

SPAC Habitat Monitoring and Long-Term Maintenance Subcommittee
Draft Meeting Summary
July 22, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. via Teams

List of Attendees:

John O'Meara, Chair, Detroit/Rouge River AOCs
Tennille Newsome, ARC
Erma Leaphart, Healing Our Waters
Bob Burns, Detroit River AOC
McKenzi Waliczek, Detroit River AOC
Paulette Duhaime, St. Clair River AOC
Lynnea McFadden, St. Clair River AOC
Melanie Foose, EGLE

Introductions

Introductions of attendees on the call were completed. John introduced himself as the new Chair of the SPAC Habitat Subcommittee and his background. He mentioned that Jen T. was on vacation and would not be on the call.

Depository Location

John gave an update on how the SPAC Habitat Subcommittee will have its own website and depository location through the Alliance of Rouge Communities website with EGLE's support. With this we will be able to use as a depository of information and exchange of ideas. Nothing has been developed to date. John is hoping by next meeting he will be able to send a link to the committee to provide feedback on.

The site will be straight forward in structure with a small intro of why the SPAC Habitat site. The two main initial areas will be the SPAC Habitat Committee meeting notes will be posted there for viewing and monitoring/maintenance examples previously discussed will also be posted. The committee members should expect a request to send information to Chris O'Meara that will be uploaded to the site. John also would like the committee to discuss what else they would like to see or showcase on the site. An example would be to showcase habitat projects to get information out there of what is being done under the AOC program with habitat. A link to individual AOCs could be listed as well. Once documents are received and the committee reviews it, the site structure could change.

John asked if there were any questions, there were none.

Erma Leaphart stated it sounds like a great idea and that having a lot of resources in one place would be helpful and looks forward to sharing the information.

Gap Monitoring

John would like the committee to start thinking beyond monitoring and maintenance, as it is what is being focused on, and consider other things, not just for the website but for topical discussions.

GAP funding for monitoring and maintenance needs to be addressed and figuring out a way. Construction projects usually receive two years of maintenance agreements but are dependent on the grant with EPA. There seems to be enough interest in helping to find funds between Year 2 and Year 5 of monitoring and maintenance.

Bob Burns stated they just finished pre-monitoring work on Sugar Island. For some projects that have been around for 3-5 years, you don't get the full value because it takes a minimum of 5 years for them to

establish. Year 5 of post-construction monitoring would be more positive than some almost the day the projects are complete.

John said that was a good point of the difference between scientific/biological of habitat projects and maintenance monitoring and would be one of the things that we should make sure is a distinction

- 1) monitoring and maintenance as it relates to establishment and functionality of a project site;
- 2) monitoring as it relates to biological functionality and usage of a project site.

Paulette stated it was important to get on the radar of existing monitoring programs within state and federal governments and prioritize the AOCs. It benefits everyone to have these monitored on a regular basis. Also, that we should reach out to AOCs who are still planning habitat sites and advise them what works and what doesn't.

Erma stated she designs mostly rain gardens and said that none of them look like what she designed them to look due to mother nature and change and certain plants took over the garden. She would like to journal the process from start to finish.

John O. stated the native vs "garden look" in public outreach needs help being communicated and what native means would be helpful to the everyday person. Lynnea asked if there were any ideas to change the mindset of landowners who think it is weeds to let her know. John said this would be another great example of what to put on the depository location.

Paulette mentioned she would like the subcommittee to address how to establish a good volunteer group as they are constantly educating the public on why they are pulling "weeds".

Paulette is inviting the committee and will send out an invitation for an event happening at the Bluewater Riverwalk in Port Huron, which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary on September 17th, 5:30pm. It is a good example of a project of what was successful and what wasn't. The program was funded and there is a stewardship program to maintain the site and keep out invasives. Lynnea stated the beauty of the project is they had the maintenance and monitoring in place since the succession.

Melanie added links in the chat for "Cues to Care".

- <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/49351/1/MessyEco.pdf>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204619314033>

Erma stated in terms of phragmites and other invasive species that once they have been around for a while, would they still be considered invasives? Erma mentioned maybe finding use of turning phragmites into a cash crop. She stated she knows someone who was using phragmites and making paper. John O. stated phragmites are one of the best water quality filter plants around and said they do have some value.

Lynnea stated that one of their cities is issuing blight ordinances in areas that are unkept and unmowed. One of the AOC projects is under scrutiny, and they are weed-whacking native plants and milkweed. She stated that they need to do some education in that area because the public doesn't understand the type of habitat. She stated in a month some individuals and entities are going to get together and brainstorm looking forward to prevent this from happening in the future. Melanie asked what site it was and Lynnea stated it was Marysville shoreline. Melanie stated it was disappointing to hear and if she spoke with Randy at the City since he was an advocate.

Melanie asked John what the meeting schedule was for this committee. John mentioned they were quarterly and would get with Jen T. to set the next meeting. John mentioned the next PAC meeting should be in October. Melanie stated she would put it on the agenda to get an update from the SPAC.