

## **Minutes of meeting of Natural Area Advisory Committee: 10 December 2002**

Tuesday, 2 to 3:15pm, NATL Pavilion and Natural Area Park. Members present were Mark Brown, Mark Clark, Tina Gurucharri, Susan Jacobson, Linda Jones, Kaoru Kitajima, Doug Levey, Chris Lewis, Alan Long, Marilyn Roberts, Erick Smith, Carol Stiles, and Tom Walker (chair). Others present were Michael Bond (Ethnoecology Society) and Patti Anderson (Florida Museum of Natural History).

### **1. Barbwire fence**

The Committee voted to ask PPD to remove the barbwire fence that is along the south side of Division Trail.

### **2. Live oak in Plot B**

Tom Walker suggested that a live oak about 12 inches DBH be left for shade and diversity in Plot B, the successional plot that is tilled nearly every year. After some discussion the Committee agreed to give the live oak a temporary reprieve until the implications of leaving it are more fully considered.

### **3. Public-area master plan**

In spring of 2000, NAAC prepared a master plan for NATL's public area. With copies of the plan in hand, the Committee was asked whether they still supported, at least in concept, the components of the plan.

Erick Smith suggested that the landscaping north of the NATL fence behind the Phillips Center might be modified from the proposed myrtles and palms to something more varied and more in keeping with upland pine. Tom Walker volunteered to work with Erick to come up with a specific proposal to present to the Committee.

Michael Bond and Patti Anderson suggested that a site for an "ethnoecology" garden be provided somewhere in NATL's public area. The garden would contain plants used by native and early Americans for food, medicine, and commerce. They were asked to prepare a detailed proposal for the Committee to consider by e-mail or at its Spring Semester meeting.

Mark Brown told the Committee that H. T. Odum had donated to the University, for research and education, about 15 acres of pine flatwoods (cut 25 yrs ago) with a 6-acre (uncut) cypress dome in the middle. He asked if information about the dome might be included on NATL's Web site and if the dome property might become part of NATL, as an off-campus teaching lab. Tom Walker said that linkage of information about the property to NATL's web site could be accomplished easily. Making the dome property part of NATL would require a specific proposal to NAAC. Should NAAC approve the concept, the next requirement would probably be to win the approval of the Lakes, Vegetation, and Landscaping Committee, which oversees both NAAC and UF natural areas.

Mark Clark stated that the next expense in implementing the master plan for SEEP would be the installation of a water-control structure between the treatment marsh and the rest of the retention basin. No new plantings in SEEP are planned.

#### **4. NATL trails**

The committee voted that the trail along the east NATL fence north of the kiosk be called "SEEP Trail." This trail connects the pavilion area and Natural Area Park and is the only regularly mowed part of SEEP's eastside meadow land. (The rest is mowed only as often as required to suppress tall plants that might interfere with the view of SEEP from Natural Area Drive.)

Tom Walker proposed extending the East Trail southward to South Trail to provide more direct access to the sinkhole and pond that are in the southeastern extreme of NATL. The Committee approved but voted that the extension be limited to a narrow footpath and not be maintained by regular mowing (as is the case for other named trails). Walker volunteered to establish a route for the foot trail and suggested that a sign will be needed to identify its status and destination

#### **5. Restoration planting priorities**

Erick Smith asked for input as to what plants PPD might provide in speeding the restoration of NATL ecosystems. Tom Walker noted that the Committee had already approved planting wiregrass and longleaf pines in the Upland Pine and "native plants" along the east DPI fence. Kaoru Kitajima suggested that more persimmons would be desirable. Susan Jacobson suggested landscaping the pavilion area with native plants.

All plantings in NATL must be approved in advance by the Committee.

#### **6. Development of Natural Area Park**

The Committee walked to the area north of SEEP that is designated Natural Area Park on UF's Cultural Complex Master Plan. There they discussed what should be done to make the area function as a public entrance to SEEP and NATL and as a place where K-12 groups that visit the Florida Museum of Natural History can eat their lunches.

*Parking controls.* The east side of Natural Area Park is continuous with the shoulder of Natural Area Drive, and cars and busses sometimes park throughout the Park. The Committee rejected using railroad ties or a fence to prevent vehicular access but endorsed using boulders and trees (especially red oaks). Erick Smith will investigate whether PPD might install such a barrier. A large enough space will be left between the barrier and Natural Area Drive to permit busses to pull off the road while loading and unloading.

*Kiosk.* A kiosk is needed to display information about SEEP and NATL, so as to inform Park users about the natural areas they can investigate by walking through the gateway to SEEP. The Committee was told that the Florida Museum of Natural History might provide a kiosk that would accommodate a 4x4 ft. display on each side. The Committee approved the installation of such a kiosk, selected a site, and specified that one side face Natural Area Drive and be easily visible from it.

*Tables.* There is one picnic table (source unknown) already in Natural Area Park. Marilyn Roberts estimated that four more tables are needed for the Park to be attractive to K-12 groups seeking a place to eat their lunches. Based on the cost of tables recently bought for NATL's pavilion, four tables, including one with a handicap station, should cost \$1190. The Committee voted to pay up to half the cost of the four tables, with the

expectation that the Museum will pay for at least two tables. (Should the tables cost significantly more than estimated, another vote will be taken.) Placement of the tables and whether to tie them down was discussed but no votes taken. These issues will be revisited once funds for the purchase of the tables are assured.

*Trash cans.* PPD will be asked to provide one or more trash cans as soon as the placement of the tables is settled.

*Chiller plant.* The Committee expressed concern about the possible expansion of the chiller plant and its negative visual impact on Natural Area Park (and SEEP). Erick Smith volunteered to ask those involved with the expansion to provide shrub-plant screening along the perimeter fence.

*Interpretative materials.* A team from Susan Jacobson's Environmental Interpretation class proposed the installation of signs that would identify and explain trees in Natural Area Park, and they provided sample text for such signs. Another team prepared a simplified NATL pamphlet suitable for distribution at Natural Area Park. Those attending the meeting received copies of these materials.

## **7. Content of NATL kiosk**

Susan Jacobson's Environmental Interpretation class made many proposals for improving the content of the NATL kiosk.

*NATL posters.* Posters that might substitute for the current four posters were displayed at the meeting but, for lack of time, they were not discussed. Because the current posters were recently reprinted to restore their colors for the visit of the Provost and Dean, there is ample time to discuss revisions before the next reprinting.

*SEEP poster.* Two posters for SEEP that the class prepared were displayed at the meeting and turned over to the Wetlands Club for help in planning their future postures. [A new version of the current SEEP poster was installed by Mark Clark and Chris Lewis immediately after the meeting.]

*NATL pamphlet.* Susan's class noted that the map on the back of the NATL pamphlet showed none of NATL's trails, yet travel routes are among the first things a visitor would wish to learn about NATL. A rough copy of a revised map was distributed at the meeting.

*NATL grid map.* Susan's class noted that the bulk of the features shown on the NATL grid map are structures and roads outside of NATL. A grid map annotated to show changes to be incorporated in a new version was distributed at the meeting.