

VCTU Council Meeting Notes – May 13, 2023

Date: May 13, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Location: Bridgewater College, 402 E College St, Bridgewater, VA 22812

Meeting hosted by the Massanutten Chapter and via ZOOM

Attendees:

In-Person: Jim Wilson (Chair/Northern Virginia), Burr Tupper (Vice Chair/Winchester), Bill Pierce (Treasurer/Massanutten), Scott Allen (Secretary/Northern Virginia), Eric Tichay (NLC Rep/Smith River), Deidra Stultz (Comm-Diversity)/Roanoke Valley), Mike Makufka (TIC/Winchester), Seth Coffman (TU), Gary Heschl (Massanutten) Tom Benzing (Conservation/Shenandoah), Jim Prussia (Massanutten), Red Bourdage (Rapidan)

Zoom: David Holladay (Roanoke), Amy Orr (At-Large, Rapidan), Arthur Wilson (Roanoke), Jason Collins (Smith River), Tony Hill (Northern Virginia)

Meeting Called to Order at 9:15 A.M.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:10 P.M.

- (Jim) Opening remarks and Agenda review

1. Minutes from last meeting

- Approved
- Amy Orr provided email update to Rapidan TIC information
- Post meeting, the minutes were updated by Scott

2. Priority Waters Status (Seth Coffman)

- a. Investigate Regional Vice Presidents to lead multi-chapter efforts
 - (Jim W) how to link chapters to 3 areas?
 - (Jim W) What do the chapters need?
 - Will look at engaging Chapters/Members with vested interest
 - Grayson Highlands – identify key players that participated in the Priority Waters selection committee to get ideas for projects
- Recap of actions to date:
 - In 2021, committee looked at locations with opportunities for TU to “move the needle”
 - Two (2) other areas were considered, but were dropped due to amount of national forest lands and private land within that area
 - Three areas selected:
 - Upper James – National wildlife headwaters of Chesapeake
 - Blue Ridge – extends outside of the national park extent
 - Strategic Plan:
 - includes coordination with park biologists (e.g., eDNA study)
 - will look at what is going on in streams based on VTSSS and other studies
 - will include policy advocacy
 - Grayson Highlands – includes North Fork of Holston and New River and the area is popular with tourists

b. Operation Plans

- Strategic action plans are in draft
- Draft Plans [[Attachment 1](#)]
- No set goals in actions or time for each priority water – each state and each priority water is unique
- Next steps:
 - Need to drill down on specific actions that “move the needle”
 - Opportunities for increased state money (e.g., trout stamp)
 - DEQ regulations
 - Create pathways for chapter/local involvement – outside of usual partners
 - Focus on how to get from point A to point B
 - Example: Point A = Grayson Highlands has had no activity
 - Point B = Established activities within 5 years
 - Communicating at state events (i.e., festivals, meetings, etc....)
 - Identifying key legislative contacts to help influence advocacy efforts
 - All State Action Plans are on shared drives so all states have access (Eric)
- Open Discussion
 - Council looking to get access to GIS mapping tools
 - **ACTION: Seth to contact Matt and Scott to coordinate GIS options**
 - DWR has a mapping tool that may be incorporated
 - Provide dashboard to council and chapters
 - (Eric) Is there a master project list?
 - (Seth) National is looking at new database, but not on-line yet
 - **ACTION: Scott -- Add Cover letter (Seth) and Action Plans to website and link in newsletter**

3. Wildlife Action Plan (Tom Benzing)

- PPT [[Attachment 2](#)]
- Work on the 2025 Wildlife Action Plan is underway, and Tom is the TU VA Council representative. Catharine Tucker attended the first meeting in his absence.
 - Three (3) plans
 - VA 2015 Wildlife Action Plan / National driven / 10 year plan
(Seth) recover American wildlife act – tied to state WAP
 - VA Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (2023) / State driven / Maps available / 4 year plan
 - VA Wild Trout Management Action Plan (2019) / State driven / Maps available / 10 year plan
 - Federal money for brook trout possibility?
(Burr) how to incorporate wild trout vs native trout activities
(Seth) Will not pass up on opportunity to maintain wild cold water

4. Wildlife Corridor Action Plan Update (Tom Benzing)

- Looks at opportunities to provide deer/bear road crossing
 - \$8B insurance payouts for deer collision annually
- Nexis areas defined as high road and wildlife intersections
- Does not include aquatic crossings
 - Opportunity: Take advantage of VDOT activities where wildlife crossings include streams (i.e., have the “tunnel” support both wildlife and at the same time help aquatic crossing
 - DWR has huge database of aquatic passages – need surveys – possible action
- (Deidra) What are the talking points with interaction with representatives?
 - (Tom) Best action is to thank legislators for passing this law and supporting the plans

5. Buffalo Creek Stream Project (Jim Wilson)

- Joe Irby has asked for \$1K for stream work near Lexington's Buffalo Creek, a Special regulation area
- Joe may be working with Asa Dunnavant from the Shenandoah chapter
- Joe has ties to the local 5 Rivers club
- (Burr) This is a good opportunity to use the new grant program
 - Need to have a Chapter sponsor the grant request
 - Good opportunity to engage the Skyline chapter members
- **ACTION: Jim Wilson to follow up with Joe and the Skyline Chapter, Jim Prussia will assist**

6. Council By-Laws Review (Scott Allen)

- Reviewed the draft and took verbal edits to some text
- **ACTION: Scott will incorporate verbal edits and email the final copy for vote**

7. Council Operations Plan Development (Scott Allen)

- Reviewed the draft
- **ACTION: Scott will edit the draft and send out for review and solicit volunteers to take on specific actions**

8. Action Committee Action Items Update (Burr Tupper)

- PPT [[Attachment 3](#)]
- Committee renamed to "Community Development Committee"
- a. Council Communications – Newsletter
 - Address issues of cross communications between Chapters
 - Newsletter will be posted to website and emailed to all members with link
 - Distribution method still needs to be identified
- b. Engage Survey Respondents
 - Targeted email for specific activities
- c. Grant Funding for Chapters
 - Process sent out for comments

9. NLC Report (Eric Tichay)

- Report [[Attachment 4](#)]
- (Jim) Is the Friday Newsletter the best way to keep in touch with activities?
 - (Eric) The Monthly "Lines to Leaders" is a good summary of all activities
- (Jim) Native Trout workgroup – Are Priority Waters a permanent discussion item at meetings?
 - (Eric) A new workgroup may be created specifically for Priority Waters
- There are 36 NLC reps
- You do not need to be an NLC rep to go to meetings (12 working groups)
- There is an ongoing discussion about having non-NLC members eligible to become an NLC working group chair
- FYI: TU National has hired a lot of new staff

10. Treasurer's Report (Bill Pierce)

- Report [[Attachment 5](#)]
- Annual activity report filed
- Skyline Chapter has not submitted an AAR
[Post meeting, Bill filed the Skyline AAR]

- Virginia Capital Chapter has not submitted an AAR
 - **ACTION: Jim Wilson will see if a report is required**
- We need a SAM registration if for government reporting and money
 - Bill tried to renew registration but had no luck. Any assistance is welcomed
- a. Restricted Funds
 - Dominion-South River activity still active talks (Tom Benzing)
 - Funds distributed
 - All other restricted funds allocated

11. TIC Report (Mike Makufka)

- Notes [[Attachment 6](#)]
- With regards to the Rapidan request for funds, it was agreed to offer a TIC grant proposal to all chapters for 2023

12. Chapter Reports

- a. At-Large zip code move to VA Capital Chapter status (Scott Allen)
 - Scott engaged with Maggie and is awaiting word on the move's effective date
- b. Chapter Annual Activity Reports (Scott Allen)
 - This was addressed in the Treasurer's section regarding AAR submissions
- c. Skyline de-charter status
 - (Jim Prussia) Asked the reason the Skyline chapter is going away. Membership engagement?
 - **ACTION: Both Jim Wilson and Jim Prussia to reach out to the Skyline chapter, specifically the Lexington area members**
- d. Lexington & Lynchburg restart status
 - This is tied to the results of the Skyline chapter discussions
- e. Identify non-attending chapters and status
 - The only discussion was about the need to reach out to Mountain Empire Chapter, specifically with regards to the Priority Waters Program

-end