

Friends of Still Creek Meeting Summary

Monday, August 14, 2006

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Greenbelt Park

Greenbelt, MD 20770

Meeting attendees:

Shobha Duncan

Bill Duncan

Fred Gasper

Jeff Pedelty

Michele Touchet

Lutz Rastaetter

Kevin Barry (National Park Service)

Alan Turnbull (National Park Service)

John Galli (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

Kate Levendosky (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Bill Duncan welcomed the meeting attendees and asked all present to introduce themselves.

II. Electro-Fishing Demonstration Slideshow

Ms. Kate Levendosky presented a brief slideshow with pictures from the Electro-fishing Demonstration event that took place on Saturday, July 29th. The event drew about 15 people to observe COG staff demonstrate a non-lethal biological sampling method, called electro-fishing. Participants were able to observe about 12 different fish species that were collected from Still Creek.

III. Incorporation Update

Mr. Bill Duncan reported that he is about ready to send in the Articles of Incorporation, but that he still needs to get signatures from the Board of Directors. The following is a summary of the discussion about Incorporation.

- Mr. Duncan updated the group about a couple of key changes to the document
 - The group voted to change the group name from Still Creek Friends to Friends of Still Creek.
 - The signatures on the Articles of Incorporation do not need to be notarized, so Mr. Duncan removed the notary section from the document.

- Mr. Duncan proposed that the section about officers (Article IX – Officers), be changed to allow any person to hold more than one office, except the President. The group unanimously agreed to this change.
- Mr. Duncan said that he will make the change to Article IX-Officers, re-print the document and then contact the Board of Directors to sign the document before sending it in.
- Mr. John Galli said that COG will pay the extra charge for expedited service.
- Mr. Fred Gasper suggested that the group could then ask for donations at the Labor Day Festival.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull said that he believes that that is allowed, but needs to double check.
- Mr. Bill Duncan said that the group is about to incorporate as a non-profit in the State of Maryland, but that it is separate process to apply for 501(c)3 status with the federal government.
- Mr. Fred Gasper volunteered to check into the process of applying for 501(c)3 status with the IRS.
- Mr. Bill Duncan suggested that now that the group is well on its way to incorporation, the group should begin to develop a plan. He suggested that a discussion about goals and a long-term plan be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

IV. NPS Technical Assistance Report

Mr. John Galli said that COG appreciates Mr. Alan Turnbull's help in supporting the growth of the Friends of Still Creek over the past eight months. Mr. Turnbull works for the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance program. Mr. Galli said that the group has the opportunity to tap the resources of the RTCA program and COG has requested Mr. Turnbull's assistance over a two year period. Mr. Galli added that COG's commitment to the group is long-term, but that the group does not have to rely solely on COG for support.

Mr. Alan Turnbull commented that the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program is a section of the National Park Service dedicated to outreach to a variety of organizations, including non-profits and local governments, and provides support on cultural resources, rivers, trails and land conservation issues. He said that if COG's application is approved, he would be able to commit more time and effort to Friends of Still Creek over a two year period beginning in October. Assuming that Friends of Still Creek would like the help, Mr. Turnbull said that it would be great if a member of the group could send a letter in support of COG's application for assistance. Mr. Turnbull clarified that the support is not monetary and would be solely in the realm of technical assistance. He gave the group the following overview of the roles of the partnering organizations that was laid out in COG's application letter.

- MWCOG will contribute mapping assistance and graphic resources as available; hosting for a website for the Friends group; consultation in technical fields including fisheries and water quality; and liaison with the Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee.

- Greenbelt Park will provide meeting space; help with publicity through interpretive programs, website, and park publications; logistical support for special events; and liaison with natural resource and regulatory staff within the NPS regional office.
- The types of assistance we are seeking from the NPS RTCA program include help with the organizational development of the Friends of Still Creek; meeting facilitation; advice and assistance in engaging the media and local government; and help in identifying and pursuing available grants for restoration projects.

The group unanimously agreed that additional assistance from Mr. Turnbull through the RTCA program would be helpful. Mr. Duncan volunteered to write a brief letter in support. Mr. Fred Gasper asked whether additional letters would be beneficial. Mr. Turnbull replied that one letter would likely be sufficient. Mr. Kevin Barry suggested that Mr. Turnbull contact Mr. Fred Cunningham, the Greenbelt Park manager, about the application. Mr. Turnbull agreed, saying that the director of the regional RTCA program, Mr. Christopher Niewold, will certainly be in contact with Mr. Cunningham.

V. Greenbelt Labor Day Festival Planning

Mr. Lutz Rastaetter reported that since the last Friends of Still Creek meeting, the three Greenbelt watershed groups (CCRIC, BCWWG and FoSCr) decided not to reserve a booth for the whole Labor Day Festival this year, and instead plan to collaborate on hosting an information table on Saturday, September 2nd. Mr. Rastaetter said that he has already reserved 2 tables for Saturday's information session and passed around a volunteer schedule for the tables. There is a cooperative planning meeting for the three watershed groups scheduled for Friday, August 25th from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the Greenbelt Community Center.

Mr. Rastaetter said that the Friends of Still Creek only owe \$17 for the table. Since Mr. Duncan, Ms. Touchet and Mr. Gasper each donated \$20 at the last meeting to reserve a booth, Mr. Rastaetter returned \$43 to the group.

Mr. Bill Duncan thanked Mr. Rastaetter for his help organizing the Labor Day Festival tables. Mr. Galli told the group to let COG know what is needed for the table (maps, posters, handouts, etc.) and COG staff will deliver the materials.

IV. Upcoming Events / 2006 Calendar Year Planning

The following is a summary of the discussion of upcoming events.

- Mr. Duncan reported that the Schrom Hills Park Pond Cleanup is already scheduled for October 7th.
- Mr. Duncan mentioned that there are a number of other ponds in the watershed, including the following, and suggested that the group try to get a handle on what is going into the ponds and who is responsible for keeping them clean.
 - SWM pond near TGI Friday's

- SWM pond at the new Greenbelt Post Office
- SWM pond near the Cadillac Dealer
- SWM pond at the Trinity Assembly of God church
- Schrom Hills Park Pond
- Greenbelt Lake Village Ponds (upper pond and lower pond)
- Mr. Fred Gasper commented that his community association does hold annual clean-ups of the Greenbelt Lake Village Ponds and is trying to minimize the algae growth. He mentioned that the runoff from the Lanham Boys Club property feeds into the Greenbelt Lake Village Ponds via stormwater pipes.
- Mr. John Galli suggested that the group needs a map of the storm drain network, which could be used to show people how what they put on their lawns ends up in Still Creek. Mr. Galli said that COG can work on putting together a map of the storm drain network for the group.
- Mr. Duncan agreed that some education to homeowners about raingardens and other pollution reduction measures could make a big difference.
- Mr. Galli suggested that the group could do some storm drain stenciling, with a stencil that reads “Drains to Still Creek.”
- Ranger Kevin Barry mentioned that eagle scouts are always looking for projects.
- Mr. Bill Duncan announced that the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is hosting a Watershed Network Meeting for watershed groups at the end of September. He said that he and Ms. Shobha Duncan are planning on going, but will forward the information about the meeting to the rest of the group.
- Mr. John Galli mentioned that the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group is hosting a Water Quality informational forum on September 30th from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at the Greenbelt Community Center.
- Ranger Kevin Barry reported that he will do another Still Creek Watershed walk on Sunday, September 17th and will plan some more walks later in the fall. He said that he will hand out a flier about the Friends of Still Creek at the end of the walk. Also, Ranger Barry announced that there are three bridges being installed in Greenbelt Park this fall on the following dates.
 - September 23rd/24th
 - October 14th/15th
 - October 28th/29th
- Ranger Barry said that the installation of the bridges is being done through a partnership between the National Park Service and REI. REI is coordinating the volunteers for the installations and could use volunteers on the Sunday of each weekend that a bridge is being installed.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull asked Ranger Barry to forward the group any information about how people can volunteer to help with the bridge installations.
- Mr. John Galli asked whether there is a need for plant materials after the installation of the bridges is complete. Mr. Galli said that if NPS puts a plant list together, COG could buy the plants and help to organize a group to re-plant the areas around the new bridges.
- Ranger Barry said that there will be a meeting after the 1st bridge installation. He offered to give the group a report at the October meeting.

- Mr. Alan Turnbull commented that the group may want to have a table at Schrom Fest, which will be held in late October. He said that he will find out the exact date and keep the group updated.
- Ranger Barry reported that Greenbelt Park will not hold a Fall Festival this year.
- Mr. Fred Gasper asked whether the eastern track of Greenbelt Park is used.
- Ranger Barry replied that the eastern track is not used very often, but that NPS may be willing to arrange a walk this winter, exclusively for Friends of Still Creek members, in that part of the park.

IV. Communication and Networking

The following is a summary of the discussion about communication and networking.

- Mr. Bill Duncan commented that the group needs to look at the residential and business communities and develop a strategy for outreach.
- Ranger Barry suggested that the group could submit letters to the mayors of the municipalities in the watershed.
- Mr. Fred Gasper volunteered to make a presentation at one of the meetings of the Greenbelt East Advisory Committee.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that the group should also talk to the Greenbelt Advisory Committee.
- Mr. Bill Duncan commented that the group should think of the chronological order of what needs to be done. He suggested that planning is key right now and said that once the group has a good plan, recruitment of new members will be easy.
- Mr. Galli said that the group should consider developing an annual signature event, similar to the Friends of Sligo Creek's annual 'Sweep the Creek' watershed-wide cleanup.

Membership Recruitment

- Mr. Alan Turnbull asked whether the group would like to be open for new memberships.
- Mr. Fred Gasper suggested that the group could offer people 'Free Membership' for the first year and then begin requiring dues next year.
- Mr. Galli commented that holding events like the Schrom Hills Park Pond cleanup is a great way to build the group's membership. He said that there is no harm in advertising events and continuing to add new people to the mailing list.
- Ms. Michele Touchet agreed that the group should continue to build its mailing list, as it is unlikely that the attendance to the group's regular meetings will increase dramatically.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Greenbelt Park Ranger Station on September 18th.