

Minutes of meeting of Natural Area Advisory Committee: 12 November 2003

Wednesday, 1:30 to 2:30pm, Natural Area Park. Members present were Mark Brown, Mark Clark, Deb DiPietro, Don Graetz, Daniel Herrera, Kaoru Kitajima, Doug Levey, Jack Putz, Carol Stiles, and Tom Walker (chair). Patti Anderson (Florida Museum of Natural History) was also present.

1. SW 24th Avenue

Tom Walker described the current situation regarding the proposed extension of SW 24th Avenue through NATL. At the 14 November Focus Group meeting, VP Poppell will need to explain how the County's decision to return to the two-lane plan for SW 24th Avenue west of SW 34th Street affects the Focus Group's deliberations. On 20 November, the Faculty Senate is scheduled to proceed on the SW 24th Avenue extension by voting on an action introduced at the 16 October Senate meeting. Jack Putz proposed, and the Committee agreed, that the action should be modified to read:

"The Faculty Senate asks the UF Administration to withdraw its 20 Feb 2003 and 25 March 2003 endorsements of the donation of right-of-way for an extension of SW 24th Avenue through the Natural Area Teaching Laboratory and Preservation Area 1."

This removes a reference to a *four-lane* extension and makes the action agree with the motion that the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee passed on 8 Sep 2003 "to oppose the 24th Avenue extension through NATL."

2. Plot B live oak

The Committee gave final approval to modify NATL's long-range plan by sparing a 17-inch DBH live oak that is on the south edge of successional plot B.

3. H. T. Odum cypress dome

Mark Brown described a 12-acre cypress dome, surrounded by flatwoods, that was donated to the University of Florida by H. T. Odum to be used for teaching and research. The 15-acre tract is located about *n* miles [Mark: How many?] from the main campus off Hawthorne Road. Mark asked if the Natural Area Advisory Committee would be interested in adding the tract to the natural areas under its purview. In the discussion stimulated by this request, these points were made: (1) UF has a record of selling donated land that has no defined use, (2) the Natural Area Advisory Committee has a limited charge and limited recognition by the Administration, (3) the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee is supposed to oversee the "management and well being of natural areas containing non-domesticated plants and animals" but currently restricts its considerations to on-campus natural areas. It was agreed that Mark should ask for guidance from the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee, that the issue of management of off-campus natural areas needs to be addressed, and that upgrading the status of NAAC should be considered. (After the meeting Tom Walker told Mark that information about the cypress dome could be posted on NATL's web site.)

4. Ethnoecology garden

Daniel Herrera reported that the Ethnoecology Society had no current plans for establishing an ethnoecology garden in NATL.

5. Natural Area Park enhancements

Kiosk. The following items were suggested for the west side of the kiosk: a 4x4 foot poster explaining SEEP, a map of the public area of NATL showing walking trails and approximate walking times; and, possibly, information about signs identifying the trees in Natural Area Park (NAP). It was agreed that “Natural Area Park” in large letters at the top of the east side of the kiosk might, at least for the time being, substitute for the official sign that was recently stolen from its site on Natural Area Drive.

Signs identifying trees. Susan Jacobson’s class in environmental interpretation had proposed signs that would identify and tell something about the seven species of trees in NAP. The signs would provide a learning opportunity for users of the park, which are currently mostly K-12 groups visiting the Florida Museum of Natural History. Various means of implementing this proposal were discussed, with cost, resistance to vandalism, and how to install the signs being of particular concern. No consensus was reached and the Museum representatives (Deb DiPietro and Patti Anderson) were encouraged to investigate the alternatives and propose what should be done.

Access between NAP and the Cultural Complex. Currently the principal route between NAP and the Cultural Complex is unsafe and uninviting--it is a road immediately south of the Complex’s parking garage with parking on both sides. The Cultural Plaza Master Plan provides for enhanced pedestrian access to NAP via a new walkway between the road and the Southwest Chiller Plant. The Southwest Chiller Plant will soon be upgraded to provide cooling for additions to Powell Hall and the Harn Museum that are now under construction. Removing the north fence of the Chiller Plant or moving it southward would provide the needed right-of-way for an inviting and safe route between NAP and the Cultural Complex. The Committee unanimously approved asking the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee to recommend that such a walkway be planned and constructed.

Plants to screen the chiller plant. Erick Smith has indicated that the upgrading of the Southwest Chiller Plant should provide the opportunity to have it screened from NAP. The Committee suggested wax myrtle, red cedar, and cabbage palms as candidate species for the screening.

Plants along the north and west borders of NAP. The Committee agreed that plantings of native species along these borders are needed to discourage vehicles from entering NAP.

Planting additional trees. The Committee approved a proposal to plant specimens of common native trees to add to the seven species that are already represented in NAP. Species suggested as appropriate were mockernut hickory, soap berry, magnolia, and turkey oak. Deb DiPietro and Patti Anderson pointed that K-12 groups using NAP needed an open area to release excess energy by running and that the open area between the chiller plant and the tables was safer and more easily monitored than the open area next to Natural Area Drive. Thus the latter open area is the preferred site for planting additional trees.

6. Signage for NATL trails

The Committee voted to spend no more than \$200 to provide five 6x12-inch trail signs in NATL’s public area. Two of the signs will designate the East Trail; two, the DPI Trail; and one, the Division Trail.