

## WQQC Virtual Meeting Notes November 14,2023

### DRAFT

**Attendance:** Jen Zunino-Smith (CCE), Marcus Octaviano (Consultant for SWCD), Anna Palmer (HREP), Michael Kezner (RC Planning), Jody Addeo (CCE Rockland), Marisa Marrone (KRB), Ebi Elaahi (RC Dept of Health), Matt Ceplo (Chair WQC), Beth Roessler (HREP), Tolly Beck, Brianna Rosamilia (SWCD), Jim Elling

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Matt Ceplo, Chair, at 10:05am.
2. **Speaker:** Matt introduced the speaker, Mark Brownlee. Mark is the Ecological Restoration Specialist for WildLawn.

#### *Program Summary:*

Personal decisions and cultural norms have consequences. We are killing our planet globally by ignoring the importance of biodiversity. The example of Pin oaks and Sycamores suffering is what happens when a decision is made to plant grass because it looks good. Lawn irrigation accounts for 30% of fresh water usage daily. 60% of that water irrigation is wasted as run-off or evaporation. All the while groundwater is being used up that is needed by many trees. Along with the loss of trees comes a loss of bird species, as 2 out of 3 North American bird species are facing extinction. A solution is to give up at least some of our lawn and instead concentrate on an area that will help in getting pollinators and attracting wildlife. Mark presented a step- by- step process to accomplish this when following an ecological approach.

1. Address the weed problems in the area first.
2. Fix any problems you encounter related to water.
3. Take a hard look at the plants you will grow in this reclaimed area. The emphasis should be on plants that attract birds and pollinators.
4. Evaluate how much of a lawn you really need. Maybe just as a front lawn. You can then work on letting the backyard go back to nature.
5. Educate yourself about what others are doing to accomplish ecological restoration.

6. Start fixing your soil problems.
7. Replace current plants with better ones keeping in mind the need for pollinators and wildlife. Often these will be native plants.
8. Give your backyard back to nature.

Mark suggested using resources like the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The area that is replacing former back lawn areas might look weedy but it works for wildlife. A natural back lawn may only need to be trimmed 3-4 times per year.

A question and answer period followed.

3. **Old Business:** There was no old business.
4. **New Business:** There was no new business.
5. **Next Meeting:** TBA
6. **Adjournment:** Tolly made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Matt adjourned the meeting at 11:32am.