

Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday January 11, 2011
2 pm, Dept. of Agriculture
Hartford, CT

Council members present: Dave Goodwin, Bill Hyatt, George Krivda, Lou Magnarelli, Mary Musgrave

Others present: John Blasiak, Pat Bresnahan, Donna Ellis, Nancy Murray, Logan Senack, Penni Sharp

- The group held a moment of silence in remembrance of Les Mehrhoff, who died on December 22, 2010. Murray noted Mehrhoff's many contributions to the Natural Diversity Database Program (NDDDB), his work on endangered species, and his work on invasive species.

1. George Krivda arrived at 2:07 pm. A quorum was then present.

2. The minutes for the 12/14/10 meeting were reviewed. Senack noted a few non-substantive typographical errors. Goodwin moved (second: Musgrave) to approve the minutes. **The group decided to approve the minutes with the corrections.**

3. IPANE representative

The group discussed the process needed to fill the vacant seat on the Council and the statutory requirement that a representative of the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) be appointed by the Senate Minority Leader. Hyatt spoke with Dr. John Silander, who was Mehrhoff's Co-Principle Investigator for the IPANE project. Silander expressed an interest in attending but may not be able to make every meeting due to teaching responsibilities and other commitments and asked if Dr. Robert Capers could serve as a proxy in those situations. The group discussed the details of a proxy set up. Blasiak suggested that Capers be the appointed representative since Silander cannot attend every meeting.

Goodwin reminded the group that other seats on the Council may need to be reappointed as well, including the seat held by Tom McGowan that is appointed by the Governor.

Hyatt asked Musgrave and Magnarelli how filling vacancies had worked in the past. Magnarelli suggested sending a letter to the elected official responsible for the appointment with a suggested appointment and following up with a phone call. The group discussed whether to recommend Silander or Capers as the representative from IPANE. Krivda suggested putting both names forward to the Minority Leader of the Senate. Goodwin moved (second: Magnarelli) to forward both names to the Minority Leader of the Senate. **The Council decided to provide both names to the Senate Minority Leader.**

Hyatt will follow up with McGowan to make sure he is interested in continuing to serve on the Council. Magnarelli moved (second: Goodwin) that the Chair send a letter to the Governor on behalf of the Council recommending that McGowan be reappointed for the position. **The group decided to recommend McGowan to the Governor as long as he is willing.**

4. Murray provided the group with an update of activities from DEP

- A meeting of the Connecticut Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Committee will be held Jan. 27 at UConn Avery Point. The meeting will restart the committee, review the list of ANS species, and begin to implement the CT ANS plan.
- Bresnahan distributed information about the new ANS wiki website, which will be used to help track and coordinate efforts on ANS. New information and new drafts of materials will be posted to the wiki so that people can share information and provide comments in a format more easily tracked and more accessible than emails.
- The zebra mussel Personal Service Agreement is in the final stages of approval. Funding was provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Aquatic Nuisance Species Program. The work will focus on surveys of high risk lakes and the Housatonic River watershed. Hyatt added that even though zebra mussels are not invasive plants, they are an extremely important invasive species in Connecticut.
- The final reports for the two mile-a-minute vine removal projects are due in June. The final report on the Bantam Lake project is due in February.
- DEP is hiring an ecologist/botanist. The new hire will work in the Wildlife Division and will have some involvement in invasive plants. Hyatt reported this is one of the few positions in DEP that was approved to be refilled after it was left vacant from the retirement incentive program in 2009.

Krivda left the room at 2:29 pm. A quorum was no longer present. The group decided to continue to discuss remaining matters informally.

Discussion of legislative briefing

The group discussed when to invite members of the legislature to attend a Council meeting and legislative briefing in February or March. The group discussed who to invite to the legislative briefing. Goodwin suggested inviting the entire Environment Committee or at least the Co-Chairs of the Environment Committee and suggested reserving a room in the Legislative Office Building for March.

Magnarelli suggested that February might also be a good time because March will be in the middle of budgetary discussions. Hyatt will get input from Dave Sutherland on planning the briefing. The group discussed inviting other legislators.

The group discussed the format of the presentation to the legislators. Musgrave suggested using the PowerPoint she gave during the CIPWG symposium in October 2010 as a starting point to build this presentation.

Hyatt will coordinate with Magnarelli about ways to invite the legislators. Magnarelli noted that last time the invitations were made via phone as it was the quickest way. Hyatt will also coordinate with Sutherland and will distribute drafts of invitations to the group via email.

Cultivar issue

The group discussed the schedule for topics for the year and when it would be best to discuss the cultivar issue. Musgrave asked whether a working group that was discussed at a previous meeting to take on this issue was going to be established. Hyatt noted that Mehrhoff was going to start drawing up a suggested working group, but now the Council will need to determine next steps in the future.

Reporting banned plants in commercial trade

Senack updated the group on issues associated with the reporting of banned plants appearing in the nursery trade and in pet stores. During 2009 and 2010, a number of reports were received by DEP regarding invasive plants being sold at garden centers and at pet stores, but DEP did not have enforcement authority for the prohibited plants list until Oct. 1, 2010. DEP requests any information that other state agencies have about any issues with banned plants, including issues where cultivars are found but allowed to remain for sale. DEP is interested in following up at these locations with education and outreach about the invasive plant laws and encouraging sellers to take corrective action before fines are given. Hyatt added that establishing a database of businesses selling banned plants would be a good way to focus outreach efforts and follow-up visits, and discussed the role of industry and other state agencies in providing data for the database. Magnarelli noted that it would be very important to let Bob Heffernan of the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association (CNLA) know about this plan so that businesses would not be surprised by the development of the list. Magnarelli pointed out that the work of inspectors becomes a public record, so businesses should be aware that any sales of prohibited species could become public records.

Murray stressed the need to stop the sale of banned plants to prevent their distribution and establishment in uncultivated settings.

Musgrave asked how the list of businesses would be used, as anyone would be able to access it through a Freedom of Information Act request. Hyatt replied that the primary purpose of the database or list would be to identify where banned species were being sold so that DEP could follow up with educational efforts to stop the sale of banned plants. Goodwin suggested such a list might be useful to identify patterns or identify out-of-state wholesalers or other businesses that may not be aware of the legal restrictions on some invasive plants in Connecticut. Murray agreed and added that if the database showed that a number of aquatic plants were being sold at pet stores, for example, then the data would help DEP to focus outreach efforts in that area of the industry.

Sharp asked if the database would be used to collect fines for violations of the statute. Hyatt responded that the database would be used first for outreach and education. Musgrave agreed with Magnarelli that it would be best to check in with Heffernan first.

Musgrave left the room at 2:57 pm.

Update on IPC Coordinator activities: disposal of invasives, Internet/mail-order trade

Senack updated the group on his work to find a way to address internet and mail-order sales of banned invasive plants. Senack reported that DEP plans to draft a letter to send to big-box

growers and catalog companies, asking them to post shipping restrictions for banned plants in their catalogs and on websites (e.g. “sorry, this product cannot be shipped to Connecticut”). Senack will work with Heffernan, Larson, and Goodwin for input on what groups to mail (wholesale companies, catalogs, etc.). This approach was used by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources with good success. Murray asked if this information could be redistributed to the Connecticut nurseries as well. Ellis noted that there are lists of registered Connecticut businesses and growers and Magnarelli suggested that CNLA may also be able to help distribute this information.

Senack updated the group on the status of guidelines for the disposal of invasive plants by homeowners. A draft document has been prepared and Murray, Ellis, and staff at DEP will provide comments. The group hopes to bring a revised draft to the IPC for distribution and comments for the February meeting, and hopes to provide revised recommendations by March.

Additional thoughts on Legislative strategy for 2011

Due to the lack of a quorum, this item was not discussed.

Other old or new business

Murray asked about the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) involvement with the Invasive Plants Council (a topic that had been discussed at previous meetings). The group discussed DOT’s work addressing the issue of invasive plants growing on sandpiles which are then moved around and distributed. Goodwin asked if anyone was surveying the areas around DOT sandpiles to see what plants may be growing on them. Hyatt noted that Mehrhoff had formerly taken the lead in working with DOT on the issues associated with DOT facilitated invasive plant dispersal.

Goodwin noted that DOT also worked to clear and maintain right-of-ways and asked if anyone was monitoring for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) or Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB). Magnarelli responded that many arborists do have training in EAB and ALB detection and that early detection will be extremely important in finding these destructive invasive insects. The group briefly discussed the planned incident response system that will be employed if these pests are found.

The meeting dissolved at 3:14 pm.

The next meeting will take place at 2 pm on February 8, 2011, at the Department of Agriculture Building in Hartford, CT.