



Southern Maryland Habitat Forum: Finding Common Ground

SUMMARY NOTES

Monday, December 9, 2019 | 9:30am-3:00pm
Serenity Farm | Benedict, MD 20612

On Monday, December 9, 2019, approximately 40 people met in southern Maryland to discuss the protection, restoration, and conservation of local habitats and natural resources. The following is a high-level summary of the issues, concerns, and topics that were discussed.

We began the day introducing ourselves and the organizations we were representing to each other before breaking into small group discussions.

Small Group Discussions

In tables of 4-8 people, participants engaged in small group discussions and worked together to identify current issues and concerns regarding protection, restoration, and enhancement of southern Maryland habitats. The conversations varied greatly on focus and touched on topics such as land management, policy, outreach and education, and diversity in the movement. Each small group provided a report out of the topics they discussed and the specific issues and concerns that resonated in the group. The information shared in the report outs became the foundation of the afternoon work.

Open Space Discussions

The afternoon work was structured by the high-level categories of issues and concerns that were raised in the morning small group discussions:

- Environmental education & stewardship
- Partnerships and coalition building
- Advocacy and policy
- Land management issues and solutions
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion

In the afternoon, small groups were formed when participants self-selected which topic was of most interest to them. It was requested that each group develop goals and action steps towards addressing the issues and concerns. Participants were allowed to move from group to group as they felt the need to and it was not required that each group get to concrete goals and action steps. The following notes were generated out of each group:

1. Environmental Education & Stewardship

- a. Goals
 - i. Hierarchy of needs
 1. Community gardens
 2. Energy efficiency
 - ii. Emphasis on local food
 1. Ag. education in schools
 2. Requirement of local food

- iii. Adults doing the right thing
 - 1. Master naturalist/gardeners
 - 2. Tax incentives
 - 3. Green realtors

2. Partnerships and Coalition

- a. Goal
 - i. Promote community health partnerships
 - 1. Have every group in attendance identify a nontraditional group (this is not here) that they have worked with
 - 2. Identify facilitators that can bridge diverse groups and help connect common issues/goals
 - 3. Groups from 1 and 2 get together town hall meetings so that groups from 1 can come together to establish goals, projects, and events to work during the next year

3. Advocacy and Policy

- a. Goal
 - 1. Bring truth to power
 - a. Collect data (economic and environmental)
 - b. Advocate measures to protect watersheds
 - c. Identify your champions
 - d. Identify community values - sources of pride
 - i. Preserving character (mas and pops instead of corporate)
 - e. Recommend each county establish environmental advisory council
 - i. Alternate: combination agriculture plus environmental - >rural lands advocacy group

4. Land management Issues and Solutions

- a. Issue 1: Uncertainty about how to prioritize and tackle land management projects such as meadow establishment or invasive species removal at smaller land preservation organizations
 - i. Solution 1: Seek out other organizations that are undertaking similar projects and consult with them. Review their management plans to develop one for your organization if a plan is not already in place.
- b. Issue 2: There are many tracts of land that are initially preserved by government, but are not subsequently being maintained as they should be. This is due in large part to lack of funding and manpower for long term land management.
 - i. b) Solution: Governments and conservation organizations that preserve land but find that they cannot provide adequate resources to maintain it should contract or seek the help of local land managers and trained volunteers that can be the boots on the ground to make sure that preserved land is being cared for. Conservation organizations could raise funds for land management by picking a project and reaching out to involve the local community through capital campaigns.

5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- a. There is a great need to include ALL people in the protection and restoration of natural resources.
- b. To do so, we must be willing to go TO the communities of color rather than asking them to come to us.
- c. Communities of color have a strong heritage in the area that includes a complete understanding of the history, the landscape, and the natural resources. This should be championed.
- d. The movement must focus on a PEOPLE FIRST approach to the work in order to work towards more inclusive and equitable practices.