

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee Meeting  
March 29, 2016 – Totier Room 235**

Committee Members: Devin Floyd (Chair), Lonnie Murray (Vice Chair), Peggy Cornett, Peter Hatch, Ari Daniels, Manuel Lerda, Nancy Weiss, Jeremy Glode

Other Participants: David Hannah, Ruth Douglas, Terri Keffert, Tom Olivier, Andrew Walker, Wren Dawson

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 by Devin. Minutes of the 2/23/16 meeting were approved.

The meeting agenda was adjusted to accommodate Manuel, who needed to leave early. Devin opened the meeting by displaying a piece of graphite schist from the Charlottesville geologic formation, which he picked up near Preddy Creek. It creates a nutrient-poor substrate and plant communities upon it are specially adapted to those demands (the rare and compromised Piedmont Prairie system being one of those). 600 million years ago this part of VA was at the mouth of a large river system, at sea level, south of the equator. The graphite formed as a result of algae "bottle-necking" at the waters edge for several million years. Thousands of feet of algae stacked up at the dawn of plants advancing to the land, setting the stage for graphite production.

Devin wants to officially revive the education subcommittee. He envisions an active group of 3-4 members willing to meet monthly. We can refer to previous committee documents to determine the purpose and mission of the subcommittee. Christine Putnam, the committee's newest member, will be asked to serve. Devin would like to serve and Ari expressed interested. Local and regional data should be emphasized, not generic info that can come from many sources (e.g., Wikipedia). Several ideas were offered and many different target audiences were identified, including schools. Perhaps a Facebook page can be created. Manuel will send a bullet list of ideas for the subcommittee to Devin that everyone can add to.

**Motion Approved:** The committee approved formation of an education subcommittee.

Lonnie mentioned there are also past projects the committee began that have not been completed. We should not overlook them. There was discussion about the county's website, information included about the committee, and educational information the committee has developed in the past. David will send website links to committee members.

Climate change and invasive species have been approved (at a previous meeting) as subjects to include in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Manuel feels we need to be selective about what we choose to address, we should play to our strengths and avoid weaknesses, and that science drivers must be included. Kudzu is an example of invasive plant moving up in elevation in response to climate change. Insects are moving too, including butterflies and moths. Peter would like to see specific examples from Albemarle County if possible, to add power and relevance to examples we use. Range compression of some species and local data may be hard to find. Risks to rare species and species at the edge of their ranges are amplified. Tom, Ruth and Manuel are willing to form a subcommittee on the BAP and these two topics in particular. Invasions are a big threat to some populations. Invasives seem to be a more

tangible problem than climate change. Lots of useful information can may be leveraged from Blue Ridge PRISM.

**Motion Approved:** A work group will be formed to investigate invasive species and climate change. Tom, Manuel, and Ruth will meet before the next full committee meeting.

Elaine Pack, Albemarle County staff person, helped maintain committee's educational web pages in the past. Can an independent website be developed, and linked to from the County's website? Piedmont Discovery blog is an example. David will research this. If we design a new site, the education subcommittee should be in charge of it.

Lonnie has worked on the Annual Report, covering calendar year 2015 and due April 4. We need bullet list of goals for the committee in 2016, Devin and David will draft a list. David can work on tying together the text for the Annual Report. A draft report will be circulated by Friday, for approval by the committee.

Site visits to some of our Important Sites and other interesting places. Lonnie has contacted landowners by phone in the past about visiting their property. He framed requests in terms of volunteer naturalists visiting places with a history of interesting plants. Landowners should be invited to accompany the group. Someone going on the visit should make the landowner contact. Landowner and real estate information about all parcels in Albemarle County is available on the web. If more than two committee members participate in a visit, it becomes a public meeting.

Ruth reported the plant team continues reviewing the Mo Stevens data, and all is going well. Ten of the quad sheets have been reviewed by the team, five more are set for review, and five more after that will cover all 20 quad maps. The team wants to visit some of these sites, and will be doing so. The team is meeting weekly, and Tom participates on occasion. There should be a presentation to the committee at the conclusion of work. The County and the team will get copies of the digital records.

Ruth provided an update on the Blue Ridge PRISM, and the NRCS grant they received. She recommended that Rod Walker make a presentation to the committee. He is looking for partners and other funding opportunities.

Andrew updated the committee on the status of Green Infrastructure Center grant project. Six factors are being used in the landscape analysis, resulting in 325 potential categories. The factors are geologic chemistry groups, aspect, panform slope, profile slope, elevation, and slope. All 325 categories actually occur in Albemarle. The three most common combinations make up 9% of county's land area. The top ten combinations make up 22.5% of county land base. A map depicting connectivity analysis of the core areas was shown. April 12 at 5:30 is tentatively set for the next subcommittee meeting.

David described the work advisory group that is being formed to provide input to County staff as they develop a Natural Resources Program. The program will impact the focus of David's work. Devin had previously asked Nancy to serve on the 7-8 person advisory group.

**Motion Approved:** Nancy will represent the committee on the advisory work group.

The certificate of appreciation, thank you card, and art work by Rose Brown (framed illustration of northern saw-whet owl) were discussed, all being tokens of recognition for Scott Clark. Money was collected to cover the cost of the art work. The committee will develop a press release, and a member will use three minutes at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting to announce the recognition of Scott. Final details about timing will be worked out.

Lonnie updated the committee on construction of a new entrance to Miller School. Construction of the road caused clearing and much ground disturbance within the 100' buffer of an intermittent stream. The area cleared included a high quality forest containing umbrella magnolia trees. A mitigation plan (tree planting in the Mechum River riparian buffer) was part of the project. Lonnie and others were of the belief that waivers to the Water Protection Ordinance were not allowed by county staff in the rural area of the County. Board action would be necessary for waivers in the rural area. That has not been the case though. Mark Graham will provide some documentation about the history of the WPO to educate everyone about the history and current status.

The meeting concluded at 7:39.

Next Meeting: April 26, 2016 at 5:30pm, Totier Room 235.