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Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday, June 11, 2013
2 pm, Dept. of Agriculture G8-A
Hartford, CT

Council members present: Dave Goodwin, Bill Hyatt, Paul Larson, Rich McAvoy, Tom McGowan, John Silander, Dave Sutherland, Jeff Ward, Katherine Winslow

Others present: Nancy Balcom, Ellen Bender, Donna Ellis, Hillary Kenyon, George Knoecklein, Nancy Murray, Maura Robie, Penni Sharp, Logan Senack, 1 guest

1. Hyatt called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.

2. The minutes for the 2/19/13 meeting were reviewed.

Ward moved (second: Goodwin) to approve the minutes. Larson proposed the following changes: page 3, section 8a, paragraph 2, lines 3 and 4: change “were” to “are”, line 5: delete the first instance of the word “that”, line 6: change “safety” to “invasiveness”. Page 4, section 11i, line 1, change “had” to “have”. **The Council decided to approve the minutes with the changes.** Larson abstained since he was not present at the last meeting.

McGowan arrived at 2:06 pm.

3. Aquatic invasive plants in CT lakes- George Knoecklein

Hyatt introduced George Knoecklein, the founder and president of Northeast Aquatic Research. Knoecklein has been surveying CT lakes since 1997. He shared a list of the 5 worst aquatic invasives in his experience: *Cabomba caroliniana* (fanwort), *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian watermilfoil), *Myriophyllum heterophyllum* (variable-leaf milfoil), *Potamogeton crispus* (curly-leaf pondweed), and *Najas minor* (Brittle water-nymph). Knoecklein reported that he thinks *C. caroliniana* is the worst of the five, due to its ability to create runners and stolons and spread laterally by 30 to 40 feet in a season. All five plants spread by fragments and by other means. They can form dense mats at the lake surface, blocking sunlight. Knoecklein reported that he found one lake where *M. spicatum* completely outcompeted all native vegetation, and reported that fragments spread downstream easily in river systems. Knoecklein answered questions and discussed various topics with the group.

4. Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) presentation- Nancy Balcom and Maura Robie

Hyatt introduced Nancy Balcom and Maura Robie of the Connecticut Sea Grant. Balcom has been working with DEEP to utilize fish and wildlife service money to survey and research the lightbulb tunicate (*Clavelina lepadiformis*), first found in found in 2006 in Stonington Harbor and the Thames River.

Robie has developed three new ANS stand displays. She also created a 4-panel display about water chestnut, zebra mussels, mitten crabs, and hydrilla. She distributed handouts about aquatic nuisance species and water gardens. These items are used at outreach events and Senack has added them to the CIPWG website. Murray reported that Bob Heffernan (CT Nursery and Landscape Association) received copies of these and distributed them. Robie is also working on developing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans for suction and mechanical harvesting. Balcom noted that the purpose of the project is to identify all the risks

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behind the control methods and identify best management practices to reduce those risks. Robie is also researching options to identify sales of restricted ANS online in addition to other tasks.

a. Zebra Mussel update- Nancy Murray

Murray reported that DEEP will be using 2013 ANS funds to research a new method of controlling zebra mussel veligers. DEEP will work with the Federal Bureau of Reclamation to study the effects of a carbon dioxide treatment method in controlling zebra mussel veligers in a closed system, a leaking pipe on the CT/MA border that is allowing zebra mussel veligers to enter Connecticut waters via the Housatonic River. Western CT State University will also be involved in the project.

5. Mugwort seed production update- Ward

Ward collected mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) seeds from several different locations in the state last fall, vernalized the seeds for two months, and planted them in a CAES greenhouse. He reported that the seeds had very high germination and provided a photo of the plants growing in the trays. He suggested that the Council discuss listing mugwort as invasive. Ward will prepare documentation of his project so the issue can be discussed at the next meeting. Senack will assist him with compiling the needed documentation.

6. Meeting schedule for 2013

Senack will redistribute the meeting schedule for the remainder of the year.

7. Bamboo legislation update- Hyatt/Senack

Hyatt reported that the bamboo bill, S.B. 1016, may have received more public comment than any other bill before the Environment Committee this year. There were some concerns about the enforcement burden that would be placed on DEEP. Enforcement authority was changed before passage to include “any duly authorized municipal constable, municipal tree warden, zoning enforcement officer or inland wetlands and watercourses enforcement officer” in addition to DEEP. Hyatt reported that DEEP will be responsible for identifying reported plants as “running” bamboo species.

Senack added that he has received a number of calls and emails since the bill’s passage, asking about enforcement, control, the legality of some plantings, and similar topics. He will continue to investigate the reports and noted that there is a fair amount of confusion regarding the invasive status of bamboo. He has been providing copies of the testimony the Council developed on S.B. 1016 to the public, as it provides a good summary of the history of the bamboo issue in CT. Winslow requested that Senack redistribute the testimony to the group.

8. Coordinator funding update

Hyatt reported that the Coordinator position is scheduled to be funded again this year. There were some budgetary changes between different proposed budgets, but the final change is that funding has been reduced from \$90,000 to \$85,500 for the upcoming fiscal year. Sutherland reported that the Commissioner of DoAg has expressed a strong commitment to keep the position going. Hyatt thanked Sutherland and Bob Heffernan for their efforts.

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9. Update on Coordinator activities

a. Invasive plant walk project

Senack worked with members of CIPWG, the Sierra Club CT Chapter, and a number of other groups to develop, site, and install a series of invasive plant signs along a trail at the Eagleville Preserve in Mansfield, CT. The signs provide identification and biology information about nine invasive plants found at the site. No invasive plants were planted for the purposes of the trail—the plants had already invaded the site. Additional signs may be added in the future. The walk was named in honor of Les Mehrhoff. The cost of the project was split jointly between the CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) and Coordinator funds.

b. *Arundo donax* biofuels best management practices project

Senack has been working through Bill Hyatt with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to develop best management practices (BMPs) for the planting and cultivation of *Arundo donax* (giant cane). *Arundo donax* is considered invasive in some southwestern and western states and is being proposed for use as a biofuel crop on the east coast. A project is currently under development in North Carolina that would involve the planting of 17,000 acres of *Arundo donax*. The BMPs focus on reducing the likelihood of escapes from established cultivated areas. Senack noted that the species is known to spread along riparian corridors and would be hardy in Connecticut. If large-scale plantings are proposed in the state, the Council may want to discuss or review the plant in more detail.

c. Invasive species awareness campaigns in other states

Senack shared sample outreach materials from other states that may be useful messaging tools.

d. Newsletter

Senack recently sent out the first edition of the Invasive Plant News, an outreach e-newsletter that will highlight relevant invasive plant events, law changes, and the activities of the Coordinator and the Invasive Plants Council.

e. Kudzu

Senack reported that the eastern part of New York State has been discussing removing kudzu populations before they get too big or increase with climate change. Massachusetts is also working on kudzu control. Given that kudzu is present only in low numbers in Connecticut, Senack noted that this may be a good opportunity for action before the species becomes a larger problem.

Dave Goodwin left the room at 3:51 pm.

10. Cultivar discussion and plan for moving forward

Hyatt will call Silander before the end of the week to discuss this item further.

11. Inspection plan for 2013

Senack has received a report of goutweed (*Aegopodium podgraria*) being sold in a Connecticut nursery. He also received reports of invasive bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) sales, but these have turned out to be American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*). He received similar reports for sales of vine honeysuckles which turned out to be native trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). Senack reported that he has seen a plant called “red cabomba” for sale in a pet store, but he does not have any information about whether this is a red form of *Cabomba*

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caroliniana or a different species. The group discussed how to best address sale issues. Hyatt will work with Vickie Smith at CAES and Bruce Sherman at DoAg to set a meeting date to discuss this issue.

12. Old/New business

a. Invasive Plant Spread

The group discussed ways to track the progress of invasive species spread, including using online resources such as EDDMapS as a central repository of data. McGowan suggested tracking progress in the Council's annual report. The group discussed the possibility of including an annual report section on changes and updates in the distribution of invasives, as well as control successes. Senack noted that the email newsletter could also highlight program successes. Sutherland noted that a Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) report could also be a good place to note the progress of various projects. Senack noted that prevention efforts, such as the monitoring done by DEEP staff and volunteers at boat launches, is also an important accomplishment and could be covered.

b. Federal invasive species legislation update- Hyatt

Hyatt updated the group on the status of the two pieces of federal legislation being proposed this year relating to invasives that he had covered at a previous meeting. Funding for both items has been reduced to zero and the programs may be proposed to work within existing resources.

c. Pet industry MOU

Hyatt reported that an MOU regarding species screening and sales in the pet trade has been developed between industry, the Department of the Interior, and others, and is now ready to be signed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, industry, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. He noted that this effort was a good example of agency and industry collaboration.

d. US Fish and Wildlife Service

Hyatt reported that he has been asked to be part of a group reviewing the federal ANS plan. Anyone wanting to review the plan should contact him for the details. The plan will direct how the Department of Interior will address invasive species.

13. Adjournment

McGowan moved (second: Sutherland) to adjourn the meeting at 4:10 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 10, 2-4 pm, in room G8-A at the Department of Agriculture building in Hartford, CT.