

**Notes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee Meeting  
December 8, 2015 – Totier Room 235**

Participants: Lonnie Murray (chair), Peggy Cornett, Ruth Douglas, Peter Hatch, Tom Olivier, Nancy Weiss, Manuel Lerda, Devin Floyd, Karen Firehock & Andrew Walker (Green Infrastructure Center), Jeremy Glode, Scott Clark, David Hannah

The meeting began at 5:30 with brief introductions by everyone in the room.

Andrew and Karen gave an update on the grant project. It is proceeding well. Habitat core areas (100 acres or more) have been identified. Biodiversity Predictor Variables are being identified & worked on, based in part on input from the committee. Connectivity Analysis will follow. There will be another project update at the next committee meeting.

Group discussion followed. Tom gave some background on the 39 biodiversity spots identified by the original Biodiversity Work Group. The GIS layer of the sites is available for use in the project. Tom Dierauf was mentioned as someone to involve in providing input and reviewing project maps. Tom will send notes he has from Tom Dierauf to Andrew & Karen, about places on the landscape to look for rare or uncommon plants, communities.

There was great interest in analyzing current data and aerial photography from 1937 to identify forested areas that have been undisturbed during that time period. At least one set of additional photos from the time interval should also be included in analysis.

The importance of addressing climate change in the project was discussed. Manuel pointed out that Landsat data is available (at no cost) that would allow changes in plant phenology to be analyzed. Tom will make a presentation about climate change at the January meeting of committee. A subcommittee was formed to discuss specific data, conditions, methods, etc. that will be useful for Andrew & Karen in their GIS analysis. The subcommittee includes Devin, Manuel, Tom and David. They will meet before the next full committee meeting.

Tom described a dataset he has created from maps, field notes and other observations that Mo Stevens made during his many decades of field work. He began working with Mo on this in the late 1990's. It is mostly about rare plant observations, more than 500 total covering 19 or 20 topo quads. Some observations date from the 1960's. Tom feels "more eyes" are needed to provide some additional quality control of the data, and the plant team is "salivating" to see Mo's data. Ruth, Peter, Peggy & Lonnie will help review. There was also discussion about the eventual home for the dataset, whether it should belong to the county or not. Any important information that might be discovered in reviewing the data will be provided to Andrew & Karen.

Three members of the committee (Devin, Peggy, Ruth) visited the Wilhelm property a few miles east of Batesville in early November. Lonnie is also familiar with the property. The landowners are talking with PEC about protecting the land through conservation easement, possibly retiring development rights, and PEC sought input and ideas from the committee. There is no house on the property, but there is a highly

disturbed area with many invasive plants near the road. The remainder of the property is wooded and part of an identified core forest area, with some north-facing slopes. There was not enough time to walk all of the property. No rare species were found, but there were two cove forest areas that were not visited, and there may be a seepage area. A trail is on the property. By unanimous vote of the committee, Lonnie will draft recommendations and circulate among the committee for review. After review, the recommendations will be sent to Rex Linville at PEC.

Devin and the Center for Urban Habitat have been hired by City of Charlottesville to conduct ecological survey of Ragged Mountain Natural Area. He is mapping plant community/ecosystem classes, coordinating biological surveys, and compiling existing data from about the site. Gary Fleming of Virginia DCR is providing some help.

The meeting ended at 7:30. Committee members recognized and applauded Scott Clark for his many years of help, interest, and devotion to the committee's work.

Other items: Per suggestion from Manuel, David will find out if there is a Forest Inventory Analysis field site in Albemarle County.

Next Meeting: January 12, 2016 at 5:30pm, Totier Room 235