

TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE
WATERSHED ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 8, 2007– 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The Watershed Committee of the Town of Waynesville held a meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 8, 2007 in the Waynesville Town Hall. Members present included Jack Swanner, Bill Skelton, Gordon Small, Pat Maier, Dave Dudek and Karen Kaufman. Also present were Dr. Peter Bates and Rob Lamm, representatives 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.

The Town Manager opened the meeting and thanked those who were in attendance. He called on Dr. Peter Bates who advised that his office had been conducting extensive studies of the watershed over the past two years as they developed the Forestry Management Plan for the Town. Dr. Bates presented a list of the Management Objectives which had been adopted by the Town Board and made a part of the conservation easements on the watershed. He also explained the rationale behind the Board's decision to have a forestry management plan. He made a power point presentation with extensive slides showing a breakdown of the various tree species in the watershed and pointing out the various forest types. This included an approximate acreage for each cover type, the square feet of trees per acre and an estimate of board feet per acre of cover type and grade of timber.

Based upon the work done to date, Dr. Bates feels that there is potential for management activities in 4,593 acres of the watershed, while there is limited potential for management in another 1,646 acres. It is his opinion that on 2,351 acres, there is no potential for any type of forestry management.

There was discussion about the next steps in the process of evaluating the watershed for past damages and for future possibilities. Dave Dudek asked about the possibility of using infrared photography to determine areas of disturbed soils and to show eroded areas. Gordon Small mentioned that if active forestry management were to occur, there is the opportunity to use the funds generated from the sale of timber to improve the roads within the watershed and limit the silt that may be entering streams. Jack Swanner indicated that in some cases, a land owner will specify required improvements in a contract for the sale of timber and the bidder must make those as part of their agreement with the owner.

In very general terms, Dr. Bates estimated that all the standing timber on the Waynesville Watershed may have a value of \$5 to \$6 million dollars. Mr. Swanner noted that in the

case of the Mars Hill watershed, it was only 670 acres and had a value of \$2.9 million. He explained to those in attendance that an owner could bid out the work in various ways, asking for bids on a 100 acre area, for example, based upon removal by ground, by cable and by helicopter. This would allow the owner to see what the value is. This led to a discussion on the economics of the forestry management and whether the Town would or should be restricted to using the funds raised only on watershed property.

Dr. Bates suggested that it might be good for the watershed advisory committee to identify what they feel like the forest should be in 20 years and determine how to get there. Both Jack Swanner and Dave Dudek noted that if there is not management, the wildlife is impacted and diminishes, and it is not as an attractive place as people believe.

Rob Lamm pointed out that some trees have slowed in growth as they are being crowded by other trees and there is not enough growing space. As such, the trees will start dying or become weaker due to the stress of competing for growing space and this makes the trees more vulnerable to disease.

Dr. Bates noted that with the past clear cutting that occurred, many trees are close to the same size and agreed with Rob that the trees are crowding each other, particularly in periods of drought. He explained that one option to consider might be to do crown thinning or selective cutting, opening the forest so existing trees may gain in strength.

There was also a discussion on the possibility of using fire as a forestry management tool. To do so, the fire must be well planned and with the right conditions. This would thin out and open areas that are not now opened.

Don Hendershot was on hand for the presentation, and he has led hikes and bird watching tours of the watershed during 2007. He noted that on the trips he has made, he did not detect any particularly unusual birds in the watershed.

Dr. Bates advised that at a future meeting, the botanist from Duke University would be present to provide information about the plant life in the watershed. Jack Swanner noted that this would be particularly helpful, especially if they found any rare or unusual plants.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

A. Lee Galloway
Town Manager