

NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL
33 Years of Service to Improving Delaware's Quality Of Life
"Preserving Delaware's Natural Areas Today For All Delawareans Tomorrow"

NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

March 13, 2014

Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances Conference Room

Richards and Robbins Building

Dover, DE 19901

9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Council Members:

Debbie Heaton, Chair

Edward A. Lewandowski, Secretary

Pete Martin

Theodore Palmer, Jr.

James White, Jr., Vice Chair

John Williams, Esq.

Guests:

Hans Medlarz

Staff:

Raymond Bivens, Director, DNREC

Eileen Butler, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ron Vickers, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

I. Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions/Announcements

Ms. Heaton, Chairperson, called the Natural Areas Advisory Council meeting to order at 9:29 a.m. She welcomed Council members and staff and asked for announcements.

Ms. Butler welcomed Mr. Raymond Bivens as the new Director for the Division of Parks & Recreation. Council members in turn, introduced themselves and stated their affiliation.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Ms. Heaton, and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2013 meeting. Motion carried.

III. Old Business

• **Articles of Dedication for Nine Tracts of the James Branch Nature Preserve**

Ms. Butler said the Division is dedicating 360 acres of recently acquired State lands to the James Branch Nature Preserve. Ms. Butler sent out a draft of the proposed Articles of Dedication for Council review and concurrence.

Ms. Heaton had pointed out that the Articles permit visitors.

Ms. Butler said there is an active access area for people who like to canoe the James Branch – The Division Director wishes to continue this activity.

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to approve the language in the Articles of Dedication for Nine Tracts of the James Branch Nature Preserve. Mr. Williams moved to approve and Mr. White seconded. Motion carried.

- **Articles of Dedication for Godwin Tract of the Doe Bridge Nature Preserve**

Ms. Butler informed Council that she is pursuing to move the natural area line to include all of Godwin Tract and requests Council to approve to dedicate it as a tract within the Doe Bridge Nature Preserve.

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to approve the language proposed in the Articles of Dedication for the Godwin Tract of the Doe Bridge Nature Preserve. Mr. Lewandowski moved to approve and Mr. White seconded. Motion carried.

IV. Natural Areas Registry

Ms. Butler reviewed recent work done within the Thousand Acre Marsh Natural Area that would remove 6.2 acres on the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Yardley-Dale property.

V. Nature Preserve Dedications

- *Murderkill River Nature Preserve, Kent County*

Ms. Butler introduced Mr. Hans Medlarz. He is the County Engineer for Kent County Division of Public Works.

Mr. Medlarz said Kent County has had a unique opportunity for pursuing land conservation opportunities through work related to the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) done for the tidal portion of the Murderkill River. Both he and Frank Piorko, Director of Watershed Assessment, have been working closely together to try to align their interests in preserving pieces of land with the ultimate goal to meet pollution strategies in reducing pollution flowing into the tidal portions of the Murderkill.

Along with this effort, there is a piece of land that Kent County is targeting for conservation, which will help meet the requirements of the TMDL for the Murderkill River. Both the Department and Kent County are working with the landowner to this end.

This is the property that Ms. Butler had planned for Council to visit – she would still like to consider a visit in June or September.

- *Fork Branch Nature Preserve*

An appraisal was done for the Smith property. Ms. Butler continues to contact landowners along Fork Branch to discuss preservation options.

VI. Nature Preserve Management Issues

- Nature Preserve Monitoring Schedule

Ms. Butler informed Council she would be beginning the annual monitoring and invited

Council to attend and/or participate in monitoring. She will forward her schedule once complete.

VII. New Business

Love Creek - Mr. White asked whether anyone had heard of the Love Creek property debacle and what the latest news was.

Mr. Vickers said the Love Creek property is a piece of property located adjacent to Love Creek in Sussex County, north of Route 24, west of Midway, an area between Lewes and Rehoboth. The proposal was to place a recreational vehicle campground within the wooded part of the property. The wooded property is about 155 acres to 160 acres. At the upper end of that wood portion is Welches Pond, which is an ecologically rich area. The latest is that it is before the full Council. It was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and was tabled by the County Council but it may be coming back again – not sure what date.

Clean Water Initiative - Ms. Heaton highlighted two projects that were written up in the papers – the Governor and the Department are working together towards clean water and freshwater wetlands protection.

As the Natural Areas Advisory Council was established to advise the Secretary of the Department, Ms. Heaton suggested Council pen a letter, as a group, supporting the efforts of the Governor and the Secretary, since the work will benefit Delaware's Natural Areas.

Mr. Martin felt it was not necessary to write a letter at this time until this Council knows what the Wetlands Advisory Group's objective is. At this time, nothing is clear.

Ms. Heaton said she was not considering writing a letter to the Committee, but to DNREC's Secretary O'Mara asking for his continued focus and work because it has a laudable goal.

Mr. Williams said he is supportive of the Clean Water Initiative. He asked if the Bayshore Initiative is tied up with these issues. In terms of this Council, it has a very important mission if we could bring in our expertise and offer our support along those lines.

Ms. Butler agreed that a letter could be penned along the lines that Mr. Williams discussed.

Mr. Bivens said Secretary O'Mara would appreciate an endorsement on the Clean Water Initiative as he is getting negative feedback on how to fund it. The Natural Areas Advisory Council agreed to draft a letter to Secretary O'Mara in support of the 'Clean Water Initiative.'

VIII. Public Comment and Synopsis Reports From Other Councils, Stakeholders, and Partners

Mr. White said he could not attend the State Parks Advisory Council meeting.

Mr. Bivens, Parks Director, said the meeting was held at Killens Pond. Some issues discussed:

- That the Council took a stance on the ferry service to New Jersey and the connection

to Fort Delaware

- The Report on Hunting in State Parks indicated deer herds tend to be increasing
- An updated report on the Agricultural Lease program was just completed statewide.
- The Cabela's Store in Wilmington is opening May 1st. Topic was a highlight – the camping section is filled with pictures of Delaware States Parks camping sites, such as Trap Pond and others. There is also a kiosk with pictures of the State Parks.

Ms. Heaton asked Mr. White to designate an alternate if and when he cannot make it to State Parks Council meetings. Mr. Lewandowski offered to be the alternate.

Ms. Butler said the next Natural Areas Advisory Council meeting will have a full member Council. A member has been nominated and approved by the Senate.

Mr. Williams said there is a Christina River cleanup in 1st week in May.

IX. 2014 Council Meeting Dates/Time

- The 2014 Natural Areas Advisory Council meetings will be held on Thursdays at the Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances conference room, DNREC, Richards & Robbins Building, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, DE 19901, starting 9:30 a.m.
 - June 12
 - September 11
 - December 11

X. Adjournment

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.