

**THE OTTAWA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT OF SPECIAL MEETING DEDICATED TO THE FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN**

February 17, 2014

Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, CEF, Ottawa, 7:00 p.m.

Chair: Fenja Brodo

Facilitator of Discussion on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden: Ann MacKenzie

Directors Present: Annie Bélair, Dan Brunton, Julia Cipriani, Barry Cottam, Don Hackett, Diane Kitching, Lynn Ovenden, Rémy Poulin, Henry Steger, Ken Young, Eleanor Zurbrigg

FWG Volunteers Present: Gretchen Denton, Tony Denton, Ted Farnworth, Elizabeth Gammell, Brian Haddon, Robert Hurd, Diane Lepage, Isabelle Nicol, Barbara Riley, Geoff Rowe, Renate Sander-Regier, Hedrik Wachelka

Directors Absent: Carolyn Callaghan, Barbara Chouinard, Owen Clarkin, Ian Davidson, Karen McLachlan Hamilton

1. Minutes of the January 20, 2014 Meeting

Although the revised version of the minutes were not sent to the directors prior to this Board meeting, Annie and Dan explained what changes they were proposing to the first version sent on January 27th.

Annie will send the revised version to the Board as soon as possible.

Moved by A. Bélair/D. Lepage that the January 20th minutes be accepted as discussed.

Carried

2. Electronic Vote on Nominations for 2013 OFNC Awards

Because this Board meeting was dedicated to the FWG, Eleanor sent the nominations by email to the directors and asked to reply to show their approval or disapproval of the nominations. The final count will be received on Feb. 19th.

3. Electronic Vote on the 2014 OFNC Committee Rosters

Annie will send the list of committee members for approval by email to the directors; votes are due in by Feb. 25th.

4. Discussion on the Future of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden

The primary focus of this meeting was to discuss the future of the FWG. A discussion paper had been circulated in advance and members from the FWG Management Committee and the broader FWG community were invited. The notes of this part of the meeting are attached in [Annex 1](#). These notes will be considered at the March meeting of the board at which time they will be formally adopted in whole or in part.

Recording Secretary: A. Bélair

Meetings in 2014:

Monday, March 17
Tuesday, April 22 (because of Easter Monday)
Tuesday, May 20 (because of Victoria Day)
Monday, June 16

Tentative dates for fall:
Monday, September 15
Monday, October 20
Monday, November 17
Monday, December 15

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Notes on Special Board Meeting on the FWG

Time of Meeting: Monday, February 17, 2014, 7:00, FWG, Interpretation Centre

Attendees:

Board Members: Fenja Brodo (chair), Annie Belair (recording), Daniel Brunton, Julia Cipriani, Barry Cottam, Don Hackett, Diane Kitching, Ann MacKenzie (facilitating), Lynn Ovenden, Remy Poulin, Henry Steger, Ken Young, Eleanor Zurbrigg

FWG Guests: Hedrik Wachelka, Isabelle Nicol, Brian Haddon, Geoff Rowe, Ted Farnworth, Robert Hurd, Tony Denton, Gretchen Denton, Barbara Riley, Elizabeth Gammell, Renate Sander-Regier, Diane Lepage

Purpose of the Meeting: This special Board meeting was planned to give more in-depth consideration to the future direction of the FWG than would normally have been done in a regular business meeting of the Board of Directors.

Background and Process: Prior to this meeting a discussion paper was prepared by the committee planning the meeting: Henry Steger, Barry Cottam, Diane Lepage and Ann MacKenzie. This November 17, 2013 paper was distributed to the FWG Management Committee and others associated with the FWG. The paper was then revised to incorporate comments received. This final paper along with an accompanying list of Discussion Questions was circulated to everyone who had expressed an interest as well as all Board members. Everyone interested was invited to attend the meeting.

The meeting was conducted in an informal manner designed to encourage discussion and exchange of ideas. As various topics were discussed a consensus was determined by asking everyone to raise a red, green or yellow piece of paper. The points raised and the consensus reached was recorded on a flip chart by Annie Bélair.

These notes were prepared by Ann MacKenzie with comments from those in attendance. They do not include every point made but rather reflect the main points and the essence of the discussion.

Highlights of Meeting

- The FWG should be a demonstration tool for creating wildlife friendly areas but not a protected wildlife preserve.
- Outreach and Education primarily through demonstration is the first priority.
- Our target audience is Ottawa residents and those who influence property management.
- The Backyard Garden is the most important area followed by the Butterfly Meadow.

- When considering an activity we should be looking for the ‘teaching’ angle.
- Invasives can be controlled in the BYG and Butterfly Meadow using labour intensive methods such as hand removal and sifting.
- In other areas more efficient management approaches should be used, including leaving invasives alone, to show their relative effectiveness. Use of herbicides can be tried on a test basis.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the FWG was

“Encourage residents of the Ottawa area to create or restore wildlife-friendly habitat and gardens on their urban or rural property, emphasizing the use of plants native to this region.”

There was considerable discussion regarding whether the primary role of the FWG was to create a space for wildlife (with education of people secondary) or to use the FWG as a demonstration tool to show people what they might be able to do in their neighbourhood. The general view was that it was not a protected area. Anything that is done should be tested against the criteria of how it would contribute to showcasing what can be done by others.

There was a consensus that the mission statement should read:

“Demonstrate to residents of the Ottawa area how to create or restore wildlife-friendly habitat and gardens in their neighbourhood, emphasizing the use of plants native to this region.”

Strategic Objectives

The discussion centred on the validity of the current strategic objectives and their relative priority. Subsequently we discussed each objective in greater depth.

Outreach and Education – agreed that this was the top priority but that it should include ‘demonstration’. This would make it Outreach and Education through demonstration. It is possible to educate without a physical site. What makes FWG unique is the fact that people can visit and see what can be done, or is being done.

Habitat Improvement – This is the second priority objective. Habitats need to be improved in ways that make them more effective as demonstrations. Many habitats need considerable remedial work before they could be used as demonstrations. We need to earn the ‘right’ to demonstrate by having a successful showcase.

Control of Invasives – It was felt that the control of invasives is not an end in itself but rather is a component of Habitat improvement. We are not controlling invasives just to control invasives. In many places invasives must be controlled so that other aspects of the area can be demonstrated. We could also control invasives in the context of demonstrating the impact of invasives and various ways of dealing with them.

Natural History (maintaining records and keeping lists) – keeping records and lists is a tool to manage the FWG and provide a factual basis to show the impact of wildlife-friendly

gardening. It is not really a strategic objective.

Revised Strategic Objectives

1. Educate and outreach primarily through demonstration
2. Habitat Improvement to demonstrate an action, including control of invasives to facilitate that demonstration.

Educations and Outreach - primarily through demonstration

We recognized that the website is very effective in reaching a large number of people beyond the geographic area of Ottawa. However, given our mission to demonstrate actions it was felt that our focus should be on those living in Ottawa. Influence from the web postings would be secondary or 'gravy'. We can have an effect on not just home owners but also those who 'are doing things with land' i.e. influence decisions related to land use such as institutions, condos, schools, municipalities, and neighbourhood gardeners. Future generations could also be considered.

Priority should be given to those in close proximity – regular visitors, dog-walkers, those living close-by. These people are most likely to visit and are more easily reached with a message. They may also be a source of volunteers. We can then work our way out to farther away in the city. All Ottawa-area residents will remain our clientele. Selling plants is an excellent way to reach out to people both at the time of the annual plant sale and later in the year. We might consider an expanded role for this activity as part of our education program.

In addition to showing what others can do with property under their control we can also showcase the effect of 'changes' in an urban environment. These changes include invasive plants, wildlife, climate and increased urbanization. Since we have to deal with these changes ourselves in managing the garden we can use them as part of our education.

Habitats

The most important habitat to achieve our mission is the Backyard Garden. Second in importance is the Butterfly Meadow. The rest of the FWG has a more tenuous link to an urban land owner/manager. The driver should be the utility of the feature being demonstrated. It might be the role of trees and shade or it could be how to live with invasives. We should be looking for the 'teaching moment' as part of the 'why' question when considering an activity. We can show that wildlife benefits from diverse habitats. We could have areas we have actively managed and a similar area allowed to be natural and document the difference in wildlife in the two. We will be losing our ash trees in the Ash Woods because of the Emerald Ash Borer but we still have many other trees and wooded areas. This is a 'change' that we can document and show. In addition we can highlight various native trees for people to consider for their own yards.

The old designations of habitats (beyond the Backyard Garden and Butterfly Meadow) are probably no longer very applicable. We may also remake paths depending on what we are trying to demonstrate/showcase to visitors.

There was an extensive discussion of the ways in which we can control invasives as outlined

in the background document. It was recognized that the extent of DSV and other invasives in the FWG means that, to a large extent, we are going to have to live with them. Hand removal and sifting should be used for the Backyard and Butterfly areas. Recognizing that non-stop weeding is a dis-incentive to volunteers it was agreed that whatever we did it should be able to be done efficiently (e.g. mowing versus scything). Some felt that we had an obligation to at least mow in areas that we are not actively managing in other ways but it was pointed out that we would be reverting back to the field that was there when we started 20 years ago. We also could not plant other things in that area because the subsequent mowing would eliminate them.

Use of herbicides is the only method that is really effective but that cannot be an educational demonstration because landowners are not allowed to use it themselves. Most of those at the meeting accepted that we could try a test program in a small area, up to an acre, to determine whether herbicide use should be incorporated into a long-term plan for dealing with DSV.

There was no consensus on one way to manage DSV and the other invasives. There was not wide support for leaving it 'as is' but most felt that we should use a variety of methods in different areas and demonstrate and test the effectiveness of these. Any area that is cleared by any means needs to be perpetually managed, including replanting with appropriate native species and monitoring for the return of DSV and other invasives.

Remaining to be done

The 2 1/2 hours of the meeting was not sufficient to cover all the topics nor even to get into depth on those we did discuss.

From this discussion:

Name someone to lead the Education aspects of FWG.

Develop and Education and Outreach plan

Determine what areas will be subject to which of the invasive control methods

Needing Discussion (from the Questions prepared for the meeting):

Leaders, management, relationship to OFNC

Volunteers – coordinator and recruiting/managing volunteers

Financial resources