

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group Meeting Minutes 5-7-18

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

In attendance were: Caroline Haynes, David Howell, Nereid Ellis (Park & Rec), Sarah Meservey (E2C2), Phil Klingelhofer (UFC), Alonso Abugattas (DPR), Mary McLean, Kit Britton, and Marion Jordan (Public)

Introductions made all around.

No public comment.

April 2, 2018 Minutes approved with no edits.

Report on City Nature Challenge 2018: data collected, lessons learned and preparation for the September 8, 2018 Arlington Bioblitz

Several event leaders shared their thoughts on this year's City Nature Challenge. Several common elements were mentioned such as the networking and partnerships that resulted, building on last year's success, the social as well as citizen scientist aspects, and the use of the iNaturalist app which lends itself to other citizen science projects and the planned Arlington Bioblitz. All the additional observations of even common species lend itself to improving the artificial intelligence identification feature of the app.

The Arlington Regional Master Naturalists had leadership roles in 28 of the 40 or so planned events for the City Nature Challenge. They believed that the use of Signup Genius to take reservations was superior to what was used by the region and Arlington County as a reservation tool.

Arlington, as part of the DC Metro area, did quite well, placing 5th overall with 22,809 observations, and 4th place in participation with 876 participants. Amazingly, it also placed 8th overall in species count with 1,855 tallied.

Common issues included confusion over where to meet, uneven participation in the events (some well attended, others very sparse), difficulty in use of the app (particularly after a last-minute change in how the system recorded projects locations), post card and advertisements being too late, and getting enough experts to confirm and help with identifications. There was reference to having two sides to the Challenge: the citizen science versus the engagement aspects. Overall, the feedback on the event was very positive and participants are looking forward to expanded participation in 2019.

Staff Updates:

Alonso Abugattas provided the following updates:

- The City Nature Challenge provided opportunity for some citizen science, but also much in the way for public engagement in the wonders of the Arlington natural world. He viewed the City Nature Challenge as a dry run for the September Arlington Bioblitz, using the same iNaturalist app and many of the same volunteers.
- The native plant nursery and greenhouse are undergoing some improvements and expansion, including the installation of an irrigation system.
- NOVA PRISM (Northern Virginia Partnership for Invasive Species Management) had its first signatories as partners with Dominion Energy and NOVA Parks. All pilot project sites chosen, several committees formed.

Member Reports:

- Sarah Meservey (E2C2) reported that the Four Mile Run Working Group had crafted a letter supporting option 1 of the project, keeping the away from the water.
- Sarah Meservey (E2C2) informed NRJAG that the Upton Hill Community had concerns regarding parking, with some supporting the move, others questioning the proposed work. Some were concerned that funds from Fairfax would be used for a NOVA Parks project in Arlington.
- David Howell (Parks & Rec) reported that there were some people who were concerned with the language and supposed results of the tree canopy study, questioning the results.