

WG Conservation Meadow Committee Meeting

March 20, 2024

In attendance; Georgette Cole, Bruce Daggy, Christine Dibble, Joan Mahaffey, Audery Maskery, Paula Puglisi, David Stopak, Anne Vincent

No public appearances. The agenda was approved, with Joan volunteering to explain the Weed Warrior program. Minutes from the Jan 2024 meeting were approved as written.

A meeting with Parks is scheduled for April 1, 2024, 10.00am-noon, meeting at the signage entrance on Ridge Road. A list of questions to raise with Parks was discussed; revised draft as follows:

- 1) WG Conservation Meadow's Operations & Use Plan was generated years ago but never officially approved by Parks. Can we get one approved?
- 2) Can the number of red cedars be reduced, especially mid-meadow?
- 3) How does a meadow become added to the restoration list? What would that mean?
- 4) When will Parks replace the missing bollards?
- 5) How effective are the county's efforts at managing the deer population? Is it falling? Is the county or state planning to do more?
- 6) Does anyone at Parks monitor water quality from the springs?
- 7) Who is responsible for trash removal in the adjacent woods?
- 8) WG Conservation Meadow needs better signage, both "Rules of Use" type at the entrances and Interpretive at the main entrance on Ridge Rd. Will Parks provide? (see note at end of this document)
- 9) What is Parks' obligation with respect to the meadows? How can we work together?

Comments

Brenda Sandberg at Parks developed the O&U plan with WG, it was formally presented but never signed off after she left. Bob Service may be useful contact for treatment of NNIs.

The deciduous trees used to thicken the tree line and along Ridge came with WG approval from Pope Farm. Wider spacing was used for a more natural appearance. Some may be more centrally located than they should be. There are many fallen trees tangled in the tree line between the two meadows. They need to be brought down to the ground but left in situ to rot properly. If a tree has lost more than 20% of its canopy, it needs to come down. There are too many trees, especially conifers, within the upper meadow.

The committee wants to make certain that the current Parks staff are aware of the significance of the park area. Three points were raised:

- 1) Archeological sites are located within the woods between the two meadows. The sites are mentioned in the unsigned O&U plan.
- 2) The spring forms the headwaters of Rock Creek. WG does not monitor water quality.

- 3) The meadows are home to endangered species, which should not be disturbed. This includes the Northeastern turtle, whose numbers were reduced in the lower meadow.

The county monitors deer activity by means of vehicle impact statistics. WG's deer hunters use wildlife cameras.

Based on statements made about the four meadow sites that Parks selected for restoration, Parks is motivated by the amount of use a park receives. It might be possible to monitor footfall using wildlife cameras or by survey techniques.

Weed Warriors:

Work parties may be scheduled by the committee and in conjunction with Parks.

The predominant NNIs in the meadows being addressed are Japanese Knot Weed, Mile a Minute, Garlic Mustard, Chinese Wisteria, Oriental Bittersweet, Autumn Olive and Japanese stiltgrass. They are mostly found alongside trails and along Ridge Road.

Weed Warriors receive 10hours training, including two in-person sessions at worksites. They can train others and organize work parties.

Trained Weed Warriors include: Ernie Kawasaki, Joan Mahaffey, Audery Maskery.

Notes by Anne Vincent

From the unsigned MOU:

Interpretive signage is being provided at many parks throughout the Commission's park system to educate and inform park users about the natural or cultural importance of those parks to Montgomery County. The characteristics of Washington Grove Conservation Park make it an appropriate site for interpretive work for both natural and cultural resources. Potential interpretive themes for natural areas could include:

- a. Native Meadow habitat, wildlife and plant life
- b. Forest edge species, wildlife and plant life
- c. Ecosystem succession

Potential interpretive themes for cultural resources could include:

- a. Importance of rural and agricultural setting to the history of the Town of Washington Grove
- b. History of use of this particular property (active agriculture, hayfields, now native meadow)
- c. History of local, small-scale quarrying for stone [Note; Not recommended now due to concerns about souvenir hunters or other problems brought about by increased public awareness.]