District of Columbia Urban Forestry Advisory Council Meeting Agenda

DATE: Monday, December 2, 2024
TIME: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
LOCATION: Web-Ex

Meeting Chair - DDOT	Earl Eutsler	Earl.eutsler@dc.gov	202.673.6813
Meeting Chair - DOEE	Steve Saari	Steve.saari@dc.gov	202.535.2961
Meeting Scribe	Erica Carlsson	Erica.carlsson@dc.gov	202.934.3307
Meeting Title	**UFAC Fall Meeting**		

Council Members:

Steve Saari, DOEE	Patrick Campbell, NPS	Brenda Richardson, comm. rep.
Earl Eutsler, DDOT	Allison Clausen, comm. rep.	Shoshana Sommer, comm. rep
Maureen Alonso, GSA	Nathan McElroy, Pepco	Vacant, comm. rep
Kristen Audette, DGS	Peter Norden, DPR	Vacant, DC Water

Invited Guests:

Annie Acostia, comm.	Kelly Collins Choi, Casey Trees	Evan Johnson, GSA	Brent Sisco, DPR
Michael Alonzo, American U	Arielle Conti, DOEE	Nick Kushner, DPR	Deborah Shapley, RMA
Matthew Baker, UMBC	Robert Corletta, DDOT	Craig Larcenaire, USFS	Rob Shaut, Casey Trees
Spenser Balog, Casey Trees	Liz Crafford, comm.	Joseph Luebke, GSA	Nancy Sonti, USFS
John Boland, Casey Trees	Merrit Drucker, Ward 8 Woods	Julie Mawhorter, USFS	Stella Tarnay, community
Jeanne Braha, RCC	Stephanie Free, NCPC	Damien Ossi, DOEE	Catherine Stratton Treadway, comm.
Mark Buscaino, Casey Trees	Alexander Grieve, DDOT	Rasma Plato, GSA	Matt Weber, DOEE
Delores Bushong, comm.	Stephen Gyor, OP	Ashlyn Pouvaranukoah, comm.	Jim Woodworth, DOEE
Matt Chambers, comm.	Bay Hanson, USFS	Phillip Rodbell, USFS	
Dennis Chestnut, comm.	Rob Halligan, Restore Mass Ave	Darryl Ross, comm.	
Sally Claggett, USFS	Nathan Harrington, Ward8Woods	Mary Pat Rowan, comm.	

SCHEDULE:

TIME	Duration	Agenda Item
1:00-1:05	5 min	Welcome, Introductions, & Minutes - Earl Eutsler, DDOT UFD & Erica Carlsson, DOEE • **Introductions**: o Robert Corletta, representing DDOT's Urban Forestry Division (since Earl couldn't attend), introduced himself. • **Approval of Meeting Minutes**: o Minutes from the last meeting were approved after being moved by Brenda and seconded by Steve.
1:05-1:15	10 min	Forest Health and Urban Wood Reuse - Alex Grieve, DDOT UFD • **Spotted Lantern Fly Update**: o Reports of spotted lantern fly increased in the Fall but have decreased with colder weather. o Over 100 Tree of Heaven trees (the primary host) were removed with a Forest Service grant from areas such as public lands, rec centers, and schools. o Plans to work with Damien from DOEE to host public events to remove egg masses in winter.

		○ Ongoing collaboration with the Forest Service to plan for the summer field season, focusing on pest detection and management. ○ Other concerns include early detection of pests like beach leaf disease, which may be more noticeable next summer. • **Oak Decline Research**: ○ UDC graduate student, sponsored with a Forest Service grant, is studying oak decline and will present findings from field research conducted over the summer in spring. • **Questions/Discussions**: ○ **Questions**: 1. Brenda expressed interest in participating in activities for ward eight, especially regarding spotted lantern fly. ▪ Will break DC into all 8 wards for better data collection and pest management. ▪ Plans to include Ward 8 in the pest management field season. 2. Are there plans to plant more trees in Oxon Run Park? ▪ Deferred to the team supervisor (Duff McCulley) but expressed willingness to discuss further offline. 3. Are you noticing any sort of decline in the population of lantern fly now that it's in our areas? There have been inquiries about possible declines in lantern fly populations due to predation or disease. ▪ DDOT noted that there hasn't been enough data to confirm this in DC, as no full field season was conducted this summer. However, trends may show declines based on reports and literature. 4. Where are spotted lantern fly sightings being recorded? ▪ There is a website for reporting invasive pest sightings, and sightings can also be reported on iNaturalist.
1:15-1:20	5 min	Legislative Update - Kelly Collins Choi, Casey Trees • **Tree Preservation Enhancement Amendment Act** and **Office of Natural Area Conservation Establishment Act** are two pieces of legislation still pending. Neither has completed final markup and will be reintroduced in the upcoming council periods starting in January. • **Performance Hearings** are expected to occur before the next meeting. These hearings are typically scheduled to start mid-January, though the exact schedule has not yet been released. • **Piney Branch CSO Environmental Assessment**: ○ Comments for the National Park Service were initially due by 6 December but have been extended to 3 January.
1:20-1:30	10 min	Advancing Equity - Key initiatives at DOEE - Neha Bhatt, DOEE **DOEE Overview:** • DOEE (Department of Energy and Environment) employs 425–450 staff, with significant diversity. • 30% of staff are first or second-generation immigrants, and over 30 languages are spoken. • Staff diversity includes a balance of young, mid-career, and senior employees. **Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives:** • Community blocks organized for staff to connect and share knowledge across programs (e.g., solar staff working with rain garden staff). • Internal programs like a breast cancer walk to honor survivors and raise awareness. **Challenges & Equity in Environmental Issues:** • Disadvantaged communities face higher pollution levels, greater energy/food insecurity, and greater impacts from climate change. • Children in predominantly Black communities experience 20–25 times more asthma-related ER visits. • Low-income areas (Wards 7 and 8) face high energy costs relative to income. • Organizations led by people of color have more difficulty securing contracts. **DOEE's Efforts Toward Equity:** 1. **Equity Committee**: Formed to address equity issues within the agency. 2. **Mandatory 8-hour Equity Training**: For new staff - covering environmental injustice history and its relevance.

3. **Equity Framework**: Defines environmental justice, equity, and related concepts.
4. **Racial Equity Impact Assessments**: Ongoing evaluation of programs to identify barriers to equitable delivery.
5. **Racial Equity Action Plan**: Launched with 18 action items to address embedded inequities within operations.

Racial Equity Action Plan (Sample Actions):

- **Public Facing Environmental Justice Page**: Will provide data, information, and connect the public to relevant programs.
- **Increase Access to Community Grants**: Review criteria, panel composition, and provide clearer grant info.
- **Annual Racial Equity Impact Assessments**: Conducted on programs and internal practices.
- **Wider Job Advertisements**: Aim to increase diverse applicant pools.
- **Centralized Equity Data**: To be collected across all programs.
- **Equity Trainings for Grantees/Contractors**: Free training opportunities to apply equity principles.

Racial Equity Impact Assessments (Program Focus):

- **Rain Garden Stewardship**: Focus on community engagement.
- **Illicit Discharge Complaint Portal**: Designing a more user-friendly system.
- **Invasive Species Management**: Enhancing equitable operation in site selection and contracting.
- **Stormwater Retention Credit Program**: Targeting increased business applicants from disadvantaged communities.
- **Watershed Infrastructure Funding**: Prioritizing equity in project selections.
- **Internal Performance Reviews**: Integrating equity into the performance review process.

Outreach and Community Engagement:

- **Neighborhood Outreach**: Staff visited Wards 5, 7, and 8 to distribute information to lower-income households.
- **Language Access**: Materials translated into Spanish and other languages.
- **Community Programs**: Includes the Anacostia River Explorers program and Kingman Island Friends and Family Day.
- **Public Events**: The Electric Vehicle Grand Prix to engage the public in innovative green solutions.

Conclusion:

- DOEE is deeply focused on advancing equity, internally and externally, with many programs and assessments in place to address barriers to environmental justice.
- **Questions/Discussions**: Group discussed challenges related to environmental equity, grant accessibility, air quality, and the tangible impacts of programs in certain communities, especially in Ward 5, 7, and 8. Here's a brief breakdown of what was discussed and the ideas shared:
    1. **Frustrations with translating policy to action**: Brenda Lee Richardson shared that, while agencies like DOEE have great plans and intentions, they often don't lead to visible changes in communities. She mentioned that the language used in grant applications is complex, making it difficult for smaller, community-based nonprofits to apply. There's a disconnect between the policy plans and real community impact, especially regarding equity initiatives.
    2. **Challenges of the REI (Racial Equity Initiative)**: Neha Bhatt, from DOEE, acknowledged the difficulty in showing tangible results from REIs and plans. While programs are being evaluated to identify barriers, they are still working on making these evaluations more impactful. She asked for feedback on what kinds of tangible changes community members would like to see.
    3. **Health concerns, especially related to air quality**: Brenda also mentioned concerns about air quality, suggesting the introduction of air quality monitors in public housing developments. She expressed frustration over the rising health issues east of the river and called for concrete steps to reduce pollution and improve health outcomes.
    4. **Outreach challenges**: Shoshana Sommer from Ward 5 echoed the frustrations, sharing her experience with trying to convince residents to engage with programs and apply for grants. She emphasized the need for more support in outreach efforts, including hand-holding and guidance for community members who are unfamiliar with these programs. She also brought up the need for more actionable progress on air quality issues, such as the asphalt plant situation in her neighborhood.
    5. **Actionable feedback**: Steve Saari from DOEE responded positively to the feedback,

		indicating that the agency is aware of the barriers in grant-making and outreach and that they're working on solutions. He also mentioned their work with schools, particularly with environmental education programs for students, as one way to reach the community and raise awareness about environmental issues.
1:30-2:00	30 min	Forest Restoration Updates - Langdon Park, Linnean Park, Fort Totten, Kingman & Heritage Islands, and DOEE Invasives work - Multiple Presenters **Landon Park Update (Dolores Bushong):** o **Method:** Using **Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR)** as an alternative to planting trees, especially where there is a good seed bank. o Over **2000 native trees** have been planted, with some growing over **6 feet tall** in 2.5 years. o **Research Project:** Allison Clauson conducted research as part of her master's degree, looking at how to prepare the ground for ANR. o **Results:** ▪ **18 native species** of plants have emerged and are being cared for. ▪ Focus on removing **invasive species**, particularly **vines**, without using chemicals. o **Data Collection:** Tracking hours spent clearing plots and monitoring tree growth. o **Future Plans:** ▪ A **detailed presentation** will occur in the spring UFAC meeting. ▪ **Site visits** are encouraged, and Dolores, Allison, or Mary Pat can guide visitors. **Rock Creek Conservancy Update (Lindsey Cathcart):** o **Funding:** Using **Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)** funds and other sources like DOEE to restore **90 acres of forest** in Rock Creek Park. o **Project Goals:** ▪ Increase **biodiversity**. ▪ Improve **habitat** for species of conservation concern. ▪ Enhance **equity of access** to ecosystem services. o **Fort Totten Park Focus:** ▪ Addressing **hazardous dead chestnut oak trees** that are unsafe for park visitors. ▪ Aim to **formalize official trails** once hazardous trees are removed. ▪ This work will be done alongside **invasive plant management** and **planting**. o **Recent Work:** ▪ Removed **38 hazard trees** in September 2024. ▪ Working on funding for **60 additional trees**. ▪ Cautiously optimistic about receiving **IRA funds** to cover the removal costs. o **Partnership:** Collaboration with the **National Park Service** to create **canopy gaps** that are essential for reforestation. o **Future Plans:** ▪ Finalizing contracts and plans for next spring to begin **invasive plant management** and **planting**. o **Funding Needs:** Still seeking other funding sources to support tree removal and ongoing work. o **Collaboration:** Rock Creek Conservancy and the Park Service are working together on this significant project. o Acknowledgment of the significant efforts and the importance of addressing invasive species and canopy gaps in reforestation efforts. **Kingman and Heritage Island Restoration (Lee Cain and Damien Ossi):** o Vendor has been actively working on Kingman Island for the past year, focusing on removing invasive plants. o Significant progress in plant removal has allowed for better visibility of water and preparation for planting. o **Planting Milestones:** ▪ 2,600 containerized trees planted across the island two weeks ago.

        - An additional 9,500 bare-root seedlings and 20,000–30,000 shrubs and perennials will be planted by March.
    - Plants are selected based on soil and geological conditions to ensure proper growth (e.g., areas with high water flow are planted with irises).
    - **Soil Composition:**
        - Soil samples revealed high calcium content, likely due to dredged soils from Montgomery County, which has influenced plant selection.
        - Plant communities are chosen to thrive in these specific soil conditions.
    - **Future Plans:**
        - Project aims to restore Kingman Island and create a model for similar areas along the river and city parks.
        - Monitoring plant success through data collection on plant diversity and spring/summer surveys.
        - Bird data and other ecological indicators will be used to assess long-term project success.
    - **Conservation Efforts:**
        - Focus on protecting and expanding the population of Virginia mallots, a rare plant species discovered on Kingman Island. The island is one of the last known habitats for this species within the beltway.
    - **Future Design Plans:**
        - Plans to hire a designer for trails and amenities like pavilions, ensuring a "light footprint" to minimize environmental impact while respecting the island's value.
    - **Discussion Points:**
        - Acknowledgement of the invasive plant issue in Oxon Run Park and the desire to replicate Kingman's successful restoration efforts elsewhere.
        - Continued management of invasive plants will be necessary for long-term maintenance of the island's ecosystem.
    - **Closing Remarks:**
        - Positive feedback on progress and eagerness to see results.
        - Emphasis on the ongoing, adaptive process of restoration, with a focus on sustainability and community involvement.

Linnean Forest Restoration Project (Erica Carlsson):

- Linnean Forest Restoration site is located behind the Kuwaiti Embassy residence in Forest Hills, northwest DC.
- The project covers just under an acre of land, previously turfed and mowed, which is now being restored for natural reforestation.
- **Restoration work:**
    - 2021: Casey Trees planted 10 trees (silver maple, toilet poplar, white oak, and swamped Spanish oak) on the land.
    - 2022: DOEE put out "No Mow" signs, partnered with LAYC to plant new trees and shrubs, and began reforestation efforts while stopping mowing.
    - 2023: New native saplings volunteered, including tulip poplar, Eastern red bud, white ash, American beach, box elder, persimmon, American holly, and more.
- **Invasive Species:**
    - Invasive species that had been controlled by mowing before were now beginning to take over, including:
    - Fountain grass, Japanese knotweed, English ivy, mile-a-minute, and more.
    - The area became overrun with invasive plants once mowing stopped.
- **Invasive Species Management:**
    - A partnership was formed with Rock Creek Conservancy and DOEE's Fisheries and Wildlife Division to manage invasive species on the site.
    - Three chemical treatments were conducted on June 27, July 31, and September 10, 2024.
    - Approximately 60% of the understory was treated, focusing on fountain grass, Japanese knotweed, and other invasives.
    - Chemicals were provided by DOEE, with two applicators working each visit, averaging 3 hours per visit.
- **Volunteer Involvement:**
    - Friends of Linnean Park volunteers helped remove invasive plants, including bagging fountain grass heads, and continue to assist with

		invasive plant removal in late summer and fall. ○ **Restoration Progress:** ▪ Before-and-after images demonstrated the effectiveness of the invasive species treatment, showing significant changes in the landscape. ▪ John Burwell planted additional trees closer to the fence and property line to enhance forest cover and further naturalize the area. ▪ The project serves as a pilot to demonstrate effective forest management using chemical applications on smaller land areas. **DOEE Invasive Species Management & Future Plans (Damien Ossi):** ○ **Introduction by Damien:** ▪ Damien, a wildlife biologist with the Fisheries and Wildlife Division at DOEE, discussed the upcoming invasive species management efforts and the funding received for these initiatives. ▪ The funding comes from the ONAC legislation proposed. The funding allows DOEE to address invasive plant management on district properties. ○ **Plans for 2025 and Future Years:** ▪ **Funding Utilization:** The funding will be used in conjunction with existing contracts for rapid deployment of invasive species management. ▪ **Priority Sites:** Some key locations for invasive plant management in 2025 include: 1. Pope Branch Park, Suitland Parkway, Linnean Park, Alger Park, Hillcrest Rec Center, and more, especially east of the river. ▪ **Separate Funding for Wats Branch:** Wats Branch will be managed separately, with funds allocated for stream restoration and potential tree planting. ○ **Full-Time Position:** ▪ A new full-time equivalent (FTE) position will be created to help Damien manage the invasive species efforts. This position will be advertised soon, focusing on inventory, mapping, and prioritizing sites. The individual will also help develop a volunteer program similar to Montgomery County and Rock Creek Park's "Weed Warrior" program, where volunteers are trained to manage invasives using mechanical methods. ○ **Training and Certification Programs:** ▪ **Professional Training:** DOEE plans to train local community organizations in invasive species management. 1. A grant was secured through the Chesapeake Wild program for training conservation organizations in professional invasive plant management. 2. Organizations involved will have the opportunity to get certified as pesticide applicators or integrated pest management professionals. 3. Key organizations include the National Capital Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, Friends of Anacostia Park, Living Classrooms DC, and others. ▪ **Goal for Job Creation:** The training program aims to create jobs in invasive species management through partnerships with local organizations. The long-term goal is to fund these organizations through grants for work on forest patches across the district. ○ **Support for Forest Conservation:** ▪ Erica expressed her excitement about the project, emphasizing the importance of removing invasives to keep existing forests healthy and to allow space for the regeneration of native trees, which is crucial for achieving DC's larger canopy goals of 40% by 2032 and beyond. ▪ Erica noted that removing invasives is essential for maintaining the health of current forest stands and providing room for future tree growth.
2:00-2:20	20 min	Rock Creek Songbirds Project - Steve Dryden **Introduction:** • Steve Dryden introduced himself and gave thanks to Steve (the founder) for starting the

Rock Creek Conservancy.
- Dryden became familiar with Rock Creek through his involvement with the conservancy.

Background of the Rock Creek Songbirds Project:
- Inspired by the deteriorating state of Piney Branch (a neighborhood near Rock Creek), Dryden started the Rock Creek Songbirds project in 2013.
- The area was affected by invasive plants, deer browsing, trash, and dilapidated facilities, having been used as a dump in the past.
- The area was incorporated into Rock Creek Park in the 1930s, but it received little attention since.
- The goal of the project was habitat restoration and community outreach.

Partnerships and Support:
- The project was initially supported by the Endangered Species Coalition and National Audubon Society's TogetherGreen program.
- The initiative was a partnership with various organizations, including DOEE (Department of Energy and Environment) and Casey Trees.

Habitat Restoration and Community Involvement:
- Focus on restoring 67 acres of parkland and engaging the diverse local community, particularly the Latino community.
- Community engagement was done through planting events, environmental education, and water quality testing.
- Sacred Heart School in Mount Pleasant was a key partner in engaging students.

Wetland Restoration:
- Restoration of a wetland area with springs behind a picnic pavilion.
- A fence was erected to protect the wetland from trash while encouraging its natural development.
- Many animals, including birds like ospreys and herons, have benefitted from the wetland restoration.

Environmental Projects:
- Removal of invasive species like bamboo with the help of the Latin American Youth Center River Corps.
- Tree planting and restoration efforts in the area, with around 700 trees planted to date and ongoing restoration efforts.

Educational Outreach:
- Received a DC Humanities grant for a project aimed at bridging communication between the environmental community and the Latino community.
- A video was created featuring stories from Latino individuals about their experiences with birds and migration.
- The video was shown in various schools, churches, and community centers.

Rock Creek Songbirds Book:
- Dryden, with his journalistic background, wrote a book about the project that includes photos, stories, and an inventory of the park's vegetation.
- The book features details on plant species found in the park, which had been affected by invasive species but showed signs of regeneration.
- The project emphasizes the importance of restoring flora to its natural state.

Environmental Concerns:
- The project faced concerns about a new sewage system construction (Branch Tunnel) that could impact restored areas, including mature trees planted by the project.
- Dryden and others are actively sending comments and advocating for careful planning to avoid damage to the restored habitats.

Conclusion:
- Dryden offered a free copy of the Rock Creek Songbirds book to interested participants and invited them to watch the video about the project on the DC Bird Alliance website.

2:20-2:45	25 min	Outreach to Increase Tree Planting and Maintenance - Steve Raabe, Opinion Works with the Chesapeake Bay Program Forestry Workgroup **Introduction:** • Steve Raabe from OpinionWorks shared findings from a project focused on public outreach for tree planting, especially in urban and rural settings where individuals and homeowners are involved in tree planting efforts. • Raabe highlighted the importance of outreach to underserved communities and the need to improve communication strategies in tree planting initiatives. **Project Overview:** 1. **Phase 1: Survey of Forestry Professionals** o Surveyed 289 forestry professionals in the Bay Watershed, resulting in a database of 119 tree planting projects. 2. **Phase 2: Formative Work with Tree Planting Managers** o Engaged successful tree planting campaign managers to assess best practices and gaps in outreach efforts. 3. **Phase 3: Practitioner Focus Groups** o Focused on gathering feedback on effective outreach tools and methods. **Key Findings & Ingredients for Success:** 1. **Engaging New Audiences:** o Practitioners stressed the importance of reaching out to new, diverse communities. This requires intentional effort and strategies to engage groups that typically don't actively seek out tree planting programs. 2. **Community Relationship Building:** o Successful tree planting programs are those that involve the community in the process, making them not just recipients but co-creators of the efforts. 3. **Effective Leadership:** o Programs with "spark plug" leaders—visionaries who are relational, communicative, and entrepreneurial—tend to succeed. These leaders also act as mentors to other staff. 4. **Neighbor-to-Neighbor Engagement:** o Homeowners who have received trees should be encouraged to advocate for trees within their neighborhood, sharing care tips and fostering a culture of sustainability. 5. **Sustained Outreach Efforts:** o One-time tree-planting events are less effective. Ongoing communication and reinforcement are essential, including follow-up efforts to engage communities. **Challenges and Gaps Identified:** 1. **Limited Focus on Motivations and Barriers:** o There's insufficient research on why homeowners may be hesitant to plant trees and what factors motivate them to take action. o The importance of conducting focused listening sessions to understand residents' motivations is highlighted. 2. **Lack of Technical Training for Public Outreach:** o There is a need for better training in public outreach techniques, which is often overlooked in tree-planting programs. 3. **Limited Sharing of Effective Outreach Tools:** o Successful outreach efforts in some areas (e.g., DC) are not being replicated across other communities. 4. **Absence of Evaluation Mechanisms:** o Programs are often lacking formal evaluation to assess the effectiveness of their outreach efforts and what works best in engaging communities. **Recommendations:** 1. **Bay Program Support:** o Focus on public engagement strategies and the creation of a web portal with messaging tools, audience research, and outreach resources. o Encourage more collaboration and networking across different regions.

		2. **Increase Focus on Community Outreach:** o Funders and organizations need to commit resources to train staff in outreach techniques and provide tools to help connect with new audiences.
		Discussion: • Rob Shaut shared successful neighbor-to-neighbor efforts using platforms like Nextdoor and Facebook to increase community engagement. • Steve Raabe emphasized the importance of listening to community members before planting trees and shared his thoughts on creating lasting relationships with communities. • Further discussions were held on understanding motivations and barriers for homeowners regarding tree planting, with a proposal to conduct more focused research.
		Action Items: • Continue exploring ways to incentivize tree planting in urban communities and better understand barriers to participation. • Coordinate efforts with stakeholders like Casey Trees and RiverSmart Homes to collect and share feedback from homeowners.
2:45-3:00	15 min	Announcements & Closing Remarks In response to concern about the impact of summer drought conditions on DC's tree canopy, Robert Corletta shared several initiatives being taken to address the challenge. These include: 1. **Contractor Watering**: Contractors are required to water trees regularly, though, in extreme conditions like the summer drought, additional support is often needed. 2. **Tree Watering App**: This app helps residents track their trees' watering schedules and report if they notice gaps in care. It's a tool that encourages community participation to supplement official watering efforts. 3. **Tree Planting Flyers**: When new trees are planted, a flyer with guidance on how to care for them (including watering and mulching tips) is given to residents to help ensure the trees' survival. 4. **Gator Bags**: These are used to slowly water newly planted trees, helping to counteract the compaction of soil and mulch that can prevent proper absorption of water during drought conditions. The goal is to work collaboratively with residents to improve the survival rate of trees, particularly with more frequent droughts expected in the future.