

Santa Fe College – North Woods Kick-Off Event
Notes from classroom discussion
February 14, 2009

General discussion of the morning's observations, existing work, and future plans, moderated by Charlie Houder and Craig Gilikin.

Potential Plans for the Site:

- Trails:
 - There are several existing trails. Need for trail improvement was briefly discussed. Research (possibly by students) needed to determine best options for trail surfacing (gravel, mulch, etc), drainage issues.
 - Suggestion made that there be one asphalt trail with ramp access to pavilion.
 - Suggestion made that too many trails may contribute to erosion and too much “break-up” of the natural area. Perhaps mainly what is needed is enhancement of existing trails rather vs. addition of new ones. Perhaps one new trail that creates a “loop” in the western sink-hole area.
 - Location of interesting and key ecological features may be important in deciding where trails are located or re-routed.
 - Need to GPS and map the trails.
 - Suggestion for a guided tour with brochure that guides through a number of stops at key features

- Pavilion:
 - Desire for an open-air pavilion on southern upper slope.
 - Suggestion made for screening for mosquitoes. Some discussion of wood versus metal construction. Picture of existing pavilion at Austin Cary Forest shown as a sample design.
 - Need to identify who will construct the pavilion, funding, etc.

- Boundaries, Entrance, Kiosk
 - Was made very clear that there is no possibility of keeping the eastern-most portion of the property as part of the conservation area – there will be a building there in the future.
 - Corner posts for the 7 acres of conservation are to be established. Will likely exclude the drainage ponds adjacent the western parking lots. Craig gave indication of where boundaries would fall.
 - There may be plans to put a large boulder at one of the southern trail entrances. Discussion of possibly putting an information kiosk at this entrance. Suggestion made that students construct the kiosk.

- Identifying / inventory of key feature of sites
 - North Woods Website has existing plant and fauna inventories, and some future site plans. These should serve as a starting foundation and be expanded / built upon.

- Need for more comprehensive plant inventory and plant community sampling. Could better characterize plant community descriptions with some plot sampling. Some general community type boundaries have been indicated on the map on the website.
- Someone suggested eventually having a GIS interactive map of the plant communities.
- Brief discussion of what could be done with the open grass area. Suggestions included
 - establishing longleaf pine / wiregrass on the higher ground
 - planting baldcypress, tupelo lower on the slope
 - burn plots
 - old-field succession plot (are that is purposely left to naturally re-vegetate)
- Martin mentioned a contact who may be a source of seeds for native plants

Ways in which Society of American Foresters (SAF) may be able to assist:

- GIS: technical assistance and access
- Field assistance and in-kind services
- Assistance with creating a management plan
- Apply to the SAF Foresters Fund for some project funding
- Helping to coordinate periodic events and recruiting participation

What's Next:

- Discussion of doing a “bio-blitz” before the official April 24th dedication of the site.
 - Need to identify key categories that will be addressed at the blitz (e.g., woody vegetation, herbaceous vegetation, wildlife (various subcategories?), trail and boundary mapping, etc) and decide on a “point person” for each.
 - Tentative date of Saturday April 4, Details TBA
- Other periodic events that keep the momentum going

Bud Mayfield, Feb 20, 2009