

## **Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group Meeting Minutes 2-5-18**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm in the auditorium of the Long Branch Nature Center.

In attendance were: Caroline Haynes, Nereide Ellis (Park and Rec), Phil Klingelhofer, Evelio Rubiella (UFC), Claire O’Dea, (E2C2), Alonso Abugattas (DPR), Marion Jordan, Karen Baragona, Tucker Kelsch, Jeffrey Pardi, Liam Spratt, Elliot Anderson (Public)

Four students from a high school Social anthropology class attended as part of a class assignment.

Guest: Karen Baragona, Natural Resources Consultant (Pro Bono) Arlington County Parks

Introductions made all around

No public comment

December 4, 2017 Minutes approved with no edits.

### **Research on Meadow Management in the Washington DC Region**

Karen Baragona, conducting and compiling meadow management techniques and best practices in the DC region on a pro bono basis for Arlington County Parks, reported on her findings. She pointed out that while most jurisdictions emphasized tree planting and preservation, that meadows are actually much rarer and their benefits often overlooked. Meadows, described as treeless areas consisting mostly of native warm season grasses with numerous sun-loving plants, serve a host of ecosystem services. These include as habitat for numerous meadow specialists, water quality buffers, pioneering soil improvements and nitrogen fixing bacteria, erosion control, carbon storage, and soil stabilization.

While the regional jurisdictions use a variety of methods and best practices to maintain and manage meadows, two elements are the most used; mowing and burning. Methods of establishing meadows also are quite varied. Most however involve killing the established groundcover. Methods used include solarization, herbicides, and bush hogging. Fairfax County, which seems to have the most experience locally in meadow establishment and maintenance, often use what they refer to as “kill and drill” which involves killing the groundcover but not disturbing the soil. They then drill and plant (seed mostly) and let the native seed bank provide the initial plants. When introducing plants, most places look at the surrounding environment or analogs to decide on what to plant. Seed Planting by Fairfax is often done in the middle of summer with the reasoning that native warm season grasses can take advantage and get established despite the lack of rain and may then overshadow and otherwise outcompete alien invasives.

Management practices, as mentioned usually involve mowing regimens (often at least once in the late winter or very early spring to control woody plants) and burning. The aim is to halt succession into forest. Most jurisdictions also include monitoring for returning invasives and gauge success of restoration efforts.

### **Staff Updates:**

Alonso Abugattas provided the following updates:

- NoVA Prism – the name chosen to represent the organization will be NoVA PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management). A general agreement for partners to sign on to is being drafted. The matching \$140,000 grant expires in August but it appears an extension for completing planting is likely to be granted.
- The group formerly known as DC-CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) has chosen to adopt the name NCR-PRISM (National Capital Region Partnership for Invasive Species Management). It has applied for a grant and is awaiting results along with drafting a general agreement for partners to sign on to.
- DPR will participate in the City Nature Challenge and is setting up a website regarding the event. The Natural Resources Unit will provide an event on the morning of Friday April 27<sup>th</sup> while Gulf Branch Nature Center will conduct an event in the afternoon.
- Arlington County has decided to renew its Mayor's Monarch pledge for another year and will continue to expand efforts to benefit monarch butterflies.
- The Native Plant Nursery may be getting some improvements and expansion using end of year funds. Estimates for these improvements are currently being taken.
- The Natural resources management unit is drafting improvements to its web presence and expanding its permissions to make changes by NRMU staff themselves.

### **Member Reports:**

- Phil Klingelhofer (UFC) noted that the commission included support for Arlington becoming a biophilic county in the UFC workplan for 2018.
- Phil Klingelhofer (UFC) reported that the Tree canopy report resulted in a 41% tree cover for Arlington, which is an improvement overall.
- Claire O'Dea (E2C2) reported that they had just completed their annual report and that both she and Sarah Meservey would reach their term limits in the Fall.
- Nereide Ellis (Park & Rec) informed NRJAG that David Howell had made a biophilic presentation to their commission.
- Caroline Haynes (Park & Rec) reported that there will be back-to-back work sessions with the County Board on February 20. The afternoon session will focus on POPS and will include discussions on level of service, synthetic fields and lighting, land acquisition policy and casual use space. The evening work session will focus on planning for Four Mile Run Valley.