

Natural Resources Work Group Meeting Notes

DATE	February 13, 2012
PURPOSE	First Interim Meeting: discussion topics included vision, issues, opportunities, review of steering committee and Chair nomination process
FROM	Kristin Peppel
ATTENDEES	Jennifer Bauer, SteveDucket, Bill Eaker, Richard Flood, Judy Francis. Victor Geer, Sue Green, Bill Hazell, Lang Hornthal, Pam Hysong, Anne Keller, Steve Macleod, Michelle Pugliese , Laura Stroud, Valerie True, Jonathon Wallin, Maria Wise, Kristin Peppel, Carrie Runser-Turner

Overview of GroWNC Project provided by Carrie

Defining a Vision for the Region (developed collaboratively by the Natural & Cultural Resources Groups)

Groups of 3 shared key elements of their vision in small groups and then with the broader group. Folks introduced themselves to the group as a part of this exercise. Major themes were teased to organize the ideas put forth and set the framework for future discussions. Both the flip chart notes and the individual sticky notes that people wrote on were used to develop the following list.

Key Elements of the Vision include:

A. The region is nationally recognized for its creative placemaking, unique historical resources, and craft heritage and the creative economy is embraced as cornerstone for the region.

- Craft still a huge economic driver for WNC
- WNC is the national “cradle for craft”
- WNC is the national model for cultural tourism
- WNC is national model for creative placemaking
- Numerous cultural and heritage attractions throughout WNC
- Thriving arts in all WNC (music, literacy, visual, performing)
- Creative economy attracts public and private investment
- Vibrant cultural arts districts throughout the 5 counties
- Regional state history museum
- Nation coming to WNC to access research and artistic practice in craft
- Preservation of the materials, processes, and histories of craft traditions
- Widespread/ broader understanding of and appreciation for historic resources
- Strong preservation culture



- Increased local opportunities and financial incentives (tax abatement, revolving funds, etc.) for restoration and rehabilitation of historic resources

B. The region's farm and forest lands are managed sustainably, providing the basis for a healthy local food system, economic prosperity for landowners, and an intact cultural landscape.

- A healthy local food system where farmers can make a living farming and local food is accessible to all
- Continued loss of farmland – age of current farmers w/o as many young to replace; farm labor issues. Why produce if can't harvest
- Farmland protected and local foods abound
- Farm and forest land preserved at current levels
- Access to local food that's affordable
- Farmers have a living wage and make profits, enabling them to keep farming
- Barns restored and protected
- Strong ag and forest lands, feeding local food and resource markets
- Locally generated energy
- Sustainable forestry operations and forest management
- More forest materials staying in the region
- Sustainable forestry abounds in the region
- Rolling, productive farmland with preserved barns and pastoral landscapes

C. The region's natural areas are fully appreciated and sensitive ecological blocks of land are protected and managed to maintain and enhance the region's biodiversity, water resources, and scenic viewsheds.

- Expansion of protected park and forest lands
- Protected national treasures
- Incredible visibility – can see distant mountain ranges
- A population appreciative of our natural resources and programs in place to ensure wise use
- Blue Ridge Parkway view shed protected
- Resurgence in a connection to the outdoors
- Green spaces
- Appreciation of natural world and commitment to care for it
- Permanent protection of the most sensitive ecological blocks of land, including high elevation habitats, riparian corridors, expansion of existing networks of protected lands, and water resources
- Water quality maintained and improved
- Larger river walks along major rivers
- Detention basins look more like community ponds instead of holes in the ground w/ a fence



- Sparkling clear waters with plenty of plump trout
- Mountain ridge/steep slope preservation

D. Communities across the region are actively working to balance responsible growth and development with natural and cultural resource protection.

- Balance of needs
- We're recognized as a region that "got it right" – growth and prosperity without compromising our natural and cultural resources
- Balanced plan in place for growth and preservation
- Environmentally sensitive development
- Forward thinking and planning with tolerance for nature and economic diversity
- Mitigation efforts underway

E. Smart growth and responsible land use help to foster vibrant communities.

- Diverse, strong local communities and towns
- Mixed uses and live/work areas
- Urban sprawl under control
- Vibrant towns and cities with good job opportunities
- Traffic manageable
- Walkable communities
- Flying cars the norm
- Small towns in WNC are thriving (while populations remain small)
- Stable, steady growth
- Smart growth ideas used – conservation development and clean energy
- Redevelopment of River front property
- Responsible land use with eye toward agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, development
- More people, more industry, tightened resources, less regional independence
- Increased adaptive reuse of existing built infrastructure
- Steep slope development under control
- The greenest building is one that is already built
- Continued growth and development along US25 / I 26 between Weaverville, Asheville, Hendersonville
- Happy citizens
- Bike lanes and transit accessible to all areas
- More multi-family housing

F. The region recognizes the importance of maintaining interconnectivity across the landscape through protecting and managing corridors for biodiversity, recreation, and vegetative buffers.

- A connected landscape that promotes biodiversity



- Greenways preserved and expanded, establishing links between communities which provide alternative transportation paths and protect and educate people about riparian areas
- Connecting pathways and greenways
- Preservation of trophy trees and vegetative buffers between roads and development

G. Communities across the region are resilient, adapting to climate change and taking measures to prepare for natural disasters.

- Climate change adaptation and response in progress and included in planning efforts and policies
- Responsive development
- Disaster resistant communities (i.e., flood)
- Prepared for natural disasters via effective communication systems in place
- No steep slope development without proper protection

H. There is a collaborative spirit of working together across the region.

- Working together across the Region
- Different groups talk to each other and listen

Identifying Natural Resource Issues across the Region

At this point, the natural and cultural resources groups split into 2 groups and had separate discussions of issues and opportunities. Our discussion was framed as a brainstorm recognizing that the compiled lists will be revisited in future meetings. Topics were grouped in an attempt to organize ideas and set the framework for future discussions.

Key issues identified include:

A. Lack of awareness of the value of natural resources

- Need to focus public attention on why resources are important
- Deepening level of awareness and kinds of audiences that are reached
- Resources are not adequately and clearly tied to jobs
- Education needs to be mainstream
- Need to identify costs of infrastructure, types of development, and how tax money is distributed, not just in terms of materials but true cost.

B. Lack of understanding of how individual decisions impact the integrity of natural systems and their associated ecosystem services

- People don't understand that greening your home doesn't need to be expensive
- Lack of education – many myths and misunderstandings



- Disconnect that how people manage or develop their property does affect everyone (preserving scenic views and protecting private property rights; impacts to lands downstream, etc.)
 - Need behavioral changes by general public – examples to show people the benefits
- C. Politics and regulations inadvertently preventing smart growth and natural resources protection**
- Zoning or government regulations prevent smart growth
 - Politics can prevent simply gathering information
 - Planning for 5 different counties each with differing needs (re: growth)
- D. Lack of funding**
- Funding (i.e., CWMTF, DENR, etc.)
- E. Lack of Access to Resources**
- Lack of widespread access to clean water, local foods, etc.
- F. Lack of Leadership at the Local Level**
- Lack of leadership for prioritizing key steps for vision
 - Lack of local decision-making and leadership – when there is a void there, decisions are made elsewhere
 - Need buy-in from those not typically at the table
- G. Negative environmental impacts on the landscape**
- Erosion problems from logging because BMPs not being used
 - Storm water management
 - Old buildings with visual / environmental concerns that are in flood plain or can't be rehabilitated
 - Agrarian land use – not just market driven
 - Laypeople doing the work often don't know or follow regulations – need additional training/certification programs that reach them

Identifying Opportunities for Addressing Regional Issues

Key issues identified include:

- A. Educate the public about the value of natural resources by using non-traditional methods**
- Get kids out in nature early so they develop a relationship with natural world



- Put information into the workplace (make it easily accessible so parents don't have to actively seek it out)
- Encourage parents and teachers to get kids into the woods
- Get everyone into the woods
- Get people not normally at the table and take them outside to show them places and natural resources – do this with elected officials and community leaders
- Develop an outreach campaign / PSA to connect people with local environmental issues
- Tie educational events to other draws (i.e., water release on rivers that draw boaters – add in 30 minute educational piece on the front end)
- More hands-on learning opportunities

B. Work across sectors and geographies to educate, develop relationships and see the bigger picture

- Find cross-regional affinity groups (paddlers, hunters, mountain bikers, etc.) to present and educate about issues in a new way
- Connect/partner with other groups who value natural resources, even if it's for different reasons (i.e., Ducks Unlimited)
- Finding common ground across the region
- Counties identify their unique qualities (i.e., their "thing") and individual strengths to see how they fit together and strengthen the region.
- Need to show how other people are affected (i.e., water quality downstream)

C. Better articulate the interconnectivity between economic development and natural resource protection /management

- Better articulate economic opportunities around natural resource protection (i.e., restoration efforts in Pisgah NF and Grandfather Mountain)

D. Encourage stewardship and involvement in natural resource protection and management

- Inform people of how they can help / participate and the kinds of opportunities that are available for land protection and management assistance

E. Use key issues / needs as a focal point for natural resource education, protection, management efforts

- Focus efforts on current and future drinking water sources (see North Toe River Project)

F. Incentives and policy are both critical tools to be used in land and water conservation efforts

- Collect and distribute best practices, case studies, and existing models
- Increased incentives – have to have arguments to sway people with financial benefit
- Policy/regulations has a place in protecting and managing our environmental resources
- Cost-share programs



- Economic downturn gives an opportunity for discussion of regulations

G. Use existing data and modeling efforts to identify priority areas and areas of concern

- Use available landslide hazard mapping or fund additional mapping to identify areas where landslides may occur and areas where people need to be especially careful when they develop that land to reduce the chances of increased sedimentation into the areas waterways, and reduce the likelihood of the slope failing.
- Good time to purchase lands in important connecting corridors across the region (using corridors model in LLC project)

Discussion about Steering Committee Representation and Chairs for the Working Group

Group briefly reviewed the primary tasks associated with the Working Group Chair and Steering Committee Representative for each group.

- Rob Bell volunteered to be the Chair of the Cultural Resources Group
- Steve Macleod is considering the Chair position for the Natural Resources Group
- Lang Hornthal is considering putting his name in the hat for the Steering Committee representative for the Natural Resources Work Group
- Group is reviewing the responsibilities associated with the Project Chair and Steering Committee Representative roles and we will revisit at the next meeting.

Meeting Dates:

March Project Team Meetings:

- Cultural Resources – March 14 from 3-5pm at LOS
- Natural Resources – March 13 from 1-3pm at LOS

Interim Meetings during the week of Feb. 27 for both groups will be set using a doodle poll via email.