

Virginia Creeper Trail Club Meeting
May 30, 2012 7pm
Washington County Public Library

Present: Billiray Armstrong, Phoebe Cartwright, Sandee Darden, Lawrence Dye, Linda Ernst, Phil Ernst, Eleanor Grasselli, Bob Horsch, Chris Lindeman, Anne Maio, Greg Meade, Wayne Miller, Mary Moffatt, Jane Haja Smith, Debbie Stern, Jeff VanCleaf

VCTC President Wayne Miller called the meeting to order at 7pm.

The minutes of the April 25, 2012 were approved with three corrections (made prior to redistributing the minutes). Bob Horsch motioned for approval, Chris Lindeman seconded.

President's Report—Wayne Miller

Wayne thanked those who volunteered to represent the Club at Trail Days and Plumb Alley Days. Activity at those events included \$183 in sales and 3 new memberships at Trail Days, and \$493 in sales and 13 new memberships at Plumb Alley Days. Wayne also reported that the USFS is working on a comprehensive survey of VCT use and that Eliot Cannon plans to collect emergency room data on injuries that occur on the VCT.

Vice President's Report—Eliot Cannon

Eliot Cannon was unable to attend tonight's meeting – no report.

Treasurer's Report—Greg Meade

Greg Meade reported that total VCTC assets were \$29,840.95 as of April 30, 2012. Greg also reported that he expects to receive a reimbursement check for \$17,000 to cover grant work expenditures made by the VCTC. Expenditures this past month included a \$5,000 donation made to the Washington County (VA) Public Library construction fund for finish work on the new Damascus Public Library & Visitors' Center branch and the purchase of paint and related supplies for Whitetop and Green Cove Stations.

Membership Committee—Chris Sullivan

Chris Sullivan was unable to attend tonight's meeting but Wayne reported that there are about 200 members.

Construction—

Bob Horsch has been coordinating the effort to repaint Whitetop Station in conjunction with the USFS. Repair work is also necessary at Green Cove Station to replace rotting wood before repainting the building exterior; the Club is considering hiring a contractor to make these repairs.

Events—Chris Lindeman

Chris reported that the winner of the bike raffle at Plumb Alley Days was I.B. Dent, who generously donated the bike to a home for children in Abingdon. She also asked for volunteers to represent the VCT at the Virginia Highlands "Ride with the Legend" booth on July 28th, from 8 AM to 2 PM at the VCT trailhead.

Publicity & Website Updates – Link Elmore

Link Elmore was unable to attend tonight's meeting – no report.

State of the Trail—Lawrence Dye

Lawrence "the Legend" Dye shared his concern about the Rt. 58 road widening project and its impact on the VCT. VDOT apparently has a plan, but nobody in attendance at the meeting knew details of the plan to be able to discuss it. To date, Lawrence has ridden 168,400 total miles.

Trail Advisory Board –

A Trail Advisory Board meeting is scheduled on May 9th.

Town of Abingdon

Kevin Worley was not present but Wayne reported that the Town of Abingdon will soon be naming the engineering firm selected for the Trestle 7 replacement project. Once a bid package is developed, the Town will be requesting bids from contractors to complete the project. Construction is tentatively planned to start after this year's fall leaf season is over.

Town of Damascus

Anne Maio reported that 48 students from the Evergreen School in Asheville, NC completed work on VCT service projects earlier today. A camp-out and a bike ride on the trail were also planned activities for the students. Completed projects included clearing short trails to several benches, clearing weeds and planting grass seed. The students were divided into groups with the USFS, Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club, and Bob Horsch supervising.

Eleanor Grasselli reported that plans are underway to design and build an interpretive sign where a Norfolk & Western water tower used to stand on the VCT. Since no photograph is known to exist, a rendering of a typical N&W water tower will be displayed on the interpretive sign, along with information about the structure.

USFS—

A representative from the USFS was not in attendance, but Wayne discussed Steven Rainey's project to improve trestle approaches. Mr. Rainey will be the guest speaker at the June meeting.

Trail Neighbors –

Phoebe Cartwright also expressed concern about the Rt. 58 road widening project and its impact on the VCT. She shared her ideas about alternatives that would lessen the impact on the trail, but it is assumed that VDOT has already secured property and execution of the planned expansion is imminent.

Program

Wayne introduced Linda Ernst, Treasurer and past President of the Highlands Beekeepers Association of Abingdon, VA. Linda explained the purpose of their organization and introduced her husband Phil Ernst, who showed the typical equipment used in beekeeping, including parts of the hive, clothing and tools.

Linda then introduced Billiray Armstrong, owner of Thompson Valley Bee Farm. Mr. Armstrong's presentation, entitled "The Importance of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators on Life as We Know It", shared a wealth of information about bees and the importance of pollinators to agriculture and the production of food. He shared interesting information about the queen and other specific roles of certain bees in the workings of the hive. He also told us that bees will travel many miles if necessary to obtain nectar and encouraged us to cultivate suitable plant species to attract and support honey bee populations.

Mr. Armstrong reported on the serious problem of colony collapse and that surveys in recent years indicated that about one third of the hives are lost each year to colony collapse. The loss of honey bees for pollination has had a devastating effect on food production in localized areas, with the problem so widespread in some foreign countries that they have had to resort to manual pollination to be able to produce food crops. The root cause of colony collapse is likely the indiscriminate use of chemicals in our environment, specifically pesticides, fungicides and herbicides. He asked that we avoid the use of chemicals that could harm the honey bees. Also, that we have unwanted bee swarms or nests professionally moved to a more suitable location instead of destroying the nest.

Mr. Armstrong recommended the book [Better Beekeeping](#) written by Kim Flottum and urged us to view a remarkable video that can be found by doing a Google search of "the beauty of pollination" on the internet. Linda also provided literature for those who were interested in more information on beekeeping.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Stern, VCTC secretary