

Still Creek Friends Meeting Summary

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Greenbelt Park

Greenbelt, MD 20770

Meeting attendees:

Tekla Cook

Shobha Duncan

Bill Duncan

Alan Turnbull

Lauren McGee

Harriette Phelps

Lutz Rastaetter

Kevin Barry

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 4/8/06 Greenbelt Park Cleanup and Follow-up

Mr. Galli reported that a number of Still Creek Friends attended the April 8th cleanup and helped to cleanup a section of the park along Kenilworth Ave. Ranger Kevin Barry said that despite the rain 54 people showed up to the event to clean up three sites around the park. Mr. Alan Turnbull said that a number of the volunteers helping along Kenilworth Avenue were from student volunteer group at Prince George's County Community College that may be a good group to partner in on future projects.

Mr. John Galli said that it seemed obvious that a lot of the trash that the volunteers cleaned up along Kenilworth Avenue was due to illegal dumping. He suggested that the group consider a follow-up action, such as documenting the trash levels along Kenilworth Avenue and/or sending a letter to the State Highway Administration. Mr. Galli added that he has not seen any signs prohibiting dumping along Kenilworth Avenue and said at a minimum, the State Highway Administration should put up signs. Ideally, SHA would seal off the area to make it more difficult for someone to pull right up to the edge of the embankment, put their trash over the guard rail and push it down the hill to the stream.

The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion.

- Ranger Kevin Barry said that NPS might write or co-write a letter to SHA, because it is definitely SHA property up to the fence line. Ranger Barry suggested that Still Creek Friends consider partnering with some of the other watershed groups in the area to put up signs identifying the local streams and stating that they flow to the Anacostia River or to the Chesapeake Bay.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull replied that stream signage may be good for education but would probably not do much to deter illegal dumping. He suggested that signs advertising the fine for illegal dumping may be somewhat helpful.
- Mr. Galli concurred with the value of stream signage. He then suggested that Still Creek stream signage should first be considered inside of Greenbelt Park, at the Park Central Road stream crossing.
- Ranger Kevin Barry stated that the Park Police used to have an environmental crimes officer. He suggested that the group could research whether that position still exists.
- Mr. Galli suggested that the group could invite a SHA representative to walk the stream section. He added that COG staff can look into who to contact at SHA about this matter.
- Mr. Turnbull said that ‘no-dumping’ signs could emphasize a tip-line or crime-stoppers line, rather than a fine, to get the public involved. Alternatively, he suggested the group could put up un-official looking, eye catching “litter vigilante” signs to raise awareness about the problem and deter would-be illegal dumpers.
- Ranger Barry suggested talking to the Prince George’s County Police about this problem, since they patrol Kenilworth Avenue.
- Mr. Galli volunteered COG to draft a letter and put it on the listserv for the group to comment on.

III. Group Mission Statement

Ms. Lauren McGee shared with the group the two mission statements that the subcommittee drafted. The meeting attendees edited one of the mission statements and provisionally approved the following mission statement.

The mission of Still Creek Friends is to care for and protect the stream that flows through the heart of Greenbelt National Park. Still Creek, fed by waters beginning outside the park on the lands where we live and work, is affected by our every action. With this in mind, we seek to understand how people treat these lands and in turn, create ways to involve the broader community in restoring the ecological health of the watershed. We envision a stream system that is clean, attractive and teeming with life and we are committed to making this a reality.

IV. Calendar Year 2006 Events Planning

Mr. Galli began a discussion about potential events for the rest of the year. The following is a summary of the discussion about future events planning.

- Ms. Harriette Phelps asked whether the group is planning on participating in the Green Man Festival (an environmentally oriented festival in Old Greenbelt on May 13/14).
- Mr. Galli said that that would be a good opportunity for the group to recruit some new members.
- Mr. Lutz Rastaetter stated that Still Creek Friends is welcome to share a table with Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek. He said that the festival runs from 10:00 am. – 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:30 – 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.
- Ms. Shobha Duncan volunteered to coordinate the volunteers to ‘man’ the table.
- Mr. John Galli noted that there are a number of handouts that the group can use at the festival, but that it would be nice to have a listing of future events.
- The following are some of the upcoming events to list.
 - May 21st – Watershed Walk, 1:00 p.m. at the Sweetgum Picnic Area
 - June 11th – Walking/Driving Tour of Still Creek, 1:00 p.m.
 - June 3rd – National Trails Day
 - June 17th – Trash Survey Training
 - July 1st – Invasives Removal
- Mr. Bill Duncan said that planning these events are good, but he would also like to get an understanding on the watershed in the coming year and develop a baseline view of the state of the watershed before developing a plan for restoring and protecting the watershed.
- Mr. John Galli replied that COG can help to pull some data together for the group.
- Ranger Kevin Barry said that the group could come up with a day for a Still Creek Watershed Cleanup and suggested that September may be a good time to arrange such a cleanup.
- Mr. Galli restated COG’s previous offer to the group to do an electrofishing demonstration in Still Creek. He noted that COG is currently in the process of obtaining a permit from NPS for electrofishing in Still Creek. A July timeframe is envisioned for the event.

V. Website Presentation

Ms. Kate Levendosky presented to the group the beginning website that she has drafted for the group. The site includes an opening page with announcements about upcoming events, a section “About Still Creek Friends” that will include the group mission statement, news articles, etc.; a section “About the Watershed” that will include maps, species lists and watershed issues; a photo gallery and a calendar. Not all of the web pages are finished, but the group agreed that it is good to have some sort of web site up and running. Ms. Levendosky said that she can post the current site temporarily off of the www.anacostia.net site and will pursue getting a dedicated Still Creek Friends site before the Green Man Festival. The group agreed that www.stillcreek.org would be the ideal site for the group website.

VI. Communication and Networking

Mr. Alan Turnbull said that the group should begin to think about strategies for outreach to the wider community. He said that a website is a good start, but is passive. Mr. Turnbull suggested that the group should try to reach decision makers, civic groups, etc. by simply going to meetings and letting community members know that Still Creek Friends exists. Due to time constraints, a thorough discussion of this topic was delayed until next meeting.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 p.m. The next meeting was planned for May 17th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Due to weekly bike races on Wednesday evenings in the park during the summer, the group can't use the Ranger Station Classroom as a meeting space on Wednesday evenings until September. Mr. Alan Turnbull said that he will work on finding an alternate meeting space in East Greenbelt.