

Natural Heritage Committee

April 2019

Annual Report of the Natural Heritage Committee for 2018

Committee Members in 2018: Nancy Weiss, Lonnie Murray, Peggy Cornett, Christine Putnam, Emily Luebke, Mary Tillman, Michael Rodemeyer, Kennon Williams

Meeting Frequency: The committee met monthly during 2018. There were nine full committee meetings and one informal meeting due to lack of a quorum. The November meeting was cancelled to allow a public meeting about amending the Comprehensive Plan with strategies for biodiversity. There were some subcommittee meetings held concerning evaluating our Important Sites. Several site visits involving multiple committee members were also conducted.

Summary: The Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) is proud to report on the goals it met and other achievements during the calendar year of 2018.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP):

The NHC began working with staff to develop a BAP in 2016, as called for in the Natural Resources Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The Board of Supervisors (BoS) endorsed the final version of BAP on July 5, 2018. NHC has worked with staff since then on amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate BAP data and themes as well as strategies for conserving biodiversity.

Important Sites Assessments:

Information about the county's Important Sites was updated during the year to keep it current. A work group was formed which better organized and updated information about the Important Sites and developed a ranking procedure for them.

Six Important and potentially Important Sites, including Biscuit Run Park, were visited by NHC members and others in 2018. Contact with two landowners of Important Sites was initiated.

Other Notable Achievements:

- Continued our own education with presentations from various organizations that hold conservation easements, including Piedmont Environmental Council and Virginia Department of Forestry. The ACE Program was also a meeting topic, reinforcing our desire that the program will continue to be funded at a significant level. Other topics covered included the threat from invasive species, County Parks, what are our natural plant communities, how does Albemarle County's land use planning process and Comprehensive Plan work, and vernal pools.
- NHC members participated in two public meetings about the Biscuit Run Park Master Plan, as well as a BoS meeting on the topic on December 12.
- NHC members participated in a public meeting on November 29 about amending the

- Comprehensive Plan to include strategies for conserving biodiversity.
- NHC sent a letter to the BoS, strongly endorsing funding to create an Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) in coordination with the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Recruited four new members for the committee in early 2018 as four members either resigned or timed out.

Conclusion:

Natural Heritage Committee Goals for 2019

Continue to review and update the original list of Important Sites developed by the Biodiversity Work Group in 2004 to reflect the status of those sites and the addition of newly discovered sites.

Work with Dan Mahon and other staff of the Parks and Recreation Department to provide input on development of Biscuit Run Park, the Charlotte Humphris Park, and county-owned lands in the three conservation focus areas, particularly the Rivanna River corridor.

Complete formalization of ecosystem assessments and biological inventories so the Committee's treatment of county level data aligns with state and national level conservation ranking and recommendation schemes.

Develop closer ties with the members of the Board of Supervisors by inviting them to committee meetings and site visits with us.

Develop a "plant rescue" process for surveying and harvesting plants and seeds from areas that are about to be developed.

Recruit additional members to the committee to increase input from a broader range of competencies.