

**WVMNSAC Meeting**  
March 17, 2021

In attendance:

Scott Warner, DNR,  
Kieran O'Malley, DNR  
Jim Fregonara, DNR, representing Tygart Valley  
Gregory Phillips, DNR, Former Admin Assistant to WVMN  
Jessica Swecker, DNR, Administrative Assistant to WVMN  
Ann Wakeford, DNR  
Andy Dalton, Canaan Valley Chapter Coordinator, WVMNSAC Chair  
Becky Linger, Kanawha Valley Chapter Coordinator, WVMNSAC Secretary  
Carol Nix, Monongalia Chapter Member, WVMNSAC Treasurer  
Ellen Hrabovsky, Monogalia Chapter, Former WVMNSAC Chair  
John Bocan, Monongalia Chapter, Webpage Manager  
Keith Richardson, New River Gorge Chapter Coordinator  
Steve Swank, New River Gorge Chapter Member, WVMNSAC At-Large Member  
Mike Vernon, Monongalia Chapter Coordinator  
Rich Brager, Potomac Valley Chapter Co-Coordinator  
Susan Patton, Pendleton County potential chapter coordinator  
Ken Hiser, Pocahontas Chapter Coordinator  
Sheldon Owen, WVU Extension Services

Meeting called to order at 10:04 am

Minutes from October 8, 2020 approved. **Moved by Clark, Seconded by Carol. Approved.**

**Welcoming Remarks** (Andy Dalton): Welcome to Rich from Potomac Valley, Ken from Pocahontas Chapter.

**Business and Treasurer Report** (Andy Dalton): \$4,497.23 in account. Filed 990N tax report this year.

Ellen Hrabovsky: Introducing Mike Vernon as the coordinator for the Monogalia Chapter. Great fish instructor.

**2021 Conference Update** (Andy Dalton): Scheduled at Canaan Valley 8/20-22/2021. Only concern is we can cancel up to 120 days out without penalty. Unfortunately, this is April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Checking if we follow the CDC guidelines would the membership feel comfortable with an in-person conference. Ellen: with the vaccine rollout, many will be vaccinated by then. Putting off the conference again would not be a good idea. **Motion to go forward with the Conference in August 2021, in person. Approved.** Scott: DNR will work with Andy to ensure that the planning of the conference goes forward. Scott is willing to be point of contact for State Parks. Andy has heard back from 80% of speakers that they are onboard. Keith: Andy: Will we require vaccinations by participants? Mike: Should hold off on any rules on vaccination but highly encourage. Andy: by May we should make a decision. To break even, we need 120 people to register. Scott: Would there be any benefit to send out a "save the date" to the chapters, and include that we will be following the CDC guidelines. Also ask coordinators to do a headcount of members who do plan to attend.

**2022 Conference, Date and Location** (Andy Dalton): Talked about holding the 22 conference in Wheeling. Would be more expensive than Canaan, charging \$700 for meeting rooms. Talked to Oglebay in Wheeling to see if there could be a break if we're not doing June dates, but April 29 to May 1, June 2

to 4 or June 17 to 19. Asked for a September date as well. Avoiding June will reduce the costs. Keith: Summit Bechtel is interested in hosting our conference. The accommodations are expanding every year. And the facilities are well beyond our needs. Both Andy, Clark, and Scott expressed interest to tour the Summit Bechtel facilities. Might be a good idea to check out the Summit and then decide where and when the conference would be held. Clark: Bechtel is also a training center and how busy they are will be an issue. Keith: The facility would be pretty flexible with us. Scott: The field trip opportunities will be tremendous as well. Scott: Keith to reach out to Summit Bechtel for a tour. With consideration for folks who are still working, we should look at early June to middle of August as the date. Andy: As for the date of the 2022 Conference, would prefer June 17-19.

**Conference Planning Guide** (Andy Dalton & Clark Dixon): Have been updating the guide and will send it out as a draft to anyone who has hosted a conference to evaluate.

**Modification/Approval of By-Laws** (Andy Dalton): The current language in Article I.B.2 currently states *“Officers: The officers of the MNSAC will be drawn from the non-DNR MNSAC members and include a Chairperson, a Vice-chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer.”*

New Language: add the word *ideally* after will and before the word be. The new wording will be *“Officers: The officers of the MNSAC will ideally be drawn from the non-DNR MNSAC members and include a Chairperson, a Vice-chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer.”*

Under the duties of the chairperson, after “...work with the State Program Director and State Program Coordinator to facilitate all aspects of the program.” Add the sentence *“From time to time, it may be necessary to look outside of membership of the MNSAC to fill this position. Therefore, general members may be called upon to hold this position if the expertise cannot be found within the committee.”* We talked about this on the last conference call and everyone agreed this may be necessary. Scott has given his OK. Carol: **Motion to adopt this new language. Clark seconds. Approved.**

**Nominating Committee:** Steve Swank and Tommy Zeitz as well as Andy Dalton will serve on this committee to find candidates for the Chair of WVMNSAC and Vice Chair of WVMNSAC. The current treasurer, Carol Nix and the current secretary, Becky Linger have indicated their willingness to serve a second two year term starting in August 2021.

**Instructor List and Manual Changes:** Jim: Want to revamp the WVMN manual. Ask coordinators to see if there are any members who would like to help with this. Andy is creating an instructor list that would include descriptions of the classes. For core classes, the description should match the manual section.

**New Chapter Guidelines/Charter Documents** (Becky Linger & Scott Warner): The guidelines to establish a new chapter were approved at the October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and were inserted into the By-Laws as Appendix A. We are proposing that the language in the distributed document, “Petition for Charter with WVMN” be adopted as a policy for this organization to certify chapters as part of the WVMN. **Motion to approve the Charter Documents, Carol, second by Clark. Approved.**

**Pocahontas Chapter Establishment** (Andy Dalton): Ken Hiser will give a report on the establishment of the chapter. Was a chapter in the early 2000s, Mary Dawson suggested the chapter start again. Reached out to community members and got enough interest to start a chapter. Has four officers. Talked with the Yew Mountain Center as sponsor and location for classes. (<https://www.pocahontascountywv.com/yew->

[mountain-center](#)) Finalizing a memorandum of understanding with Yew MC and will be filing for charter with the WVMN. Will start marketing and outreach for members. Looking for guidance from other coordinators to talk about establishing classes and so forth.

Wheeling Chapter: Molly ??? has documents from prior chapter coordinator and is planning to hold classes in the fall.

Ellen: Needs to sign off and this is her last WVMNSAC meeting. She's been very happy with the progress of the program and how we have established good organization at the state level to guide the coordinators. Her leadership has been incredible over the years and it was with her guidance that the WVMN has the structure that we are continuing today.

**Student Chapters** (Andy Dalton & Scott Warner): Want to get Keith and Sue together to establish a formal program. Keith has been doing a great job in southern WV. We need to establish how we want to capture young adults and excite them about nature to bring them into the program. Have talked with Glenville SU and West Liberty SU? Need some job shadowing for the students so that they have experiential opportunities that would be able to be put on their resume. Also allow extracurricular activities. Chapter partnering with the universities would also be nice. Other opportunities with other chapters, like University of Charleston, etc. With creating MN chapters on campus would require faculty advisors, as well as interest from the students. Will have more to share at the October meeting. Clark: Does want to mention the state conservation programs and camps, Need to figure out how to include these programs in the student MN program.

**Potential Chapters:** Pendleton, Glenville, Wheeling, and Pocahontas counties have indicated interest in establishing chapters. Susan Patton is moving to Pendleton County and is interested in establishing a chapter in that county.

**WVMN Website** (John Bocan): Needs to redesign the website since its platform is no longer being supported by Yahoo. Will try to keep the design as is, but may find ways to improve the system. Should be able to stay with the same domain name. Yahoo's business set up is rather complicated, so that might change. Also learned that email had been coming in that he should have been handling. The form on the website seems to be leading into the email, and there are a few questions. There was an email about payment for the website but that seems to have been handled by Carol Nix. Andy: There may be a chapter member who would like to take it over.

**Showcasing WVMN/Marketing Needs** (Scott Warner): Have been looking at revamping the website and developing more marketing materials and outreach programs. Needs to be on the next meeting's agenda. We are at a point where we can demonstrate the interest and successes of the program. We need to figure out what platforms to advertise our successes. Need to work with John Bocan to talk about these changes. Action Item: Couple of members work with John to revamp website and also find volunteers to help John with the changes. In the past year chapters have been suspending classes. Now we need to let the public know that we're open again and promote our outdoor activities. Becky Linger was highlighted in the December 2020 Wonderful West Virginia magazine, "The Naturalists." [Also had an article in the April 2021 issue, "Making a Meadow: A Wild Approach to Gardening."] The cost of advertising is significant and it becomes an issue of whether a chapter can foot the bill. Also, the Kanawha Valley Chapter created a banner to advertise at events. Becky Linger will forward the artwork for that to the WVMNSAC members. Becky has also created a brochure about the program, based on the old brochure.

**DNR Personnel and Program Updates** (Kieran O'Malley): PJ Harmon retired, and now a new vacancy for a Botanist for the DNR has come out. Not sure how available they will be. Hopefully be filled by Field Season. Calendar Position will be filled soon. Programs from the past: Pollinator Program, Sue

Olcott, just hired Rachel Rosenberg, who will be available to do outreach but not sure how much classwork she is available to do. Can do some outreach. Questions on what to plant. etc. She's in Beckley and covers the Southern WV area. Lacey Smith out of White Hall of the NRCS for Northern WV.

Sue is working on Butterfly Atlas. Will have best management practice booklets for pollinators coming out soon. Working with the WVDA, planting guides for homeowners, farmers, woodlands owners, etc. Habitat Improvement in several settings. Partnering with Toyota to host a pollinator workshop in May. Kanawha Valley Chapter will be helping with that program. Ornithologist Rich Bailey. Breeding Bird Atlas is at the printers now. Should be available for sale by late June or early July.

Regarding fishes, the candy darter was listed as endangered. Program to breed and release candy darters ongoing at white sulfur springs hatchery. Able to capture larvae and are growing them out to be released in the Bluestream River. Will be released up in the watershed.

Director Steven Daniels enacted policy for the creation of a natural area program. DNR will identify and nominate state owned land as designated natural lands. A protection for areas showing exemplary diversity, or rare wildlife. Jim Vanderhoort is the coordinator. Will occur primarily on state parks and land management areas. There is a list of portions of state parks. Need to evaluate the areas identified; Jim has a few volunteers and will work with the park superintendents to make sure that the areas don't infringe on established recreational areas in the parks. In September, will have inauguration ceremony at Bald Knob to memorialize the establishment of natural areas in Bald Knob and the wetland area of Canaan. Could private property be nominated? Decided to not include private property at this time but could be considered in the future. If the private land is owned by the county commission, the director can establish only on land owned by the DNR.

Revised the Reptile and Amphibian regulations. Oxenrider has been spearheading this. Regulations now state it's pretty much illegal to collect or possess reptiles and amphibians. Exemption to aquatic salamanders; these can be used as bait. Snapping turtles can be collected with a fishing license. A particular species of frog can be fished, but no other species. Effective February 27, 2021. Regulation brochure is not yet available to the public. When these are available, the WVMN should promote these so folks know the new policy.

Protecting Habitats: Jeff Heinga, Caves and Karst Ecologist led the charge to protect the Greenville salt peter cave system in Greenbrier County. Has four entries. Tons of species habitats. Worked with the conservation fund to acquire property to give to the WV Land Trust. Will have an easement and available for habitat research. Lots of sinkholes, full of junk and need to be cleared out.

Freshwater Mussels, Kevin Eliason, works also with aquatic snails. Have great mussel diversity with 10 on the endangered species list. Dealing with the regulation of mussels. Lots of impact to the navigable waters. Lots of dredging and manipulation of the riverbeds and loss of habitat from mussels. There is an account to restore the mussel habitat in Wert County at Palestine. Will be renovating the hatchery to deal with mussels to propagate to restore in streams impacted. Will take about three years to complete, but will be state of the art facility to restore mussels, amphibians, etc.

**Wild Yards Program** (Jim Fregonara): The DNR started this program in early 1990s for the private citizen on how they can attract wildlife. This is a free program. There are pamphlets available. If they are very interested, they can have their yard evaluated and certified as a Wild Yard with a certificate and a yard sign. Jim asked for help to design a new sign and Abby Rice r from the Kanawha Valley chapter, developed a new sign; it's a metal sign and very attractive. Need help from MN to send certified master

Naturalists to approve the yards as following the guidelines, food, water, habitat, etc. There's a list of plants that are invasive so the landowner can be guided on what to plant. Would love to see a conference on Wild Yards with vendors selling items to enhance your yards. Have documentation on how to make the yard wild. Working on a pamphlet and brochure; if anyone is interested in helping, contact Jim, Scott, K.O. or your coordinator. Rich: Would there be training for Master Naturalists to do the evaluations. Scott: Based on the interest, we may have training or a followup call with the Master Naturalists to discuss what's expected. May also create a shirt for the program to look more official. Also, could get the local paper involved in writing a story about the wild yard.

**Next Meeting** (Scott Warner): Thanks to everyone for their assistance. Please ask the DNR for help in everything. K.O. has given a great list of project where folks can volunteer their time. Also, Jim is looking for volunteers.

In October, let's plan to meet face-to-face at the Stonewall Jackson Dam Center. Date to come. Meeting typically runs longer, 10 – 2, and lunch is provided. More project reviews take place at these meetings. Chapter updates, etc. Hosting more training across the state.

To Do:

- Andy sending out info on the Conference, dates, guidelines.
- Chapter need to gauge the interest of their members and report to Andy
- Scott will work with Andy on the planning and coordination of the Conference
- Keith will reach out to Bechtel. Need to make a decision by the end of May on 2022 Conference.
- Andy will reach out to Oglebay about 2022 Conference.
- Poll will be sent out early June to decide where the conference will be held
- Email asking for volunteers to help with the website and marketing opportunities from either Scott or Jim

Sue Olcott is looking for help in Southern WV to evaluate the Diana Butterfly population in Logan, Fayette Counties. K.O. will have Sue write up the details and will send this out to the coordinators.

Scott: Thanks to Andy for keeping the program moving and continuing the success that Ellen Hrabovsky established.

Andy: Feels we need an archivist. Carol Nix is willing to do a scrapbook. We do need a digital archivist. We don't have all the minutes from the early days. If you have any old documents, send them to Andy. Also looking for a publicity person.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:15 p.m.