

MINUTES

Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday, June 21, 2011
2 pm, Dept. of Agriculture
Hartford, CT

Council members present: Bill Hyatt, David Goodwin, George Krivda, Lou Magnarelli, John Silander, David Sutherland

Others present: Donna Ellis, Bob Heffernan, Nancy Murray, Logan Senack

1. Hyatt called the meeting to order at 2:07 pm.

2. The minutes for the 3/8/11 meeting were reviewed.

Krivda moved (second: Silander) to approve the minutes as submitted. **The Council decided to approve the minutes from the 3/8/11 meeting.**

3. Report on Mehrhoff Memorial Activities

Murray and Silander reported that the UConn Center for Conservation and Biodiversity hosted a symposium honoring Les Mehrhoff on May 27, 2011. The symposium had over 150 attendees. Hyatt added that he felt the symposium was well organized and thanked Silander and David Wagner (UConn) for hosting the event.

Ellis noted that there are also 12,000 plant specimens from Mehrhoff that will be processed and added to the UConn Herbarium. These specimens, along with thousands of Mehrhoff's digital photographs, will be catalogued and made available to scientists for future research and outreach.

Silander reported that a guided walk also took place on June 4, 2011 at the Eagleville preserve in Mansfield, focusing on invasive plants in honor of Mehrhoff. The following weekend Silander also led a similar walk for a group of researchers from eastern Asia.

Murray and Senack reported that Mehrhoff was posthumously awarded an EPA Region 1 Lifetime Achievement Award. Mehrhoff's family received the award on his behalf at a ceremony at Faneuil Hall in Boston MA on May 11, 2011.

4. Report on DEP Events and Actions

- June 1 workshop at Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

Senack reported that DEP hosted a successful workshop at Sessions Woods WMA on June 1, 2011. The workshop, entitled "Invasive Plants and Habitat Improvement", was expected to attract 50 to 80 people but had 107 registered attendees. The workshop presenters included guest speakers from multiple agencies and organizations and included a site walk designed by biologist Peter Picone (DEP). Sixty percent of the attendees were federal, state or town staff or conservation organizations, and an additional 12% were from private companies. The workshop was open to the public. Evaluations filled out by the event attendees were extremely positive, with 98% of respondents rating the conference 4 or 5 on a scale of 1(lowest) to 5 (highest).

- Disposal document completion

Senack announced that photos have been added to the disposal document text. The text is unaltered from the version presented at the 3-8-11 Invasive Plants Council meeting. The document is almost ready for distribution. Senack will email the guide out to the group when it is complete.

Goodwin left the room at 2:25 pm.

- Silander announced that IPANE will hold additional volunteer training sessions throughout New England and including Connecticut this year. The group discussed ways that DEP and IPANE could coordinate to develop joint or complimentary programs.

- Krivda requested that more species photos be added to the CIPWG website, so that anyone who visits the site can learn to recognize the listed species by viewing digital images. Senack and Ellis are working to improve the website by adding additional information and photos and expect to have major updates complete later in the year.

Goodwin returned at 2:30 pm.

- Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) funds update

Murray and Pat Bresnahan (UConn) met to discuss aquatic invasive plants. They are working on an early detection plan for aquatic invasives. This plan will also be used to create an early detection plan for terrestrial invasive species that will be developed later. The ANS program at DEP received approximately \$29,000 in federal funding support this year. Last year the program received \$40,000. The funds support Bresnahan's time for 1.5 days per week.

Murray is working on a monitoring plan for didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*; "rock snot"), now that it has been found in Connecticut. DEP is also working on two projects involving zebra mussels (Housatonic River monitoring project and veliger detection project) and water chestnut control at flood control ponds in Hartford.

Goodwin left the room at 2:33.

- Bamboo update

Murray updated the group on the status of bamboo in Connecticut and noted that there may be indication that it is spreading into natural areas. Magnarelli reported that he was concerned about bamboo and that Todd Mervosh and Jeff Ward, staff at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), were going to look into it. Silander added that bamboo is an issue throughout the country and there was evidence that some bamboos can grow in alpine areas.

Goodwin returned at 2:36 pm.

- Invasive Plant Coordinator funding

Hyatt reported that funding for the Invasive Plant Coordinator position has been secured for another fiscal year. DEP was able to use end-of-year funds to support the position for the past two years but will not be able to do so next year. Grant monies could possibly help to support the position in the future. Hyatt requested that all Council members consider options for securing grant funds.

- Old Saybrook knotweed actions

The group discussed property rights and a problem reported to DEP about Japanese knotweed invading from one property to another in Old Saybrook.

5. Future Actions

Cultivar subcommittee

The group discussed creating a subcommittee to help resolve conflicting interpretations of the invasive plant laws regarding cultivars. Hyatt suggested the group move forward with the intent of getting recommendations back by the end of this year and suggested that Silander lead the project, as Les Mehrhoff was originally planned to head the group. Hyatt's request was: "to assemble a team of technical experts regarding cultivars and get advice on how to best proceed in a manner that is both protective of the environment and considerate of the interests of the nursery industry." The group discussed the committee and topics relating to cultivars.

Krivda suggested beginning the process of asking for volunteers and determining who should be on the subcommittee. Hyatt asked those who had suggestions for members of the committee email him and to copy Senack. Goodwin suggested that the committee bring in people from outside the Council to contribute to the issue as well, and Sutherland suggested that involving Mark Brand and UConn would be critical. Hyatt and Silander will discuss this issue further.

Revisiting database of prohibited invasive plant sales

Goodwin left the room at 3:15 pm.

Hyatt recapped previous discussions regarding creating a list or file of businesses with reported problem sales of invasive plants. Hyatt asked Magnarelli and Krivda if there were any concerns with having someone like Senack contact their staff to get the information. Magnarelli and Krivda had no concerns.

Discussion regarding moving prohibited plant list to regulation from statute

Goodwin returned at 3:17 pm.

The group discussed the pros and cons of asking for legislation to change the prohibited plant list from state statute to regulation and whether such a change would allow for more timely updates to the list and more flexibility to accommodate needed changes. Murray noted that the state endangered species list was already in regulation, not statute. Goodwin voiced concerns that a regulatory change could occur too fast compared to a statute change and could happen independently of political will. Krivda reminded the group that the Legislative Regulation Review Committee reviews all legislation before it is implemented. Krivda moved (second: Goodwin) to postpone discussion of the regulation vs. statute issue to a later date. **The Council decided to discuss the issue at a future meeting.**

6. Yearly update of list

The group decided to discuss this topic at a later date.

7. Monitoring and enforcement of invasive plant laws

Magnarelli reported that staff at CAES had conducted a study of plant species sold at aquariums and pet shops. If plants could not be definitively identified by visual inspection alone, DNA evidence was used to determine plant species. The project has expanded and out of 75 businesses visited, 30% were selling plants that are prohibited under Connecticut law. Two species of watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum sp.*) and fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) were particular problems and frequently encountered for sale. In some cases DNA molecular work will be needed in the future to continue to differentiate materials.

CAES staff are bringing copies of the state invasive plant law and copies of an invasive plant poster to the businesses to follow up with education. Magnarelli noted that distributors and suppliers are also often unaware of Connecticut's laws. Krivda asked if a list of the businesses was available.

Sutherland left the room at 3:34 pm

Hyatt asked Senack to move forward with a refined way to deal with mail order plants. Magnarelli asked Senack to contact Greg Bugbee (CAES) for the list of businesses.

Sutherland returned at 3:38 pm

8. Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB)/Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) discovery

Magnarelli reported that while Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive insect, has not been found east of the Hudson River, it is only 25 miles from the Connecticut border and is known to be a strong flier. There is currently no funding in the EAB program at the state or federal level and this may impact how the quarantine protocol would be followed in the event of an EAB discovery. The group discussed what would happen if EAB was discovered and quarantine areas needed to be implemented.

Federal funding is available for eradication of Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB). Cutting trees within an ALB quarantine area would reduce establishment and spread. The closest known occurrences are only approximately 13 miles from the Connecticut border. A new infestation was recently found in Ohio. Both species, particularly ALB, could have a major impact on the nursery industry.

Next week, DEP and CAES will sign an MOU to collaborate in responding to these invasive insects. USDA APHIS, DEP, and CAES would be the three major parties involved in an ALB/EAB response.

7/21/11 Note: This signing was subsequently rescheduled for 7/25/2011- LS

9. Adjournment

Goodwin moved (second: Krivda) to adjourn the meeting. **The Council decided to adjourn at 3:48 pm.**

The next meeting is scheduled for 2 pm, September 13, 2011 at the Department of Agriculture in Hartford, CT.