

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

24Sep2018

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Greta Marks-Strouble

Adam Burnett

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Update on Nod Rd. Japanese Knotweed control
- 3) Status of Ash and Elm trees at Petapawag boat launch
- 4) Grant Opportunity at Fish and Wildlife
- 5) Control efforts for black swallow wart at Shattuck Homestead
- 6) Update on Eliades land - mowing, Phragmites, and Autumn olive
- 7) Possible request: Farmer's and Mechanics for long-term Chestnut restoration
- 8) Action Item Review
- 9) AOB

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

The first order of business was Review of minutes from last meeting.

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Greta Marks-Strouble moved to approve the minutes.
 - Olin Lathrop seconded.
 - The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

The second order of business was the Nod Rd. knotweed stand.

- Olin Lathrop said he had no major updates since last meeting.
- Olin Lathrop felt that what the Committee should do is plan and put some dates on Next Spring's calendar.
 - Mowing was held up by technical difficulties.
 - The Committee will have to test other methods.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble and Brian Bettencourt asked about getting the tractor from Jack Petropolous.
 - Olin Lathrop said - that wouldn't be till spring anyway; he will talk to him.
- (Adam Burnett arrived at 7:08)
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: When would be estimated time for first cut? Late May?
 - Olin Lathrop said – knotweed starts to sprout in April, and is big enough to cut/spray in mid May.

- Will need volunteers to help cut, prior to treating with various mixes/strengths of chemicals.
 - Will also try foliar spray.
 - Brian Bettencourt edited his online calendar – put on March calendar (for 3rd Monday Invasive Species Committee Mtg) to make sure to advertise a Call for Knotweed volunteers on Talk About Groton etc.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that the second application of foliar spray would be done in Aug/Sept.
- Adam Burnett and Brian Bettencourt both mentioned that the Committee should involve Marie Esten(sp?) as well.

The third order of business was Ash Trees at the Petapawag boat launch.

- Olin Lathrop mentioned that he'd talked to Javier (Emerald Ash Borer Speaker), and received scientific papers on EAB control.
 - Emamectin benzoate is the recommended method - a neonicotinoid.
 - Brian Bettencourt recalled that the Committee had talked about this the last time, extensively. (The Committee then reprised discussion from the July mtg)
- Olin Lathrop described his progress from the last time:
 - He looked at multiple injection systems. Got complete data on a couple of them; waiting on more.
 - There are two main concepts: Drill holes every 6 in. + pressure inject the chemical (2000psi), OR a system more like a hypodermic needle with a plastic applicator every 4 in., inject less volume by hand, subsequent plug.
 - 1st concept - \$3k; higher incremental costs after equipment (chemicals).
 - 2nd concept - \$2.7k; less incremental cost after equipment.
 - Adam Burnett asked: Is there more risk with one vs. the other? Perhaps a blowout?
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Wouldn't the by-hand method be more prone to leaks, and uneven application, etc.?
 - Olin Lathrop responded by saying that the two companies (concepts) each say the other is worse for the tree, less effective, etc.
 - Olin Lathrop added that he's also waiting on one or two more methods (companies) to respond.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble asked: Can both systems be used for fungicides and other applications?
 - Olin Lathrop replied Yes, but it'd be "off label" use if using another company's chemical.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: So basically, chemical + applicator is always a package deal. The Committee would have to buy fungicide from same company as applicator (for pesticide).
- Olin Lathrop described also talking to Javier about grants.
 - There is an Urban Forestry grant from DCR that would be a great mechanism for the equipment cost etc.
 - 50% match.

- He emailed DCR; they never replied. He asked if the 50% match could count towards labor; if volunteer labor would count towards that, vs. licensed applicator labor rate.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Why do labor cost reimbursement? Defray costs, use for other purposes?
 - Adam Burnett asked: The Committee would need receipts right?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No; the town's portion would count towards labor (for example), DCR's portion towards equipment/chemicals.
- First deadline is Oct. 1st for pre-application; an informal document, just to judge interest.
- Formal application is Nov. 1st.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Is the pre-application just a letter? Or a form?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It's a form.
- Greta Marks-Strouble moved that Olin Lathrop sends the pre-application for the Urban Forestry grant to DCR.
 - Adam Burnett seconded.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- Brian Bettencourt asked that Olin Lathrop please circulate the pre-application prior to sending.
- Adam Burnett asked about the costs of treatment (number of trees).
 - Olin Lathrop replied: 1 L of chemical is about 1000 holes = more than enough for our trees.
 - Adam Burnett and Olin Lathrop estimated the capacity to be about 100 ash trees ~12in in diameter.
- Adam Burnett said he would start looking for more Ash trees in the interim.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned one other item: He'd started writing the RDA to Conservation Commission, to do the work (it's their land).
- Olin Lathrop and Greta Marks-Strouble both mentioned that regarding Elm trees at that site: The injection equipment should also cover Dutch elm control for the elms.

The fourth item of business was the grant application at Fish and Wildlife.

- Olin Lathrop described the opportunity: a 100% grant, due at mid-late October.
- Olin Lathrop said that the money is mainly for habitat protection, for animals that are of hunting interest. It is also allowed to be used for Invasive Species control.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble asked: What about chestnut ... a species of major wildlife interest.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble asked: Is hunting allowed in Farmers/Mechanics?
 - Adam Burnett replied: Yes
- Olin Lathrop said that he was also interested in using this mechanism for funding black swallow wort removal work at Shattuck Homestead.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he thought Olin Lathrop had said that this was impossible to get done in time.
 - Olin Lathrop said: For chestnuts, yes; too much, not enough time. But black swallowwort at Shattuck, is doable.
 - Olin Lathrop said he'd already talked to Nik Gualco about it. The Conservation Commission has a forester (bid out), and invasive species control is part of the contract; the Committee can get a cost estimate from there.

- Olin Lathrop said: As an aside, he took a look at Shattuck last Saturday; the sprayed plants are good and dead.
- Greta Marks-Strouble mentioned that turkeys abound there.
- Brian Bettencourt said: Olin Lathrop is taking this on.
- Adam Burnett asked: could Greta Marks-Strouble and I take on the grant for Farmers/Mechanics?
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said yes, with funding to buy and plant trees near the existing ones.
 - Adam Burnett said: ideal would be a planned planting, according to the map.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said that chestnuts are \$9/tree in bulk.
 - Adam Burnett added that the Committee would also need fencing and basic equipment.
- Adam Burnett asked: How much is grant opportunity?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Each grant is \$10000-50000.
- Brian Bettencourt strongly cautioned the Committee members against haste in proposal writing.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble agreed, and said she'd rather get it right.
 - Adam Burnett and Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to write to the Fish&Wildlife point of contact person, and ask whether/how the chestnut idea would fit the proposal criteria.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble and Adam Burnett agreed to try a proposal if feasible, and circulate a draft if written.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that the next Committee meeting is Oct. 15th.
- Olin Lathrop added that all funds must be used by June 30th 2019.
- Olin Lathrop finally added: The grant deadline is Oct. 17th.

The fifth order of business was Black swallow wort at Shattuck Homestead.

- Olin Lathrop said he'd already covered a lot of this.
- Greta Marks-Strouble, Bruce Easom, and Olin Lathrop did the work in July.
 - A Conservation Commission site walk last Saturday indicated great control of the plants that were treated but found plenty more that still need treating.
 - This is the focus of the potential grant application.
 - All in Conservation Commission agreed a comprehensive plan was needed.
 - Mowing appears to be better, cheaper than spraying.
 - Mowing is temporally restricted according to turtle nesting periods.
 - Conservation Commission will do turtle "sweep" followed by mowing. Darcy Donald and her volunteer sweepers conduct the work.
- Olin Lathrop said: The turtle sweep must be done in April-Nov.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said she'd read that very early spring is best for invasives control.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked whether she meant "invasives" writ large, or specifically for swallow wort?
 - Greta Marks-Strouble replied: in general.
 - Adam Burnett asked: Would that timing really apply to a perennial forb?
 - Brian Bettencourt said: It would really depend on the year, etc.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that the Conservation Commission will consider a mow right before the turtle restriction.

- Olin Lathrop said: Regardless, the Conservation Commission will be working this winter to make a comprehensive plan.
- Brian Bettencourt replied: The Invasive Species Committee can assist with volunteer labor and publicity.

The sixth order of business was update on Eliades land weed control.

- Olin Lathrop said he felt the Committee had dropped the ball here.
 - However, it's not too late for us to do a few things.
 - The Committee should go take a look and catalog results of our effort last fall.
- Olin Lathrop said: There is a Vesper's sparrow restriction on this land that hinders mowing.
 - Once that restriction opens up, Smegelski (sp?) may mow for autumn olive control, this fall. That's possible. However, there's not much opportunity for spraying after that effort.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What about Phragmites?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The Committee can do a subsequent foliar application; this is a decent time of year to do this now.
 - Olin Lathrop, Adam Burnett, and Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to propose a Sat or Sun morning to get out there and work on the Phragmites; they will circulate to the Committee members.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Just do a Google "form".
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said she would figure it out or just send email.
 - Adam Burnett asked: Would the Committee cut and spray? Or just spray? Try both.
 - Olin Lathrop and Brian Bettencourt both replied: It depends on how big the stand is right now.

The seventh order of business was a possible grant request for Farmer's and Mechanics.

- Brian Bettencourt said: This was largely covered earlier.
- Greta Marks-Strouble mentioned that her chestnuts are still looking healthy.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that the grant would look very weak without express permission of the landowner.
 - Adam Burnett agreed.
 - Adam Burnett asked: Is it possible to get formal approval from Conservation Commission?
 - Olin Lathrop said yes, but that would require a letter to Conservation Commission; getting on their agenda, and formal approval via vote.
- Brian Bettencourt said: That puts the kibosh on this potentially.
 - This is part of Adam Burnett and Greta Marks Strouble's charge to figure out feasibility of doing this in this cycle vs. next year's cycle.
- Olin Lathrop said he felt it can be done if you really put the effort into it.
 - Adam Burnett said : Perhaps it could just get partially done, in preparation for the next application cycle.

The eighth order of business was Action Item Review.

- Outstanding items:

- Brian Bettencourt to ask Adam Burnett for scan of hand-written notes from earlier meeting; Brian Bettencourt will type them up.
 - Done
- Olin Lathrop to talk to Tom Delaney (arm mower) and/or Jack Petropolous (tractor) re/ alternative mowing methods.
 - Not done
- Olin Lathrop to outline proposal to town manager re/ control of EAB with systemic pesticide; circulate draft.
 - Has morphed into current Action Item
- Greta Marks-Strouble to research neem oil for EAB.
 - Done
 - Discussed last time
- Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop to review Greta Marks-Strouble's grants information, plot likely targeted applications. Olin Lathrop will look at the previous Fish and Wildlife materials, talk to Javier about it.
 - Done
- Brian Bettencourt to advertise on Talk About Groton/Groton Herald for new members, highlight recent efforts etc. Talk to Herald about our projects. Outreach.
 - Done on TAG; not in Herald.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he'd heard from Pat Parker-Roach about Knotweed; he wants to attend meetings, but is gone tonight.

The ninth order of business was Any Other Business.

- Adam Burnett led a discussion on pressure pesticide applicators and companies – he wants to double check that at least one company will sell one applicator that will inject both pesticide and fungicide(s).
- Adam Burnett asked: How frequent is application?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Every two years.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: I think fungicide is every year.
- Greta Marks-Strouble asked: Are there applications for wooly adelgid as well?
 - Olin Lathrop wondered if the same chemical could be used (EAB and adelgid)?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: Likely yes, systemic neonicotinoids will kill any insect that *eats* the tissue.
- Brian Bettencourt asked, re/ wooly adelgid ...
 - Does it have to be along the twig?
 - He'd found some potential ones. This led to a Committee discussion re/ morphology of wooly adelgid.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that he observed that one American Chestnut in Farmer's/Mechanics (big one) does have fruit.
 - It's not clear if pollinated or not.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Could the Committee plant those fruit?
 - Adam Burnett said: Wait till mid-late October, to see if fruits are shriveled or plump.
 - Adam Burnett added that he would check back later.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Wouldn't squirrels be eating them if they were plumped up?
 - Greta Marks-Strouble added that she would check too.

Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn.

Greta Marks-Strouble seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.