



# FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



## M E M O R A N D U M

**TO:** Chairman and Members  
Park Authority Board

**VIA:** Jai Cole, Executive Director

**FROM:** Laura Grape, Division Director, Resource Management

**DATE:** October 20, 2023

### *Agenda*

**Resource Management Committee  
(Committee of the Whole)  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 – 5:30 pm  
Boardroom, Herrity Building  
Chairman: Maggie Godbold  
Vice Chair: Abena Aidoo Hewton**

1. Natural Resource Management Plan – FY 2023 Accomplishments and FY 2024 Implementation Plan (with presentation) – Information\*

\*Enclosures



If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563. TTY (703) 803-3354

Board Agenda Item  
October 25, 2023

**INFORMATION** (with presentation)

Natural Resource Management Plan – FY 2023 Accomplishments and FY 2024 Implementation Plan

On January 29, 2014, the Park Authority Board adopted the agency-wide Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP). The plan coordinates agency-wide efforts to achieve the resource preservation mission of the Fairfax County Park Authority and implement Policy 201 – Natural Resources. Staff implemented the ninth full year of the NRMP. This presentation will highlight the NRMP, the FY 2024 implementation plan and FY 2023 accomplishments. In FY 2023 work was accomplished on all four management themes.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

Attachment 1: Natural Resource Management Plan - FY 2023 Accomplishments FY 2024 Implementation Plan

STAFF:

Jai Cole, Executive Director  
Sara Baldwin, Deputy Director/COO  
Aimee Vosper, Deputy Director/CBO  
Brendon Hanafin, Director, Planning and Development Division  
Kim Eckert, Director, Park Operations Division  
Cindy Walsh, Director, Park Services Division  
Laura Grape, Director, Resource Management Division  
John Burke, Branch Manager, Natural Resource Management Branch

**Natural Resource Management Plan  
FY 2023 Accomplishments  
FY 2024 Implementation Plan**

*The Natural Resources Branch (NRB) continued to support the Fairfax County Park Authority Natural Resources Management Plan in FY 2023 by pursuing advancements in the areas of ecological monitoring and inventory, restoration, and community engagement. Through their efforts, NRB's staff ensured that the Fairfax County Park Authority remains an excellent steward of the valuable natural resources on its properties.*

**NRMP Program**

**FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Continued to populate the geodatabase model.
- Continued to implement ten ecological restoration projects at eight parks.
- Grants:
  - Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) = \$21,775 for invasive plant management at Lake Accotink Park
  - Mastenbrook for Lewinsville Park = \$1,912
  - NEEF for Huntsman Park = \$2,624.30
- EIP Funding:
  - IMA Program: Awarded
- Continued to Implement spotted lantern fly host tree control (tree-of-heaven) through the Forest Pest Branch's Pest Funding at Laurel Hill Park and Blake Lane Park.
- Re-established FY24 funding for tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) control through the Forest Pest Branch's Pest Funding
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**FY 2024 Plans**

- Continue to populate the geodatabase model.
- Continue to implement the ecological restoration projects at approved parks.
- Continue field data collection and development of the Central Area Natural Resource Management Plan.
- Begin an agency-wide list of potential mitigation sites.
- Continue implementation of spotted lantern fly and tree-of-heaven control.
- Continue rare animal survey with Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute partners.

**Inventory and Planning**

**FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Assessed 19 parks and 155 survey plots for deer browse impacts.
- Classified and mapped 1410 acres of natural vegetation communities at 16 parks.
  - 190 acres at 9 parks were determined to be rare natural communities (S-rank of S3 or lower).
- Continued systematic surveying for selected rare, threatened, and endangered species.
  - 10 rare plant occurrences were documented
  - 3 species of rare bats documented

- The Virginia Natural Heritage Program continued rare animal surveys throughout parks in the Northern Region of Fairfax County as part of the NRMP. Results report received.
- Continued field confirmation of probable vernal pool GIS data layer

### **FY 2023 Plans**

- Continue resurvey of park lands using the Non-Native Assessment Protocol method to monitor trends and inform agency decision making dataset of non-native invasive vegetation species. Park lands will be resurveyed approximately every ten years to ensure that treatments are effective, and goals and objectives are achieved.
- Continue to assess parks for white-tailed deer browse impacts. Parks will be revisited every four years to ensure that treatments are effective, and goals and objectives are achieved.
- White-tail deer population density surveys will continue to be implemented to inform adaptive management.
- Continue to inventory, classify, and map natural vegetation communities in Northern Fairfax County.
- Continue to build capacity for rare, threatened, and endangered species survey and monitoring.
- Continue bat surveys with mist netting and bat acoustic recorders.

### **Protecting Natural Capital**

#### **FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Reviewed 63 development plans to avoid adverse impacts to natural resources.
- Served on 2 park project teams to ensure that the agency-wide NRMP is being implemented on Park Authority projects.
- Provided technical assistance for 1 encroachments on park lands.
- Provided technical assistance for 757 easement actions on park lands.
- Provided technical assistance for 17 Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) projects on park lands.
- Conducted site assessments for 4 potential land acquisitions.
- Reviewed 54 permit requests for restricted activities in natural areas.

### **FY 2024 Plans**

- Continue to review development plans for adverse impacts to park lands, as needed.
- Continue to serve on park project teams for FY 2023.
- Continue to provide technical assistance for encroachments, easement actions, trail projects, and DPWES projects on an as needed basis.
- Continue to provide land acquisition site assessments on an as needed basis.
- Continue to review permits for restricted natural area activities on an as needed basis.
- Continue to advocate for agency-wide list and GIS data layer for potential mitigation sites.

### **Managing Wild Populations and Restoring Ecosystems**

#### **FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Treated 1126 acres for invasive vegetation.

- Completed 56 invasive species treatment plans on 157 acres at 23 parks.
- The Deer Management Program removed 775 white-tailed deer from 114 parks.
- Oiled over 700 eggs and approximately 200 Canada goose nests at parks and golf courses using best management practices.
- Implemented 65 acres of prescribed fire in nine burn events at four parks.
- Started implementation of zero ecosystem restorations under the Helping Our Land Heal (HOLH) program: Continued implementation at 8 parks: Frying Pan Farm Park Forest Restoration, Laurel Hill Park Forest Restoration, Laurel Hill Park spotted lantern fly host tree control, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park Forest Restoration, Elklick Preserve Forest Restoration, Elklick Preserve Grasslands restoration, Green Spring Gardens Magnolia Bog Restoration, Lake Fairfax Meadow Restoration, Old Colchester Park and Preserve natural resource management plan implementation, Old Colchester Park and Preserve Wetland Restoration, Poplar Ford EIP FY21 meadow restoration.

### **FY 2024 Plans**

- Continue to treat non-native invasive vegetation.
- Continue to remove white-tailed deer from parks by partnering with the FCPD.
- Continue to treat Canada goose nests to maintain acceptable populations.
- Continue to implement prescribed fire at existing sites on a routine basis and add additional sites as appropriate.
- Continue to implement HOLH Program projects at the following parks: Old Colchester Park and Preserve, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Frying Pan Farm Park, Green Spring Gardens, Lake Fairfax Park, Laurel Hill Park, Huntley Meadows Park, Mason District Park, Oak Marr, and Cub Run Stream Valley
- Begin a strong collaborative effort with the Landscape Legacy and Sustainability Program.
- Utilize recommendations from the Northern Area Natural Resource Management Plan to inform future HOLH projects, rare species monitoring, habitat management, and prescribed burn activities.

### **Fostering Stewardship and Expanding Natural Capital**

#### **FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Addressed an estimated 75 citizen inquiries regarding natural resources on parklands.
- 5,703 volunteers donated 22,052 hours removing non-native invasive vegetation at 76 sites. The total volunteer hours since the Invasive Management (IMA) program inception is 133,192 hours.
- 6 new Invasive Management Area Volunteer Site Leaders joined the IMA Program for a total of 70 IMA Volunteer Site Leaders.
- 20 new Tree Rescuers, contributing to total of 520 hours.
- IMA Volunteers planted 612 trees, 202 shrubs and 1,250 herbaceous plants.
- 521 FCPD volunteers donated 32,832 hours removing white-tailed deer at 116 parks. The total volunteer hours since the FCPD archery program inception is estimated at 362,944 .
  - The donated FCPD volunteer time equates to an estimated \$896,313 in FY 2023 and \$9,908,371 since program inception.

- Earth Sangha volunteers donated 794 hours at five parks and staff donated 452 hours at five parks, plus over 12,074 hours in the wild plant nursery, which provides plants to multiple parks.
  - The donated Earth Sangha volunteer and staff time equates to \$899,640 FY 2023.
- Fostered partnerships with state, regional, private, non-profit, and county organizations to include:
  - Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council;
  - Virginia Departments of Forestry, Wildlife Resources, and Conservation and Recreation;
  - Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District;
  - Earth Sangha;
  - Fairfax Releaf;
  - Fairfax County Police Department;
  - Fairfax County Departments of Public Works and Environmental Services, Health, Planning and Zoning, Urban Forestry, APP, FCPD and Fire and Rescue;
  - Fairfax County Park Foundation;
  - Friends Groups;
  - Northern Virginia Audubon Society;
  - Fort Belvoir and Fort AP Hill;
  - Quantico Marine Corps Base;
  - Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge;
  - National Capital Region Partnership for Invasive Species Management;
  - Clifton Institute;
  - Bureau of Land Management at Meadowood Recreation Area;
  - Montgomery County Parks Natural Resource Stewardship Program;
  - Plant NoVA Natives
  - George Mason University
  - Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
  - Ducks Unlimited
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Virginia Division of Natural Heritage
  - University of Maryland
- Disseminated outreach materials for the ecological restoration program titled Helping Our Land Heal.
- Participated in the expansion of the Operation Stream Shield (OSS), a program developed by the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services to employ residents in Fairfax County Homeless Shelters to remove trash and pull invasive plants on public and FCPA property.
  - OSS completed 5 invasive plant removals at 5 parks, contributing 20 hours of labor.
- Served as a steering committee member of the National Capital Region Partnership for Invasive Species Management (DCR PRISM)
- Served as a board member of the Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council (MAIPC)
- Submitted the final report for the grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation for invasive plant treatment and outreach
- Participated in a collaborative workshop with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program. Finalized a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies.

- Finalized the MOU with Urban Forestry's Forest Pest Branch and the Health Department's Disease Carrying Insect Program to streamline access for their activities on FCPA property.
- Submitted draft MOU to Land Development Services to establish guidance for work and studies on FCPA properties.

### **FY 2024 Plans**

- Continue addressing citizen inquiries on an as needed basis and provide a high level of service for development plan review.
- Contribute to the Active Fairfax review of trail development countywide and provide input on avoiding significant natural features.
- Continue the IMA program operations at, at least, 65 sites, support the Tree Rescuer volunteers and encourage volunteer-based stewardship.
- Submit a proposal for increased EIP funding for FY24 for the IMA Program. Increased funds will be used to recruit additional staff on the IMA Team to respond to community demand, and train new IMA Volunteer Site Leaders.
- Continue to support and provide training for Operation Stream Shield.
- Continue partnering with the FCPD to remove white-tailed deer on suitable park lands and work to support efforts to monitor the spread of chronic wasting disease.
- Continue to foster partnerships with state, regional, private, non-profit, and county organizations.
- Continue to assess small-scale, citizen science projects for potential agency-wide expansion including vernal pool population surveys and eBird assessments.
- Support the Trapa Task Force team in efforts to reduce the spread of *Trapa bispinosa* (also known as Two-horned water chestnut) throughout the county.
- Finalize MOU with LDS for permitting process for restorations and natural resources work.
- Establish and implement a Bamboo Prioritization Protocol for selecting bamboo removal projects in accordance with the Fairfax County Running Bamboo Ordinance
- Develop and submit a budget proposal for the creation of a running bamboo management task force within NRB to fund bamboo removal in accordance with the Fairfax County Running Bamboo Ordinance
- Hire staff, identify an equipment storage site, purchase equipment, and build the Landscape Legacy and Sustainability program to support the long-term investments in natural capital on parkland.

### **Landscape Legacy**

#### **FY 2023 Accomplishments**

- Hired program manager and began building program, purchasing a vehicle and some equipment.
- Established program location at Lewinsville House and began conversion of spaces there for offices and storage.

#### **FY2024 Plans**

- Continue building program by expanding equipment inventory, improving Lewinsville House and hiring two Ecologist II staff to support the program.

- Continue working with HOLH program to establish protocol for transition of completed restoration projects into the ecological maintenance inventory and guidelines for anticipated maintenance activities therein.
- Produce invasive plant treatment plans and begin implementation of plans for FY2024.
- Continue to establish and implement many other program areas by way of training and gaining experience in prescribed fire, fencing installations and maintenance, and monitoring protocols.



# Natural Resource Management Plan Annual Report

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OCTOBER 25, 2023

# NRMP Tenets

## 1. Know what we have

- Inventory and Planning

## 2. Do no harm

- Protecting Natural Capital

## 3. Help our land heal

- Managing Wild Populations and Restoring Ecosystems

## 4. Spread the word

- Stewardship and Expanding Natural Capital

## 5. Sustain and Maintain

- Support FCPA's Investments in Natural Capital



# Inventory and Planning



# Inventory and Planning

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- 1,410 Acres of natural vegetation communities classified and mapped
- 19 parks and 155 survey plots assessed for deer browse impacts
- Continued surveying for selected rare, threatened and endangered species
  - 10 rare plant occurrences were documented
  - 3 species of rare bats documented
- 54 permit request reviews

*...knowing what we have.*







Protecting Natural Capital



# Protecting Natural Capital

- 63 development plans reviewed
- 2 park project teams served
- 17 DPWES projects for technical assistance
- 8 encroachments where technical assistance was provided
- 6 potential land acquisition reviews



*...do no harm.*







# Managing Wild Populations and Restoring Ecosystems



# Managing Wild Populations and Restoring Ecosystems

- ~1,126 acres treated for invasive, non-native vegetation
- 775 white-tailed deer harvested from 114 parks
- 200 Canada goose nests oiled, over 700 eggs
- 65 acres of prescribed fire implemented at four parks
- Ecosystem restoration projects in progress:
  - **Frying Pan Farm Park Forest Restoration**
  - **Laurel Hill Park Forest and Meadow Restorations**
  - **Ellanor C. Lawrence Park Forest Restoration**
  - **Elklick Preserve Grasslands restoration**
  - **Old Colchester Park and Preserve natural resource management plan implementation**
  - **Old Colchester Park and Preserve Wetland Restoration**
  - **Poplar Ford meadow restorations**

*...helping our land heal.*







# Elklick Preserve

Forest Restoration Project





# Huntley Meadows

Wetland Restoration





# Poplar Ford

Meadow Restoration Project





Fostering Stewardship and Expanding Natural Capital



# Fostering Stewardship and Expanding Natural Capital



- 22,052 volunteer hours removing non-native, invasive vegetation
- 32,832 FCPD volunteer hours harvesting white-tailed deer
- 75 (estimated) customer inquiries addressed
- 25 Partnerships fostered with federal, state, regional, private, non-profit, and county organizations
  - University of Maryland
  - Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

*...spreading the word.*







Support FCPA's Investments in Natural Capital





Lewinsville House

Historic Properties Rental Services

Resource Management Division

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



# Landscape Legacy and Sustainability Office

Lewinsville House



# Support FCPA's Investments in Natural Capital

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- Continue to establish protocols for transition of completed restoration projects into the ecological maintenance inventory
- Produce invasive plant treatment plans for completed restoration and begin implementation.
- Establish and implement other program areas by way of training and gaining experience
  - Prescribed fire
  - Fencing installation and maintenance
  - Floristic monitoring protocols





## FY24

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- Expand equipment inventory and improve Lewinsville House
- Prioritization and implementation of \$400k in support Fairfax County Bamboo Ordinance
- Complete writing of Northern Area Natural Resource Management Plan
- Utilize spotted lantern fly funding at Laurel Hill, Blake Lane, and Riverbend Parks
- Begin field work for the Central Area Natural Resource Management Plan



