

Connecticut Invasive Plants Council
January 9, 2007

Minutes

Present:

Members: Dave Goodwin, Les Mehrhoff, Paul Larson, Mary Musgrave, Philip Prelli, Nancy Murray (representing Ed Parker), Lou Magnarelli, David Sutherland, Tom McGowan

Others: Richard Shaffer, Donna Ellis, Betty McLaughlin, Sandy Breslin, Karl Wagener, Karen Weeks

Lou Magnarelli called the meeting to order at 2:04.

December Minutes Dave Goodwin moved approval of the December 06 minutes; Paul Larson seconded. A spelling error in the draft minutes was noted. The minutes were approved as edited.

2006 Annual Report Magnarelli reported that he submitted 30 copies of the Council's 2006 Annual Report to the legislature's Environment Committee, and 17 copies to the State Library, on December 19th. He noted that next year's Annual Report will need to include the December 06 minutes, which had not been approved in time for inclusion with this 06 Report. Donna Ellis noted that the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group will post the Report on CIPWG's website.

Clerical Assistance Magnarelli reported that he had not heard back from Representative Fritz concerning any clerical assistance her staff might be able to provide the Council. David Sutherland and Sandy Breslin agreed to check back with the Environment Committee.

Federal Budget Magnarelli explained the relevance of recent developments concerning the federal budget process to invasive plant initiatives in Connecticut. The outgoing Congress did not complete work on the FY07 federal budget, the fiscal year for which started October 1st, 2006. The incoming Congress has announced that it will pass a "year-long" resolution to simply fund the federal budget at basically 06 levels (it's more complicated than that, but that's the gist of it) for the remainder of FY07, and will not include any "earmarks", which are appropriations for specific, often local, projects that would not ordinarily be included in agency budgets.

State Legislative Proposals Magnarelli explained that the Ct Agricultural Experiment Station receives from \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually through an earmark in the federal budget. Sutherland and Mary Musgrave noted that the funds for the Invasive Plants Center at UConn, which had been included in the House version of the budget that was never completed, could be in jeopardy. Magnarelli recalled that Representative Fritz had offered to seek funding for our state efforts in the federal budget; Sutherland pointed out that that would still be possible since those funds would have had to come out of the FY08 budget anyway.

The group discussed how our legislative proposals can be moved through the General Assembly process. Phil Prelli stated that he would ask his legislative liaison to request that the Environment Committee raise our proposals as a Committee Bill and then for a Public Hearing. If the Committee does that, there will be a public hearing before the Environment Committee, and the bill will probably then need to go to the Appropriations and Planning and Development Committees for their approvals. The group agreed that as many of our organizations as possible should notify our members of the hearing when it is announced. Sutherland also noted that the Appropriations Committee also holds hearings each year on agency budgets, and that advocates should testify at those hearings about including an appropriation for the Council's recommendations in the DEP budget.

Water Hyacinth Les Mehrhoff noted that although water hyacinth can not overwinter now in Connecticut, there are two potential problems 1) that climate change could allow it to survive through the winter, and 2) that even if it dies out each year, its ability to blanket a water body in one growing season, and indications that people are repeatedly releasing it into some water bodies, could render it capable of eradicating native plants and contributing significantly to eutrophication even if just in annual episodes. Mehrhoff stated that he is not advocating a ban, but that we do need an education effort about how to properly dispose of these plants.

Magnarelli distributed a fact sheet that had been produced at UConn in 2002 on proper disposal of aquatic invasive plants. Nancy Murray noted that there is some dispute over whether invasive plants can be composted as suggested on the fact sheet.

Plants included on the Invasive Plants list and not banned Mehrhoff noted that there are 15 plant species that were included on the original list of invasive plants, but that are not banned. There is research being done on the cultivars at least five of these species, and Mehrhoff reviewed that the Council had agreed to wait for further progress in this research before considering further action on them. He also noted that educational signs would probably be sufficient for Rosa Rugosa and Water Hyacinth. He also does not feel that a ban on Star of Bethlehem would be appropriate. That leaves seven plants that he thinks we should start discussing for possible action. His most urgent concern is with Porcelain Berry, and he is also quite concerned about Reed Canary grass.

After discussion of Reed Canary grass and further information that needs to be obtained concerning its use in agriculture, it was agreed that at the next meeting, we would discuss possible actions on Porcelain Berry, and what education could be done concerning Rosa Rugosa.

Adjournment Several members expressed gratitude to Magnarelli for his work in Chairing the Council. Prelli moved adjournment at 3:24; Goodwin seconded. The meeting was adjourned.