

LANDCARE MEETING MINUTES  
 Wednesday, May 7, 2025 9 AM  
Montreat Town Hall

**Call to Order 9:03a**

**Moment of Silence**

**Call for Quorum**

Entity	Name	Vote	Pres
MLC Chair, MPC(USA) Earth Ministry Team	George Sawyer		X
MLC Vice Chair, NWF Comm. Wildlife	Bill Neely		X
MLC Treasurer, Town Representative	Jean Norris		X
MLC Secretary, Town Representative	Kathy Putnam		X
MLC Town Commissioner	Jane Alexander		X
Cottagers Wilderness & Open Space	Beth Fountain		X
Montreat College	Josh Holbrook		X
Montreat College	Dottie Shuman		
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Tracy Bailey		X
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Martha Todd Sloan		X
MCC/MRA -Wilderness Committee	Jason Nanz		X
Earth Ministry Team	Hal Demerest		X
Quorum: $11/2 + 1 = 6.5 = 7$ voting members	TOTAL		

Visitors: Ann Marie Traylor, Bill Seaman

**Adoption of Agenda**

**Approval of March and April Minutes** Approved

**Treasurer’s Report**

We’ve had a few charges hit for website hosting but no other expenses. We’re in good shape with enough to begin website construction but we don’t have a designer yet. We have \$6,600 available for Landcare spending; everything else is dedicated to the Flat Creek Crossing project.

-----Public Comments-----

**Entity Reports**

- Town of Montreat  
 Commissioner Jane Alexander reported that town staff is busy with projects on Assembly Drive and Lookout. Contracted work will start soon.
- MRA

- Jason Nanz said most of the trails are open except Sanctuary Trail, Harry Bryan, Julia Woodward and the first 1.5 mile of Graybeard from the road to where it intersects with the trestle trail. An engineer has confirmed bridges there are severely damaged and unsafe. Summer staff arrives in two weeks. He also reported that the MRA will be stocking Lake Susan with sterile rainbow trout at end of month. They'll be sterile because they want the brook trout population to increase. Jason also noted that the Highlands Conservancy is coming out to survey damage in the MRA's wilderness conservation area.
- Martha Todd Sloan reported on campground work done by volunteers. She has been attending Swannanoa Grassroots Alliance meetings and heard a presentation by the Swannanoa Fire Department on how to safeguard your home from wildfires. She suggested the Landcare Committee may want to hear from the fire department as well as from the NC Geological Survey, which will give property owners information on stabilizing property after a landslide. George Sawyer asked Commissioner Jane Alexander if the town council might consider having the fire and landslide presentations at one of their meetings. Bill Neely suggested holding public meetings for Firewise and the landslides. Martha also reported a group of 50 high school students, working with the NC Wildlife Federation, will be in Montreat June 24 – 27 and is looking for volunteer work.
- Montreat College  
Josh Holbrook said a Montreat College student next week begins a survey on hellbender salamanders in Flat Creek. The survey includes looking for good habitat areas and source points of pollution. Later in summer the student will snorkel, looking for hellbenders. Another student has started a project looking for timber rattlesnakes, mapping for snake habitat. Jason Nanz offered to share his map with everywhere he has encountered them. Bill Neely asked about releasing hellbenders as the University of Tennessee has done. Josh said it will be a couple years before our area is prepared to take them.
- Cottagers Wilderness and Open Space  
Beth Fountain reported a group of high school kids from Durham Academy is coming at the end of the month to work on Elizabeth's Path. She is looking for folks to bring lunch to the kids on May 27, 28, and 29; on the 30th they'll need bagged lunches for the bus ride home. Beth also discussed the issue of the possible transfer Rocky Knob area to the MRA. That vote was delayed pending revisions to the organization's membership voting procedure. After hearing from members, the Cottagers committee reaffirmed in-person voting only with no proxy voting. Members expressed concern that proxy voting would allow outside groups to exert control, as anyone paying the \$25 membership fee has the ability to vote. The annual Cottagers membership meeting will now have an online viewing option, and a Cottagers website will soon be launched.
- Earth Ministry  
Hal Demerest said Montreat Presbyterian Church's fall program will include presentations on Firewise and Landcare activities.

### **Team Reports**

- Flat Creek Crossing  
Jean Norris read the update from Patti Pyle. Patti's update email is attached.

- Community Wildlife Habitat: Bill Neely reported that he had two people who committed to having their yards certified as Wildlife Habitats by the National Wildlife Federation; he needs five to have the community recertified. Three Landcare members committed, so that would cover this year if all five homeowners get certified.
- Native Plant Sale
- Firewise: No report.
- Bearwise  
No team report, but Jason Nanz said someone reported seeing a hiker tossing a rice krispy treat to a bear on Lookout Trail. People must stop feeding the bears!
- Hemlock Restoration  
George Sawyer reported that last Tuesday a group of people from Montreat and the Hemlock Restoration Initiative treated nearly 130 hemlocks. All were trained on how to use the chemicals properly.
- Children and Outdoors, Kids in Parks, and Eco-Explore: No report

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- Funding request for Flat Creek study
  - Bill Seaman said last month committee members expressed support for providing \$528 from Landcare for Flat Creek water quality monitoring. The monitoring will provide information on impacts of Tropical Storm Helene on Flat Creek. Bill hopes to use the Montreat Landcare donation as seed for two other sources for additional funding. Bill discussed the 2020 Montreat Stream Team sampling effort and said this would replicate that effort.
  - Environmental Quality Institute (EQI) Exec. Dir. Ann Marie Traylor explained that EQI is a small organization with volunteers monitoring water. EQI's lab is in west Black Mountain. For 30 years, they have been testing for turbidity, pH, and chemicals in the samples and comparing the water to other water basins. For Montreat, the sampling would occur the first Saturday morning of the month, likely at Flat Creek near the gate.
  - Discussion ensued: Jason Nanz if they would consider sampling above the house line? Ann Marie replied that would be very helpful. Bill Seaman said that on the 2020 project they sampled five sites. He explained that as we get into restoration, we're going to need data for stream restoration. Ann Marie mentioned that they've had concern about sewage in Flat Creek. Before it was from Black Mountain, but they want to see if that's from Montreat.
  - Kathy Putnam made motion for \$528 from the Landcare budget to the stream monitoring effort; Jean Norris seconded. Unanimous approval.
- 2026 Native Plant Sale subcommittee  
Kathy Putnam indicated that spring 2026 would be here before we know it and said we need a subcommittee to start planning for the event. She said she would be willing to chair the subcommittee. Jean Norris, Tracy Bailey, and Jane Alexander volunteered for the subcommittee. Kathy said she would reach out to Betty Douglas and Elizabeth Hamilton about participating.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Wilderness fire prevention presentation: George Sawyer gave an update on Firewise.

Next meeting: June 4, 2025

Adjourn: Bill Neely motioned to adjourn at 10:05a.



Kathy Putnam &lt;kputnam380@gmail.com&gt;

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## Flat Creek Crossing Update

1 message

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**Patti Pyle** <pyle.patti@gmail.com>  
To: Patti Pyle <pyle.patti@gmail.com>  
Bcc: kputnam380@gmail.com

Mon, May 5, 2025 at 9:05 PM

To the Friends of Flat Creek Crossing Accessible Trail

It is time for an update on Flat Creek Crossing from the Steering Committee to all the people who have donated to its creation. Despite damage and delays caused by Helene, Montreat is still beautiful and Flat Creek Crossing will be built!

There are several important things we can say about funding:

- Rest assured money you have donated for Flat Creek Crossing is held securely by the Town of Montreat, until work on the trail can begin.
- The Pigeon River Fund grant for initial work on the site, \$34,065, is in hand and will be held by the Town until work can begin.
- The grant of about \$255,000 from NC Parks and Recreation Accessible Parks, for 83% of the construction project, is now contracted between the State of NC and the Town of Montreat. Those reimbursement funds will continue to be available for three years.

The grant we were close to receiving from Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, about \$55,000, to cover the remaining 17%, was not confirmed. After assessing Helene's impact, BCTDA withdrew the grant offering. We will reapply, when our timeline and possible revised scope have become clearer.

When you next visit Montreat, you will find the site looks very different. The path to the water was buried a few feet deep under boulders and sand. The wooden foot bridge above the FCC site was destroyed. Much of the opposite bank was carved away, taking out our first screening plantings and many trees. Portions of that bank will need to be rebuilt, requiring input from engineers and additional permits from FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers. The Town of Montreat is working closely with these entities.

Our timeline for FCC has been extended by at least a year. Remapping, new surveys, possible redesign and engineering will affect our new timeline.

All things considered, we remain delayed but not deterred. Your continued support and words of encouragement would be welcome. If you have questions, feel free to contact Eric Nichols, 828-231-4224, [ericmontreat@gmail.com](mailto:ericmontreat@gmail.com).