Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
October 15, 2020 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Emily Luebke, Peggy Cornett, Lonnie Murray, Nancy Weiss, Kennon Williams
Absent: Michael Rodemeyer, Kate Mallek
Other Attendees: Rod & Maggie Walker (Blue Ridge PRISM), Leah Jung, Grant Connette (Smithsonian Institute), Rick Barnett, Chris Hawk
Staff: Kim Biasiolli, Margaret Maliscewski, Carolyn Shaffer

There was a quorum of six members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:05.
Visitors welcomed.
Emily moved approval of the agenda, Nancy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
Emily moved approval of the minutes, Nancy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Follow-ups:
- Proposal to change official NHC meeting time change to the first Thursday of the month at 5:30, starting in November. Nancy moved approval, Emily seconded.
- Important Sites updates
  - Avon Swamp site visit (Kim, Christine, and Dan Mahon – ACPR)
    - Investigated boundaries ACPR/HOA; discussion about engaging volunteers, invasives control and other park planning.
    - There is no WPO buffer on the wetland according to the GIS.
      Action Item: Kim will follow up.
- Charlotte Humphris Education Initiative
  - Meeting with Amy Smith (Asst. Director of ACPR). Hydraulic CAC is supportive of educational projects. Exploration of QR codes, interpretation of stormwater basin, brochures. **Action Item:** Education Subcommittee will continue working with ACPR.
  - Discussion of need to track information about parks that are not important sites in Google Drive. NHC workplan.
- Invasives management meeting with Rod Walker - Blue Ridge Prism
  - New document in progress to help summarize county policies for invasives control and options for volunteers. Currently in review with ACPR and other county departments.
- Subcommittee Updates
  - Education subcommittee – regular meeting will be 3rd Mondays from 4-5 pm.
    - Will discuss charter and website updates
  - Policy subcommittee – one meeting completed, no regular time set yet.
    - Sugar Hollow discussion of issues and recommendation letter.
      - Discussion of greenway concept, potential cooperation between City, County, RWSA, VDOT, private landowners.
      - Nancy moved to finalize letter to BOS, Emily seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
      - **Action Item:** Christine will finalize and send letter.
    - Chesapeake Bay Act discussion and recommendations.
    - Stream Health Initiative – other opportunities to provide feedback on this upcoming.
- Rivanna Corridor Plan – Christine is working on coordinating feedback to the TJPDC.

- o Peggy moved to send on the recommendations, Emily seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
  - o **Action Item:** Christine to finalize feedback and send to TJPDC.
- Mowing reduction
  - o Christine drafted a letter to ACPR using Walnut Creek as an example.
  - o Peggy moved to send on the letter, Nancy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
  - o **Action Item:** Christine to finalize and send to ACPR.

Presentation by Grant Connette, Smithsonian Institute: Mapping Wildlife Corridors
- Protected areas are not enough; landscapes working for people and nature.
- Habitat Connectivity = well connected habitats
  - o Habitat size and degree of connectivity depends on species and landscape context.
  - o Historical vs. current vs. future
  - o How much connectivity is enough?
- USDA Conservation Corridors: https://www.fs.usda.gov/nac/buffers/guidelines/2_biodiversity/3.html
- Data collection should either validate or help design corridors.
- Moisture, slope, solar exposure— research on how many factors can affect movement of wildlife. Climate is a consideration.
- Real world decision making: camera traps, identifying suitable crossing locations, road design, underpasses, modified culverts.
- Research can be too slow, too complex for real world situations. Also hard to access data.
- Mapathon – workflows for wildlife corridor mapping using Google Earth engine
  - o Continuing to explore locations for future wildlife corridor work.
  - o Satellite imagery – mapping features – assigning 'costs' (difficulty, mortality, speed, willingness) for wildlife movement in different areas. Identifying areas with more/less challenges to movement.
  - o Web application in Google Earth engine in development; with training can be done fairly quickly.
  - o Citizen science efforts provide a lot of data on species distributions.
- Road design is important.
  - o Can slow traffic (one of the most important factors)
  - o Reduce financial costs, environmental impacts – looking for a win-win road alignment to avoid high cost parts of the landscape.
- Working Land and Seascapes Initiative – interested in hearing about potential projects, collaboration, tools, and training.
- Resources: corridordesign.org/designing_corridors; conservationcorridor.org; IUCN guidelines; USDA guidelines.
- Albemarle's BAP connectivity analysis- how can we build on this potentially using the Google Earth engine to further refine corridor locations and potential project sites?
- Web corridor mapping tool will be available soon- Grant will share that with the NHC. Lots of potential for collaboration in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50. Next meeting date is November 5th.