

Faculty Senate Woods Committee

Meeting Oct 10, 2019

Present: Mike Saville, Tyler Green, Audrey McGowin, Volker Bahn (chair)

Call to order: 3 pm

0) Background on this committee

- The Wright State Runkle Woods encompass about 225 acres of forest, some of it thought to be primary, while other pieces are 50-90 years old
- The woods are used by many groups and departments for teaching, research, training and recreation
- They have no formal protection except for a 15 acre conservation easement
- Threats such as building in the woods as a suggested in recent master plans, has elicited protests from students, faculty and staff
- In 2014 the administration was planning on cutting a part of the woods to put up a large salt storage barn as a Shared Services facility under ODOT
- An adhoc sub-committee of the senate building and grounds committee was formed to deal with that plan
- Against the advice from that committee the administration decided to cut some big trees in that part of the woods in winter 2014 in violation of federal law protecting the endangered Indiana Bat
- Consequently, WSU was fined by forcing them to establish a 15 acre easement
- Also, the woods committee got some money for conservation projects and it became a permanent faculty senate committee
- The woods committee used that money mostly to improve trails and work on the conservation of the woods
- Since then the committee has not been very active, but has tried unsuccessfully to get by in from the BoT for putting an easement on all of the woods

1) Runkle Woods Symposium

- Will be on Nov 22
- New idea: a panel discussion that brings in a) people from the admin to buy into the idea of woods preservation and b) outside people who have experience with land preservation
- Audrey is organizing the second annual WSU Runkle woods symposium on November 22.
- We discussed a wide distribution of an announcement for the symposium
- Audrey suggests to consistently call the woods "Runkle woods" to decrease the risk of harm to the woods.
- We discussed having a panel discussing the woods as an entity, its conservation, accessibility and other topics related to woods management and protection. This will probably not happen this year.

2) Conservation easement

- Previous efforts to get the upper administration on board with this idea were unsuccessful.

- A meeting with Greg Sample in 2018 suggested that he supported the idea, but he sent me (Volker) on to talk to Walt Branson, then CFO, who talked to me but then ceased communication and interest.
- A direct contact to Doug Fecher in 2019, then chairman of the Board of Trustees, indicated that he saw some potential, but he sent me on to again contact Greg Sample, who at this point wasn't supportive of the idea anymore. At this point, Greg indicated that they didn't have the capacity to work on an easement. So basically, I just got the runaround on this.
- We discussed writing a charter for the woods committee and a policy for university of which a conservation easement is a part.
- The charter would contain a declaration of the woods as an entity on campus and a special resource, and contain a policy of inclusiveness and accessibility.
- In terms of approach, we discussed a ground swell - student organized, and also getting the incoming president interested. We were wondering about getting a BoT contact and decided that a senate resolution will be an integral step.
- We also discussed possibly having the president's house torn down.

3) Organizational

- We discussed the future of the committee. We decided to set up a Pilot page for disseminating material related to the woods and for collaborating virtually.

Ended 4 pm