

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee Meeting  
February 23, 2016 – Chris Greene Room 246**

Committee Members: Devin Floyd (Chair), Lonnie Murray (Vice Chair), Peggy Cornett, Peter Hatch, Rochelle Garwood, Ari Daniels, David Hannah

Other Participants: Ruth Douglas, Terri Keffert, Andrew Walker

The meeting began at 5:30 with the welcome of Ari Daniels, who was recently appointed to the committee by the Board of Supervisors. Devin spoke briefly about the idea that the Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) has a mission, and that the key words are action-rooted. The committee has had specific objectives in past years, and we should revisit that idea. Devin wants the committee to consider re-establishing an Education Subcommittee.

Minutes of the 12/8/15 and 1/12/16 meetings were approved.

As set up by Lonnie in the past, the NHC group email list is under Google Groups. NHC documents, files, photos, etc. are stored in Google Drive. An individual must have a Google account to have access to the drive, but a gmail account is not required. Lonnie grants access to the Google Drive by email address. The files contain some sensitive information. Lonnie will send a link to Google Drive to NHC members again, and we can bookmark it. Do not install Google Drive on your laptop.

Andrew Walker of Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) gave a presentation summarizing the status of the grant project. He will make the presentation available to the committee. GIC is in the midst of mapping basic ecological assets and network. Upon completing that process, Connectivity Analysis, Risks and Opportunities, and Recommendations will follow. Andrew reviewed the landscape classification scheme. There are 5 variables and 252 unique combinations of the variables: geologic chemistry (4 classes), aspect (3 classes), slope characteristics (2 classes for each type), elevation (2 classes), slope (3 classes). Andrew will see if soils, geology data are available for Charlottesville, so there will not be a "hole" in the Albemarle maps and data. Va DGIF has habitat mapped for Tier1 & 2 wildlife species. David will provide the NHC data of Important Sites to Andrew before the grant subcommittee meeting on 3/1. David and Scott Clark are doing some minor clean-up of the data.

As discussed at the 1/12/16 NHC meeting, Tom Olivier believes that climate change and invasive species should be included in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Lonnie noted we should analyze species at northern and southern edges of their ranges.

**Motion Approved:** The committee approved including climate change and invasive species in the BAP to be developed. The committee tabled for later consideration the idea of including population dynamics in the BAP.

The committee should have a standard process for deciding upon and adding new Important Sites. Maybe a small group of NHC members could conduct the process. David will touch base with original Biodiversity Work Group (BWG) members and Scott Clark about the original process. Devin will look for wording in their reports on how BWG originally decided on what constitutes an Important Site. David will send the current list of Important Sites to committee members.

The Plant Group (plus a few other volunteers) has had two meetings with Tom Olivier related to Mo Stevens' data. There 19 topo maps in all, and 2 have been processed. The group needs to keep meeting and moving forward. Mo's notebooks will be archived at UVA in the Small Special Collections Library, through the efforts of Tom Wieboldt (and possibly others). Still to be resolved is how to archive his maps. Ruth will report back at next meeting.

Spring is a good time of year for site visits. Lonnie encouraged everyone to look through the list of sites in the 2004 BWG Biodiversity Report Appendices with an eye toward leading a visit. Come to the next meeting with ideas for site visits.

Devin and the Center for Urban Habitats continue efforts to classify all ecosystem types on the Ragged Mountain Natural Area site. Seven types have been documented to date. The underlying granitic rock is allowing basic oak-hickory (not acidic) forest to develop. That geology extends southward in the county, a positive thing for forests, vegetation, and natural communities. Devin will speak at a public meeting hosted by the City of Charlottesville on 2/29.

Lonnie & Devin went on a group visit to the Hedgerow property on 2/20, the site of a future county park. There are very nice properties with great views. Deeded easement into property is not good to adjoining landowners. Several nice piedmont barrens communities were seen, including four good indicator plant species. The barrens are better quality than those on the Arrowhead land and Bunches site on Dudley Mountain.

Devin reported that migration of the spotted salamanders at Polo Grounds and Rio Mills Roads can be unpredictable, but occurred last night. It will probably happen again tomorrow night. He was there for an hour, counted 25 salamanders (5 dead) crossing Polo Grounds Road, and took advantage of outreach opportunities with passing cars. Ann Mallek and some other people were there. The pools on the Rio Mills side of Route 29 were full of salamanders. Timber harvest upslope of the pools apparently did not affect migration very much.

**Motion Approved:** The committee approved allowing Ches Goodall, coordinator of the county's Acquisition of Conservation Easements Program (ACE), to use NHC data. David will work with Ches on this so that the data can be used in documenting the natural heritage value of candidate ACE properties. Lonnie expressed a desire for a more comprehensive approach to refining the ACE process in the future.

The committee agreed there should be recognition of Scott Clark and the work he has done since 2002 with the NHC and BWG. Several ideas were offered, including purchasing a gift, recognize him in front of BOS, Certificate of Appreciation, and a card (or something) with lots of signatures with past and present committee members. Rochelle and David will work on a Certificate of Appreciation. Lonnie will work on language for BOS recognition. An art work, possibly of a bird by Rose Brown, was suggested. Terri Keffert made the suggestion and might follow up with acquisition if we can pool the money.

An annual report by NHC is due to the Clerk of the BOS by April 4, to be included in the consent agenda for the April meeting. Committee members will submit bullet items to Lonnie, and he will compile

them. He would like help in crafting the wording for the report. Including photographs might be useful. David will send the Word document template for the report to Lonnie. David & Andrew will develop a paragraph about the GIC grant. Interest was expressed in making a presentation to the BOS later in the year, probably after the GIC grant is completed.

David reported that the flag layer created by Scott Clark has been operational for project reviews since November, 2015. Christine Putnam has applied for appointment to the NHC. Christine teaches middle school science at Tandem School, is a Master Naturalist, and a landowner in the county.

The meeting concluded at 7:38.

Next Meeting: March 22, 2016 at 5:30pm, Totier Room 235. Two brief agenda items to include:

- Update on the grant award to Blue Ridge PRISM, from Ruth.
- Update on the county's Flag Layer, from David.