

CT Invasive Plants Council  
Tuesday, March 10, 2009  
2 pm, Valley Laboratory  
Windsor, CT

**Council members present:** Mary Musgrave, Bill Hyatt, David Sutherland, Paul Larson, Lou Magnarelli, Tom McGowan (*arrived at 2:16*)

**Others present:** Donna Ellis, Logan Senack, Nancy Murray

**1. Musgrave called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm.**

**2. The minutes for the 2/10/09 meeting were reviewed:** Larson moved (Hyatt seconded) to approve the minutes. **The 2/10/09 minutes were approved** with no changes.

**3. Grants to Municipalities status:** Hyatt informed the group that the DEP funding for the Grants to Municipalities for the Control of Invasive Species Program was no longer available, due to the state of the CT and DEP budgets. Emails have already been sent to the applicants in the towns that submitted proposals, informing them that no funds will be awarded for this program. A formal letter will be mailed to the applicants sometime during the week of March 9-13. All funds for the program are going to revert back into the CT General Fund.

(*Tom McGowan arrived at 2:16*)

**4. Budget plans for the remainder of the year:**

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the *Hydrilla* control project has been signed and approved through 2011 by DEP. This project was approved because the original contract committed the agency to the project through 2011.

- The MOU for the Invasive Plant Coordinator position will not be extended by DEP. The contract with UConn for the position will terminate on June 30, 2009, when the current fiscal year ends. Hyatt attempted to retain funds for the following year but was unable to protect even a portion of the funds from the current sweeps into the General Fund. No funding is available to continue the position in the next budget year. Support for the Invasive Plant Program and the Invasive Plant Coordinator must come from outside DEP or the position will not exist in the next budget cycle.

- DEP was able to transfer \$15,000 to the CT Agricultural Experiment Station for inspections of nurseries and garden centers for the upcoming year. Funding was not transferred to the Dept. of Agriculture for inspections of pet shops.

- DEP is still pursuing the possibility of civil enforcement of the invasive plant ban. No formal training or certification would be needed for DEP staff to enforce the ban, though the regulatory aspects of enforcement are extremely complex.

**5. Legislative updates and strategies:** Sutherland reported that Governor's Bill 6375 is still in the Government Administration and Elections committee. This bill would terminate the CT Invasive Plants Council, effective October 1, 2009 (along with about 90 other Councils and Commissions). At present it is unknown whether the bill will be brought up for a public hearing before the estimated deadline of March 30, 2009. If the bill does not come up for public hearing, it will be an indication that the GAE Committee will not be passing it out of committee.

*\*\*Post-meeting update: It has since been announced that the bill is on the March 16 public hearing agenda. The hearing will be held in room 2B of the Legislative Office Building at 9:30AM. People wishing to speak need to sign up prior to 8:45 AM in room 2200. Thirty-five copies of written testimony need to be submitted in room 2200 one hour prior to the start of the hearing.\*\**

- Committee Bill 5277 (formerly Raised Senate Bill 790), 'An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Invasive Plant Council', has passed out of the Environment Committee and has been sent to the floor. Sutherland encouraged everyone to write their representatives in support of the bill, since it contains the legislative language changes that the Council has been recommending for many years. At a public hearing with the Environment Committee on February 18, 2009, Prelli submitted the testimony prepared by Musgrave on behalf of the Council, asking the members of the Environment Committee to support the bill.

- The Council discussed the Governor's budget proposal to cut the funding for the Invasive Plant Program from \$500,000 per year to \$0.00 per year in the upcoming budget cycle. Musgrave submitted testimony to the Appropriations Committee on behalf of the Council on Feb. 17, 2009, urging the Committee to retain a minimal level of funding for the Invasive Plant Program at DEP. The proposed \$100,000 core or "keep-alive" budget would represent an 80% cut in funding for the program. While this is a severe cut, it would allow a few critical functions of the program to remain funded, including the position of the Invasive Plant Coordinator, inspections at nurseries (by CT Agricultural Experiment Station) and pet shops (Department of Agriculture).

- Sutherland noted that it would be extremely important for the proposed \$100,000 to make it into the Appropriations Committee budget before it was finalized, probably in the next two weeks, and encouraged all constituent groups that can to send the "keep alive budget" recommendation to members of the Appropriations Committee ASAP.

**The Council decided to attach the testimony of Musgrave and Prelli from the previous month to these minutes; as in previous years, testimony will later be included in the Annual Report.**

## **6. Recent and upcoming invasive plant events:**

- Donna Ellis presented a summary of her attendance at "Science Innovations for a Better Life: Celebrating the new National Institute of Food and Agriculture," an exhibition and reception on Capitol Hill on March 4, 2009. She and Dr. Yi Li (UConn, Plant Science) were selected to present an exhibit showcasing the work of the New England Invasive Plant Center, a multi-state project focused on controlling the spread of terrestrial invasive plants.

- Ellis also informed the group that a meeting of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group would be held in the morning on March 24 at the Valley Laboratory of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station in Windsor, CT.

- Magnarelli summarized the recent training session held at the New Haven facilities of the Agricultural Experiment Station. 58 people overall (12 from the Department of Agriculture) attended the informational invasive plant ID workshop. The attendees came from towns across the state.

- Logan Senack reported to the Council on the status of a conference he is holding on March 24. The conference will bring together Town and State of Connecticut staff from multiple government agencies, representatives from all three of Connecticut's border states, the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, a representative from a national wildlife refuge, and volunteer and citizen's groups to discuss the problems posed by *Persicaria perfoliata* (Mile-a-minute Vine) in Connecticut, discuss effective control measures, and organize solutions to stop its spread across the landscape.

- Senack also reported that regional "Mile-a-minute Awareness Workshops" are being planned for the public in areas across CT for April and early May, when the species will start to emerge from the soil and become recognizable. More details will be provided later as dates for the workshops are set.

- August 10-12, 2009: an international symposium, "Invasive Plants of the Northeast of Asia and America: Trading Problems, Trading Solutions," will be sponsored by the New England Invasive Plant Center, at the UConn campus in Storrs. Attendees from Japan, China, Korea, and the eastern part of Russia will be in attendance. Participants will have the week to consider joint project opportunities, as the two areas have similar ecosystems and plants from one can become problematic invasive species in the other. The week will begin with an open symposium at the University—registration details will be available at the next meeting.

#### **7. Other Old or New Business, future agenda items:**

- The Council will discuss its annual review of the CT Invasive Plants list at the next meeting on April 14, 2009.

- The Council will not visit any of the sites for the Grants to Municipalities projects in the fall to observe the progress of the projects, as funding for the program has been cancelled.

- If Bill 6375 passes and includes the Council, the termination date for the Council will be October 1, 2009.

#### **8. Next meeting scheduled for (Tuesday) April 14, at 2pm in the Valley Laboratory in Windsor, CT.**

**9. Sutherland moved to adjourn the meeting (Hyatt seconded). The Council decided to adjourn the meeting at 3:42 pm.**