

Still Creek Organizational Meeting Summary

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Greenbelt Park

Greenbelt, MD 20770

Meeting attendees:

Fred Gasper

Steve Ayers

Tekla Cook

Shobha Duncan

Alan Turnbull

Terri Hruby (City of Greenbelt)

Janis Oppelt

Jeannette Grotke

Tom Crone

Dave Frederick

Lauren McGee

Harriette Phelps

John Galli (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

Kate Levendosky (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. John Galli (COG) welcomed the meeting attendees and asked all present to introduce themselves.

II. Recap of 3/4/06 Still Creek Discovery Walk

Mr. Galli reported that there was a good turnout for the Still Creek Discovery Walk. He said that the group started out by walking to the Golden Triangle Business Park and observing erosion and sedimentation problems as well as the stormwater management facilities along Greenbelt Road. Then, the group walked back into the park and down the North Branch of Still Creek, observing both the diverse forest community and stream bank erosion problems. The participants agreed that they like walking in the park and would like to plan more guided watershed walks. Mr. Galli suggested that combining a bus or van tour of the watershed with some more guided walks may be an effective way to see a larger portion of the watershed.

III. Still Creek Headwaters: Photo Tour

Mr. Fred Gasper shared with the group a PowerPoint presentation that he had made, showing the headwaters of the Still Creek Watershed.

IV. Summary: Members' Interests and Roles

The following is a summary of the points raised during the discussion of the members' interests.

- Mr. Galli noted that only one person indicated an interest in helping to create a group website.
- Ms. Janis Oppelt volunteered to help with the writing for the website.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull observed that not everyone indicated an interest in 'advocacy,' and said that this was potentially troubling, since a group that is interested in protecting a stream needs to be willing to be advocates for the stream.
- Ms. Jeannette Grotke commented that some people may have felt that they did not yet know enough about the watershed to advocate for it.
- Mr. Galli said that there are many different ways for people to get involved.
- Ms. Harriette Phelps commented that she is interested in monitoring the weather and the effects of global warming on the ecosystems in the watershed.
- Mr. Galli asked whether there is a weather station in the park.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull commented that St. Hugh's School has a Weather Bug Monitoring Station.
- Ms. Janis Oppelt said that she thinks the first project for the group should be to focus on cleaning up the watershed. She asked what else might be a good start up project for the group.
- Mr. Galli said that other groups have done stream cleanups, tree plantings or guided walks as their first events/projects.
- Ms. Harriette Phelps said that she is interested in locating and monitoring trash hot spots.
- Mr. Galli agreed that identifying trash hotspots in the park would be a good activity for the group. He said that COG staff could show the group the COG trash monitoring methodology, which involves using simple equipment (tally counters) to assess the number of trash items per 100 feet.
- Ms. Janis Oppelt and Ms. Jeannette Grotke volunteered to be Trash Monitors.
- Ms. Terri Hruby reported that she may not be able to attend future meetings of the group, due to a scheduling conflict, but that as an employee of the City of Greenbelt, she would like to act as a resource for the group and encouraged the members to contact her with questions about Greenbelt.

V. So, Are We In This? Commit and Agree to Formation

Meeting attendees expressed an interest in continuing with the formation of a Still Creek subwatershed advocacy group.

VI. Group Name

The group brainstormed the following potential group names:

- Still Creek Friends
- Friends of Still Creek
- Still Creek Alliance
- Citizens for Still Creek
- Still Creek Stewards
- Stewards of Still Creek
- Alliance for Still Creek
- Still Creek Coalition

After holding runoff elections, the two final names were “Still Creek Friends” and “Alliance for Still Creek.” The group decided to allow the members not present at the meeting to vote on the final two names, by holding an election via the group listserve. It was agreed that the members would have one week to vote on the group name.

VII. Group Mission and Organization

Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that a small group meet to develop a draft mission statement. Ms. Lauren McGee, Ms. Shobha Duncan and Mr. Fred Gasper agreed to join Mr. Alan Turnbull in developing the draft mission statement before the next meeting.

VIII. Spring Events Planning

REI-Greenbelt Park Trail Maintenance Workday – March 25th

Mr. Galli announced that REI and Greenbelt Park will be holding a Trail Maintenance Workday on March 25th from 8:45 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Registration with REI is required (call 301-982-9681 or email mfordha@rei.com). Volunteers will meet at the Holly Picnic Area and then will be transported to the work site along the Perimeter Trail. Mr. Galli suggested that group members could partner with groups like REI to participate in planned activities, such as this workday, in order to learn more about the watershed.

Potomac Watershed Cleanup – April 8th

Ranger Robin Martin announced that as part of the Alice Ferguson Foundation’s Potomac Watershed Cleanup on April 8th, a number of area groups and volunteers will be picking up trash in Greenbelt Park from 9 am – noon on that day. She said that participants will meet in the parking lot of the Headquarters Building and will cleanup three sites around the park. Bags and gloves will be provided. Mr. Dave Frederick announced that Westchester Park will also be holding a cleanup on April 8th, to pick up trash along the perimeter of the park near Westchester Park. Many of the meeting attendees indicated that they are interested in participating in the April 8th Potomac Watershed Cleanup and suggested that they should wear buttons or stickers to advertise the new group to the other cleanup participants.

River Herring Transplantation Event – April 8th

Mr. Galli reported that COG is working with the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group, NOAA and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center to hold a River Herring Transplantation Event on April 8th from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. As a part of this event, about 100 adult herring will be collected from the Northeast Branch and moved upstream, to Beaverdam Creek. The idea is that the transplanted fish will spawn and chemically imprint their young with Beaverdam Creek specific “signatures,” which will induce them to return to Beaverdam Creek to spawn. Participants should meet in the parking lot behind the M-NCPPC Offices at 6600 Kenilworth Ave. at 10:00 a.m., for the collection of herring from the Northeast Branch. The herring will be released into Beaverdam Creek around noon, near the intersection of Beaverdam Road and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

Invasive Plant Removal Work Sessions – First Saturday of Every Month

Mr. Tom Crone announced that he leads Invasive Plant Removal Work Sessions in Greenbelt Park on the first Saturday of every month. Participants meet in the Sweetgum Parking Lot at 11:00 a.m. For more information, contact Mr. Crone (301-864-1959, crone@cua.edu).

COG Trash Survey Methodology Training – May (Date TBD)

After Ms. Janis Oppelt and Ms. Jeannette Grotke volunteered to be trash monitors, Mr. Galli offered to hold a training session in early May to demonstrate the COG Trash Surveying Methodology. Ms. Grotke suggested that the trash mapping could be combined with the guided walks in the future.

Walking and Driving Tour of Watershed – Sunday, June 11th at 1:00 p.m.

Ranger Robin Martin announced that Ranger Kevin Barry is available to lead guided walks in the park on a few upcoming Sunday afternoons (June 11th, June 18th and July 23rd). The group agreed that the earliest date (June 11th) would be the best, though there was also some interest in planning on also having a walk on July 23rd. Mr. Galli suggested a combined walking and driving tour, to allow members to view a larger area of the watershed.

Electrofishing Demonstration – June (Date TBD)

Mr. Galli said that COG staff could arrange an electrofishing demonstration in June, to allow the members to view some of the watershed’s resident fishes. Meeting attendees expressed interest in this event.

IX. Communication and Networking

Website Development

Mr. Galli noted that the group listserve is currently a good networking and communication resource for the group, but that having a web site would allow the group to advertise to a larger audience and would be a good tool for recruiting new members. He suggested a goal of developing a web site by the end of June. Mr. Galli

said that Ms. Kate Levendosky can help to create a boiler plate web site, but that ideally the group members would be very involved in the creation of the site. Web sites of other subwatershed groups in the Anacostia provide good models, and Mr. Galli suggested that the members look at these sites for ideas. Ms. Janis Oppelt asked what group members could do to help with the creation of a web site. Ms. Kate Levendosky replied that members can contribute to the site by helping to design the web pages as well as by writing material for the site, submitting photos of the watershed, developing a logo for the group or simply critiquing the web site as it develops. The group members agreed that the goal of developing a web site by June is reasonable.

Membership Recruitment

Mr. John Galli said that the cleanup on April 8th would be a good opportunity to advertise the group and recruit new members. Ms. Janis Oppelt and Ms. Shobha Duncan volunteered to put up fliers throughout the watershed to advertise the group and the April 8th cleanup in Greenbelt Park.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 p.m. The next meeting was planned for April 19th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Greenbelt Park in the Ranger Station Classroom. Ranger Robin Martin announced that due to weekly bike races on Wednesday evenings in the park during the summer, the group's Wednesday meeting date may be a problem. The group agreed to discuss changing the meeting date at the next meeting.