

**INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Minutes of 3-14-06**

**Approved by the Council**

**Regular Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) was held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006. David Leff, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. in the Ensign Room at DEP Headquarters, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

**Attendees:** Chairman Leff, (Vice Chair) Dr. Louis Magnarelli, David Goodwin, Paul Larson, Tom McGowan, Les Mehrhoff, Dr. Mary Musgrave, David Sutherland.

**Other Attendees included:** Sandy Breslin of Audubon CT, Betty McLaughlin, CT Audubon, Nancy Murray of the Dept. of Environmental Protection and Donna Ellis of the University of Connecticut.

**Absent:** Commissioner Phil Prelli of the Department of Agriculture.

**Annual Report:**

Chairman Leff noted the Invasive Plants Council Annual Report distribution was completed. He has not seen any feedback from members of the Environment Committee, which was included in the distribution.

**Minutes:**

Chairman Leff distributed copies of the Minutes for January 11, 2006 and February 14, 2006 meetings, to members for review. Approval of these minutes will be taken up at the upcoming IPC meeting on May 9, 2006.

**Legislative Strategy:**

Chairman Leff stated that there are two bills authored by the Legislative Commissioner's Office and sent on to the Environment Committee. Neither bill represents anything that the Invasive Plants Council proposed in its annual report. House Bill #5451 would appropriate \$475,000 in General Funds for work to be done on invasive plants to the Department of Environmental Protection and HB #5808 appropriates the same dollar amount except it would be given directly to the Invasive Plants Council. Chairman Leff and David Sutherland stated that HB #5451 would not be going forward. HB #5808 will be heard on Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>. The bill as it is being presented, does not include many of the recommendations made in the Invasive Plants Council Annual Report. A substitute bill was drafted by the Department of Environmental Protection and would be e-mailed to Council members before the March 17<sup>th</sup> public hearing. This substitute bill will be submitted to the Environment Committee as testimony. Chairman Leff urges each member of the council to appear and testify as individuals of their respective organizations. Chairman Leff stated it would be important for the Environment Committee to see the broad interest on this issue. David Sutherland discussed the "whys" and "how" on the legislative process for the proposed bill. This year the Environment Committee is hearing a vast amount of bills in the short session. Chairman Leff will submit a substitute bill as testimony at the March 17<sup>th</sup> hearing. Chairman Leff commenced a discussion between members on the possible scenario of the proposed bill

process. Portions of the discussion: the Environment Committee would vote out the bill and it will either send it to one of its sister committees, Finance or Appropriations Committee or it could send it to the floor for referral. David Sutherland suggested non-fiscal pieces of the proposed bill could be added to another bill. David Goodwin agreed with David Sutherland's suggestion to try to tie the bill to some other one. Les Mehrhoff asked if part of the bill could be taken out and be attached to other bills. David Sutherland again said yes, but it would be best to find a bill that is germane. David Sutherland mentioned an upcoming meeting that he and Sandy Breslin, Bob Heffernan, Betty McLaughlin will sit down with the new Chairman of the Environment Committee to discuss the pre-emption piece of the bill. David Sutherland said he is not sure he can get support for a 5-year pre-emption but may be able to get more support for a 2-year pre-emption. Donna Ellis heard if the bill is voted out of the Environment Committee and then it could be sent on to the Appropriations Committee and that it could die in that Committee in May. Les Mehrhoff asked if a letter would be worth writing in support of HB #5808. Betty McLaughlin said that it would be fine to do a letter of written testimony and be sure that 50 copies be made for the Environment Committee public hearing. Tom McGowan asked about the federal money – can it be matched elsewhere or will we lose it. Chairman Leff said if the Invasive Plants Council does not get the federal money the legislature could say “no” to any state dollars. More discussion between the members took place on what to expect at the Environment Committee Public Hearing on March 17<sup>th</sup>, i.e., how to prepare for the meeting, sign up for the hearing, etc. Betty McLaughlin recommended one spokesman for the Invasive Plants Council, given this is the Environment Committee's last meeting. David Sutherland disagreed with Betty's suggestion. Chairman Leff suggested that one-person come up at a time but be very brief (approximately 30 seconds) – state who you are and are in support of this bill. Chairman Leff said it is important that the Environment Committee see how diverse and how many people are interested in this issue. Chairman Leff asked how many members would be able to make the March 17<sup>th</sup> public hearing? Chairman Leff stated that the Council members and any of their colleagues attending this hearing could make a big difference. Tom McGowan was going to meet with the lake association groups before the public hearing. Chairman Leff noted that the Connecticut Marines Trade Association is aware of the Invasive Plants Council's proposal.

**Next Steps:**

Les Mehrhoff suggested that it is important (maybe make this a future agenda item) that as a Council we need to educate the legislators about invasive plants. Chairman Leff suggested possibly taking out several legislators for a field trip. Les Mehrhoff thought it be best if the legislators were brought to their own districts to visit local areas. Chairman Leff noted that it be important to show the legislators what is very impressive. David Goodwin mentioned that aquatic species is very impressive also. Chairman Leff said that the legislators are more impressed by the aquatic species than invasive terrestrial species. Les Mehrhoff stated that legislators need to hear from constituents, i.e., The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Ct, etc. Chairman Leff stated it would be wise as a next step to schedule some small field trips with legislators during the growing season.

Betty McLaughlin suggested developing a video to capture a larger audience on the invasive plant issue. Les Mehrhoff said to teach the public about the endangered species issue, several years ago they worked with CPTV and found it to be very beneficial. Chairman Leff suggested possible use of a graduate student to put together a video on invasive plants issue. Donna Ellis said the town of Redding presently is putting together a video on invasive plants. Members further discussed the use of videos, tapings and public service announcements to get the message out.

**Old**

**Business:**

Les Mehrhoff distributed a handout entitled “DID YOU KNOW – It is against Connecticut Law to sell these aquarium and water garden plants list.” This list will be put on the University of Connecticut website. This handout is good for the pet industry and stores.

**New**

**Business:**

Chairman Leff announced his retirement from state service to the Council members. He thanked members for all of their efforts. Dr. Louis Magnarelli will be the Acting Chairman of the Council on an interim basis. Dr. Magnarelli stated he will conduct the meetings for a while but as an agency head he cannot be the permanent Chairman because of the potential conflict of interest on legislative matters. Dr. Magnarelli stated another person would need to be appointed as Chairman so the Council can still be effective. Members thanked David Leff for his dedication during his tenure as Chairman. Dr. Magnarelli told Chairman Leff he did a great job and Les Mehrhoff wanted this noted in the minutes as a resolution. Chairman Leff was invited to come back any time to attend future Council meetings.

Chairman Leff: made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by David Goodwin.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jill Carr  
Office of Deputy Commissioner Leff