

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
June 3, 2021 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Peggy Cornett, Emily Luebke, Bruce Gatling-Austin, Leah Jung, Lonnie Murray, Emma Andrews, Kate Mallek, Nancy Weiss, Michael Rodemeyer

Absent: Kennon Williams

Other Attendees: Rod Walker (Blue Ridge Prism), John Lewis (CAMBC), Beth Kuhn

Staff: Kim Biasioli, Carolyn Schaffer, Nicole Jones, Tim Padalino (ACPR)

There was a quorum of eleven members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:33. Welcome to guests.

Peggy moved approval of the agenda, Michael seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Michael moved approval of the minutes, Peggy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Conversation with John Lewis, President of Charlottesville Area Mountain Bike Club (CAMBC) and Tim Padalino (ACPR) about Biscuit Run, trail construction & maintenance, and sensitive areas.

- There are high quality and sensitive areas in the southern part of the park. A high number of social trails have been observed, and invasives creeping in the edges. How can the NHC, CAMBC, and ACPR work together to minimize impacts from unauthorized trails, invasive species, and educate bikers and the general public?
- CAMBC is focused on trails and recreation; interest in invasive species. Opportunity for a two way education; and openness to educating/engaging membership on trail maintenance and invasives management.
- ACPR is trying to open Biscuit Run to the public; focused on central portion of the park currently. ACPR is required by DCR as a leaseholder to have invasive species management. Supportive of focusing strategically on the high quality areas of the park, coordinating and collaborating with volunteers and other organizations.
- Invasive Species Task Force – opportunity to develop this to help organize volunteer efforts and provide education on best practices. Potential interest in forming this with RCA, RTF, CAMBC, NHC, ACPR, and other organizations.
- Recommendation to use iNaturalist to identify where significant observations are to avoid when building trails. iNaturalist training could be organized for ACPR staff and community groups. Recommendation to consider the time of year for trail construction and survey areas first.
- Recommendation to install signs to close unauthorized trails. Another strategy could be rerouting around sensitive resources, rather than closing the entire trail. Closing social trails and installing planned trails, labelling and identifying official trails is important.
- ACPR is focused on trail designation and mapping in the central part of the park first, prior to the official opening, upcoming. Long term goals are to connect with other trail systems and address the trail system in the rest of the park.
- Interest in restoring grassland habitat, experimentation in the park as well.
- Blue Ridge Prism has upcoming workshops and encourages people to attend. The Prism can also organize a training for a specific group. **ACTION ITEM:** Kim will coordinate with Tim Padalino to potentially develop ideas (e.g. Invasive Plant Task Force and invasives trainings for ACPR staff).
- Volunteer trail surveyors could help identify resources before trails are constructed.

Follow-Ups:

- Important Sites and other areas of interest
 - Kim and Christine visited Emma's property on the Hardware River. Beaver wetland on an old pasture has potential for future survey efforts; Emma has invited members to come.
 - Key West – Emily has been working with CUH on private and community owned property there with CUH; dwarf larkspur and new county record dragonfly – rusty snaketail observed. More information on the site will be forthcoming.
 - Brookhill River Park – Emily has been doing vernal pool monitoring there. High diversity of sedges and other herbaceous vegetation. Trash is an issue there; major cleanup is needed.
 - Important Sites spreadsheet assigns NHC members to be a steward; can contact the landowners now that Education Subcommittee has drafted an outreach letter.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** All NHC members to review spreadsheet and sign up to steward a site.

- Subcommittee & Member Reports
 - Education and Outreach*
 - New Landowner Welcome Letter and Resources
 - New landowner packet and letter developed and ready to go out. Landowner info from GIS and landowner resources document has been updated.
 - Kim is working with other County staff on the environmental stewardship hub on the website and advancing some of the other NHC recommendations for the website. The landowner resources might ultimately go on the hub instead of being a separate document.
 - Master Gardeners is planning outreach to nurseries about natives. Opportunities for the NHC to collaborate.
 - Charlotte Humphris education projects are underway with students and PlantsMap QR codes.
 - Conservation Mowing
 - Conservation Mowing at Darden Towe is underway. Educational flyer was developed by Emma, working with the County, and opportunities to update in the future.
 - BR Prism has an upcoming meeting on invasive grasses.
 - Policy
 - The Policy Subcommittee has not had an opportunity to meet.
 - Wildlife Corridors
 - Leah is looking into funding opportunities for revegetation at 240/250 intersection.
 - Working with VT and Smithsonian to develop a study to track bobcat and understand where corridors are and how they correspond to modelling.

Other Matters

- Subcommittee meetings are on hold as there have been issues with Zoom, unless it is a webinar. County is continuing with Zoom for now for all meetings but options for in person may return soon. NHC Members need to coordinate with County staff to have subcommittee meetings.
- Kim has worked with Ches Goodall, Leah, and other members of the ACE Committee to incorporate biodiversity criteria into the ranking of new easement projects.
- Lonnie identified a new population of *Rhododendron maximum* in the County.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00. Next meeting date is July 1st, 2021.