

MINUTES: Healthy Carolinians of Macon County – Environmental Quality Task Force

DATE: April 12, 2011

PLACE: Highlands Biological Station

TIME: 1:00 – 2:30 PM

ATTENDEES: Rhonda Blanton, Mike Grubermann, Pat Muse, Barry Patterson, Jessica Webb and Charles Womack

GUEST LEADER: Dr. James Costa

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
Welcome	Dr. James Costa welcomed everyone to Highlands Biological Station and thanked them for attending today's event with the rainy weather.		
Brief History of Highlands Biological Station	<p>Dr. Costa gave the group a brief history of the Highlands Biological Station. Dr. Costa stated that the station was founded in 1927 by local community members. The station is set up as a living laboratory for studying biologically diverse ecosystems.</p> <p>He explained that the station is connected with over 30 different colleges and university; including the University of North Carolina and Western Carolina University. This connection allows students to conduct research projects on many different topics.</p>		
Tour of the Botanical Gardens and trail system	<p>Dr. Costa first took the group on a tour of the Botanical Gardens and the trail system. The group went on the following trails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Foreman Loop Trail▪ Falls Trail▪ Lower Lake Trail▪ Upper Lake Trail▪ Fern Trail <p>Dr. Costa explained the garden area covers approximately 11 acres and borders Lindenwood Lake. Dr. Costa said this area is home to a vast variety of plants (including several endangered species) and is home to an old-growth hemlock-hardwood forest.</p> <p>Dr. Costa showed one area on Falls Trail that was experiencing drastic erosion problems. Dr. Costa explained that Mill Creek had filled up with gravel and</p>		

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	<p>silt from nearby town roadways. The group members were very interested in the effects this erosion had had on the stream and the local plant and animal habitats.</p>		
Tour of Buildings	<p>Dr. Costa next led the group on a tour of the numerous buildings on this property. Dr. Costa first took the group to the parking lot of the Nature Center. Dr. Costa gave the history of the building and invited the group to tour it if they had time.</p> <p>Dr. Costa next showed several buildings that were used for housing visiting students and other personnel to their facility. The next building was the newest on their campus and housed a meeting area that could be subdivided into smaller rooms.</p> <p>Dr. Costa lastly showed the group some of the laboratory and research areas. Dr. Costa said this area was in the process of getting updated to make it more modern and usable with today's electronic equipment.</p>		
Conclusion	<p>Dr. Costa concluded the trip by thanking everyone for attending today's event, even with the rainy weather. Dr. Costa reminded the group members that Highlands Botanical Garden is free and open to the public year-round from sunrise to sunset.</p> <p>All members of the group thanked Dr. Costa for taking his time to conduct the tour and showing us all that the grounds and facility had to offer.</p>		