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Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday, January 10, 2012
2 pm, Dept. of Ag Conference Room G8-A
Hartford, CT

Council members present: Bill Hyatt, Paul Larson, Lou Magnarelli, Rich McAvoy, Tom McGowan, Katherine Winslow

Others present: Donna Ellis, Nancy Murray, Will Rowlands, Logan Senack, Dick Shaffer, Penni Sharp

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

2. The minutes for the 12/13/11 meeting were reviewed

A few typographical errors were noted and corrected. In addition, Senack proposed two additional changes to the minutes: on page 1, in section 3a paragraph 2, add “BEA” (Boating Education Assistant) to sentence 4, so that it reads “In 2011, the BEA program...”, and on page 2, in section 3a paragraph 3, delete the words “Together, BEAs and” at the start of sentence 5. Larson moved (second: Magnarelli) to accept the minutes as corrected. **The Council decided to accept the minutes as corrected.**

3. Follow-up discussion of proposal from Boating Division, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

Hyatt recapped the discussion on this topic from the December meeting and distributed a document from DEEP Boating Division detailing the possible options to pursue to obtain funding to address aquatic invasive plants. The document described the 3 options regarding this plan from DEEP Boating:

1. New fee for Aquatic Invasive Species and abandoned boats (up to \$5 per CT registered boat; marine and inland boats.
2. Fee of \$3 per CT registered marine and inland boat; \$3 fee for out-of state inland boats; sticker for out-of-state boats.
3. Redirect revenues from boat registrations that were formerly provided to municipalities but now go to the General Fund. This proposal would redirect these funds to DEEP in order to fund the Waterways Maintenance Fund (including ANS work) and potentially other local law enforcement initiatives that would serve to benefit the towns.

The group discussed various aspects of these proposals, including the need to ensure that boaters were aware of or supportive of these changes, the importance of funding invasive aquatic species efforts, and whether or not DEEP could move forward with some options independently of the Council.

Hyatt asked the Council to prioritize its actions for this legislative year, including funding for the Coordinator position and this boating proposal. The group discussed whether or not to take on a second legislative issue and discussed the possibility of providing a letter of support for DEEP

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Boating's plans regarding funding for aquatic invasive species. McGowan suggested the Council provide a letter in support of option 3 (redirect existing funds) first, and note in the letter that if this option was unsuccessful, the Council would have to support another source of funding and advocate the necessity of the funds being allocated specifically for invasive aquatic plants.

Magnarelli expressed support for these options but highlighted the importance of focusing on the coordinator funding issue. He reminded the group of the need to prioritize the things that were most important to the Council directly. Additionally, Murray cautioned that the Council could still lend support to another issue but cannot be the primary promoter of it. McAvoy asked if any letter of support from the Council would need to include support of funding for abandoned boats too. Hyatt clarified that the Council would only speak in support of the proposals directly relating to the funding of invasive aquatic species.

Hyatt suggested the Council hold off acting on this item and revisit it pending further developments in the legislature. The Council could request an update from Matt Fritz (DEEP) at a later date where a support letter could be given if needed.

4. Report on mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) invasive status (Ellis)

Ellis presented information on mugwort to the group. Mugwort is a non-native herbaceous plant that spreads predominantly by vegetative growth via the production of rhizomes. Ellis reported that mugwort is common in disturbed areas such as roadsides but has also been found in natural areas that are not in deep shade. Ellis provided distribution information about mugwort to the group, including a completed "Guidelines for Council Review of Species" form and photographs submitted by members of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIWPG).

Magnarelli asked for clarification on one section of the handout that said mugwort "may" reproduce and disperse by seed. Ellis responded that the plants do reproduce by seed, but this is rare, and rhizomatous growth is the primary means by which mugwort spreads. Magnarelli asked if the plants met the criteria for the definition of an invasive plant. Ellis clarified that she was not asking for a vote on this plant at this time, but that the plants did seem to be showing invasive characteristics. Hyatt asked if this plant was likely to invade only transiently. Ellis responded that she saw no evidence that the plants would be outcompeted or become less dense over time and that the reports she is receiving are mugwort populations in minimally managed habitats. Senack added that one of the dense populations in Ellis's report, at Quinnipiac River State Park, has been present for a number of years and does not seem to be dying out or being replaced by other species.

Murray and Sharp will ask the Connecticut Botanical Society and the New England Wildflower Society to look for this species.

McAvoy asked if mugwort was more likely to spread than bamboo. Murray reported that mugwort was much more likely to spread than bamboo, especially through accidental or unintentional means. Hyatt asked about the native range of the species. Ellis answered that the species is native to Eurasia. The group discussed the flowering habits of the species and other factors.

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Ellis will continue to collect information and will present new findings from the 2012 field season at a Council meeting in the fall.

a. “Guidelines for Council review of species” organization sheet

Senack distributed copies of the form originally designed by the Council to organize incoming requests for the new listing of a species. Ellis explained that she used this document to prepare her information and presentation.

5. Bamboo

a. Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association (CNLA) position on informing customers about bamboo (Larson)

Hyatt asked if Larson was able to provide any updated information on CNLA’s position and activities related to bamboo. Larson reported that CNLA was discussing working on a document that could be provided to members for use at points of sale. Hyatt asked if this was something that was on the agenda of a CNLA meeting. Larson responded that a new Board had recently been elected and was just getting started. Hyatt asked if the Council should wait on hearing from CNLA for further action. Larson suggested that Bob Heffernan (CNLA executive secretary) was going to be following up on this as there seemed to be broad support of moving forward on this at the meeting, and added that another aspect of this project is educating retailers about issues concerning bamboo.

Hyatt suggested that CNLA may want to consider a more proactive approach such as recommending warning labels on individual bamboo plants. Larson will contact Heffernan for additional information.

McAvoy asked if potential CNLA action on this item would be ready for this year’s growing season. Larson reported that he thinks the goal is to have this ready by the end of April.

Winslow asked if Heffernan could report to the group in March regarding progress on this issue. Larson will request that Heffernan present an update at the March meeting on this topic.

b. Text of Delaware town ordinance for discussion (Murray)

Murray reminded the group that there was a question of how to respond to towns with questions about bamboo, and that a property owner in Connecticut had submitted a large amount of information about bamboo, including the text of an ordinance from a town in Delaware that prohibited the planting of bamboo without proper barrier/containment & setback. Hyatt noted that CT municipalities could do likewise and asked the group to discuss and decide on the circumstances where this information could be provided to towns and how the Invasive Plants Council, DEEP, and others should answer inquiries on this topic.

Murray noted that although bamboo is not being treated as an invasive plant, many people are still being impacted by it, and the state should be working on information to protect its citizens. Murray also added that the Council and DEEP can continue researching whether or not bamboo is invasive while undertaking other actions.

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McGowan asked if DEEP could act independently of the Council on this issue by putting information relating to bamboo control and laws up on their website. Hyatt stated that DEEP could act independently but prefers to work collaboratively with the Council. Hyatt further noted that there was a big difference in approach between providing this information only in response to specific requests vs. proactively sending it out to towns.

Winslow suggested a multifaceted approach: DEEP could respond by providing the information on request while the Council continued to research bamboo and while CNLA moved forward on preparing their recommendations. The group continued to discuss this issue. McAvoy added that if the focus of the response to an inquiry was education, then the response should include all options and information, including information about herbicide control, other controls, and the legal information about town ordinances.

Hyatt noted that there seemed to be clear agreement that the Council should not be advocating to towns that they pass their own ordinances. However in response to inquiries, this ordinance information could be provided as part of the inquiry response. Ellis added that the CNLA materials, when complete, would be provided at the point of sale of the plants. Larson added that the CNLA board's position would be to encourage all members to provide this information to customers, and include it on the industry website.

Hyatt noted that a strong incentive for the industry to take aggressive action on this issue is the possibility that disgruntled landowners could advocate for town ordinances.

6. Review of draft PowerPoint and discussion of legislative presentation

Hyatt explained the upcoming potential legislative update and shared a draft of the presentation with the group. The group discussed the presentation and provided feedback and edits. Senack will make the requested edits and will work with Murray and Hyatt to reduce the length of the presentation and make sure all items are relevant.

The group discussed the importance of making sure legislators could attend the event. The group discussed inviting the entire Environment Committee, and Magnarelli reminded the group of the importance of inviting the Appropriations Committee as well. Winslow suggested that other groups, such as the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut and the Garden Club of America, might also be interested in supporting this proposal. Hyatt will seek further advice from DEEP's legislative liaison.

7. Old/new business

a. Dredging at Hartford flood control ponds update water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) (Murray)

Murray reported that Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) funds were used to continue water chestnut control at the flood control ponds along the Connecticut River in East Hartford. After two years of control have been conducted, the area will be dredged since it has started to fill in.

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b. Press release for annual report

Senack reported that Heffernan had suggested that a press release could be developed to highlight the publication of the 2011 Invasive Plants Council annual report.

Magnarelli noted that this might provide an opportunity for better exposure of the Council's work. The group discussed the potential benefits of preparing a press release. Senack will coordinate with DEEP to prepare a press release for distribution in a few weeks.

8. Adjournment

Winslow moved (second: McGowan) to adjourn the meeting. **The Council decided to adjourn at 4:07 pm.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 14, 2012 at the Department of Agriculture in Hartford, CT.