

Climate Action Coffee October 13, 2021 Message to Takoma Park City Council

Hello, I'm Barbara Whitney from Ward 1, representing the Climate Action Coffee group and I am here to talk about the Climate Emergency, specifically our concern about how we can help to protect our region's biodiversity and how the City of Takoma Park can make a difference.

Of course, climate change management is about energy efficiency, eliminating fossil fuels and reducing carbon emissions, but biodiversity, which is rarely mentioned, should also be at the center of our efforts because biodiversity is what actually feeds human beings, day by day. We cannot eat carbon emissions for dinner.

Myriads of insects, including pollinators, depend on native plants for their survival and our survival depends on their survival because they are the very basis for our food chain. These insects do not get what they need from European and Asian introduced plants, nor from lawns, nor empty agricultural space, nor the paved areas of our cities and suburbs. Because of this, biologists, entomologists and ecologists tell us that the world is on a path to biodiversity collapse which will be preceded by a period of exorbitantly expensive food production as the natural resources provided by Mother Nature are destroyed or fail one by one.

Luckily studies by such scientists as Doug Tallamy show that if we can individually create small areas of biodiversity, if we plant many more natives, especially the keystone ones which support the most wildlife, if we remove invasives, if we create as many wildlife habitats as possible and weave together small areas of gardens, parks, public spaces, schools, etc., we can eventually connect them and create native plant and wildlife corridors and we will have made a big contribution.

Our CAC Pollinator group is working to join with other cities like Rockville and Mount Rainier and the Maryland chapter of the Sierra Club, to create the Maryland Wildlife Corridor connecting the Chesapeake Bay to the Appalachian Mountains to make an even bigger contribution.

We ask that the City Council, the new Green Team and other City employees include this important issue in their work and work together with us and other residents. It is easier for individual home owners to be incentivized, but we also must figure out ways to empower the many Takoma Park residents who reside in apartments. This could be through balcony greening and beautification projects, guided group invasive plant removal, native planting and community gardening on apartment grounds. Takoma Park residents of all stripes can give the Native Plant and Wildlife Corridor the boost it needs to grow and thrive.

It can seem overwhelming. As cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead famously said, "We won't have a society if we destroy the environment". But she also said, "Never doubt that a

group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only way it ever has."