

TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE
WATERSHED ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 10, 2008 – 7:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The Watershed Committee of the Town of Waynesville held a meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 10, 2008, in the Waynesville Town Hall. Members present included Jack Swanner, Bill Skelton, Gordon Small, Pat Maier, Dave Dudek and Bill Yarborough. Also present were Dr. Peter Bates, representative of Western Carolina University which is under contract with the Town to perform the Forestry Management Plan, Lee Galloway, Town Manager and Alison Melnikova, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Dr. Peter Bates opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. He noted that as a result of the article by Don Hendershot in the Smoky Mountain News, there were several citizens in attendance who were interested in the watershed. Dr. Bates introduced Dr. Norm Christianson, a professor with the Duke University School of Ecology, who is working with him on the development of the Forestry Management Plan. Dr. Bates noted that Dr. Christianson is studying the plant communities found in the watershed, particularly searching for any which might be classified as rare species, and developing management strategies to protect these communities.

Dr. Christianson expressed his feeling that the Waynesville watershed is a remarkable place, noting that it has a wide range of elevations and contains the full extent of what you would expect to find in a southern forest. He advised that the diversity in one place is impressive. While there has been much disturbance of the land over time, the forest ecosystem is healthy and intact. He advised that over 250 plant species had been identified thus far, and with an intense study of the wet areas near streams, he surmised that there would be more than 500 plant species in the watershed. Dr. Christianson said they did not find what would be considered endangered species, there were certainly some that would be considered rare.

There was extensive discussion about the non-native species found in the watershed, and Dr. Christianson states that none appeared to be invasive. He did urge the Town to keep track of invasive species and to use mechanical devices to eradicate multi-floral rose. He mentioned that if we open up the forest too much, it would lend itself to more invasive species. Dr. Christianson indicated that fire can be used as a management tool, but there is no guarantee that fire will produce a “natural” result. He noted that trying to remove some of the invasive species is more of a burden than leaving it in place. He did not have a lot of concern about multi-floral rose, since shade will keep it under control.

There was some discussion about non-tree species which might be harvested from the watershed. Dr. Christianson mentioned Galax leaves, ginseng, moss, as some possibilities. He noted that there were many varieties of moss in the watershed.

He did not feel there was a danger to timbering in the watershed, but if it is done, it should be done judiciously. He said that we should be concerned in leaving gaps in the forest if there is too much timber removal, and those gaps are where invasive species will tend to grow more quickly. Dr. Christianson suggested that a true thinning would allow the reproduction of the tree species naturally, and he noted that one section which was cut 20 years ago has the same diversity as one cut 80 to 90 years ago. Whatever is done, the Town should monitor the watershed area regularly for diseased trees.

In conclusion, Dr. Christianson explained that harvesting trees is not absolutely necessary and the forest will survive and get along fine without timbering. But timbering can be done with no damage to the forest, provide a financial benefit to the Town and provide a healthier, balanced forest in the long run.

The group thanked Dr. Christianson for traveling from Durham to make his presentation. It was agreed that the next two meetings would be on Tuesday, February 4 and Tuesday, March 5, both at 7:00 p.m.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Town Manager advised the Committee that the Conservation Trust of North Carolina was urging the Town to make application to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund for funds to provide a conservation easement on the Rocky Branch Drainage Basin. Members urged the Town Manager to research the Forest Legacy Program and to search for all options regarding the type easement that might be attached to the Rocky Branch Tract.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

A. Lee Galloway
Town Manager