Beargrass Creek Alliance (BCA)

Minutes for Regular Meeting held December 21, 2020 held via Zoom

Attending: Linda Gugin, Jim St. Clair, Charlotte Caldwell, Ed Allgeier, Dan Siebert, David Spenard, David Rummler, Rick and Mary Ellen Harned, Suzanne Hoehne, Melissa Brown, Abigail Stewart, Cullen Hunter, KWA intern, Jody Dahmar, Mariah Corso, Reid Hennessy, Sean Craig, Erin Wagoner, Louisville MSD, Colette Easter, Louisville MSD, and Laura Mattingly, project manager for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Beargrass Creek restoration study.

With Suzanne, former president presiding, the following issues/topics were discussed:

Progress on the Army Corps of Engineers $3 million, three-year project to restore the entire Beargrass Creek ecosystem was discussed by Laura Mattingly of the Corps. Colette Easter discussed the MSD project, which focuses on the Middle Fork. The Corps project includes improving habitat, constructing wetlands, restoring banks, and generally improving water quality. Water sampling is underway and is expected to be completed in February. Samples have been tested for stream flow, turbidity, segmentation, ph. levels, and e coli. Site assessments have been conducted and a tentative plan for 21 sites in the three forks is expected to be completed in February. MSD is cooperating on some aspects of the Corps project, including providing $1.25 million in in-kind services and data collection.

Several types of stream improvements are being evaluated by the Corps with habitat restoration being the number one priority. The plan also focuses on education and outreach. Having engagement of the public is key, Mattingly and Easter said, adding that a planned report on the project will be available to the public.

Easter, discussing the MSD-sponsored trash pick-up along the Middle Fork in early November, said nearly 60 bags of trash were collected at Cherokee Park, AB Sawyer Park, Arthur K. Draught Park and Forest Green Trail. There are plans to hold another trash-collection event in the spring.

Erin Wagoner, MSD environmental partnership liaison, discussed the $305,000 restoration project of a spring-fed stream along Grinstead Drive. MSD, partnering with the Louisville-Jefferson County Environmental Trust, removed invasive honeysuckle and porcelain berry that had overgrown the area to restore the stream and wetland corridor to improve water quality and provide a healthy habitat for plants and wildlife while also contributing to the overall health of the Beargrass Creek watershed. More than 80 trees and shrubs were planted.

Cullen Hunter, a graduate student at the University of Louisville interning at Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA), is part of a team testing for SARS and COVID in waterways and wastewater. Samples from three tests from the middle and south forks showed very low levels of SARS; the team plans to expand its testing to more locations.

David Spenard, a member of both BCA and KWA whose law practice areas include both environmental and land use law, discussed his goal of seeing the use of natural solutions rather than engineered ones in watershed restoration. He identified the decision to stop mowing to the creekbank in Cherokee Park and the planting of native species in the watershed as examples of natural solutions. Citing detention and retention basins as engineered solutions, he discussed the current proposal to build an apartment complex on Hikes Lane, which will result in the loss of permeable surface/pervious surface and includes a proposed detention basin as an example of negative impact through an engineered solution.

David Rummler discussed permeable plastic pavers for driveways and parking lots, a do-it-yourself product by Techno Earth that captures storm water. He intends to discuss the product at a presentation for the Sustainability Club at Bellarmine University.