

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

18Mar2019

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Richard Hewitt

Adam Burnett

Agenda:

- Review of minutes from last meeting
- Status of Petapawag Picnic Area Ash tree efforts
- Report on Prescott Invasives Class
- Report on Chestnuts and Red Mulberries
- Eliades land - next steps
- Nod Rd. knotweed - next steps
- Next brochure - progress report
- Getting large numbers of brochures printed
- Report from Spotted Lantern Fly course
- Black Swallowwort in Shattuck Homestead status
- Getting more members, possible presentation to Garden Club

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.

The first order of business was Review of Minutes.

- The minutes were reviewed live on Screen.
- Minutes of both the October 2018 and December 2018 meetings were reviewed.
- Olin Lathrop moved to approve.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

The second order of business was Petapawag Place Ash tree efforts.

- Olin Lathrop reported that he had discussed with the Finance Committee. Getting funding was more complicated than expected. Mark Haddad said that the request was a bit steep. The Conservation Commission fund was not appropriate either. The Town Accountant suggested the Finance Committee, since they hold \$150K in reserve for things that pop up out of budget cycle.
 - He went to Finance Committee, asked for up to \$3K. They agreed.
 - He ordered the Wedgle system with High-Volume kit (for the backpack operation). Total cost was about \$2.7 K.

- Additionally, Olin Lathrop reported that he talked to the Wedgle system vendor – the vendor sold him the 8x120mL bottles for the price of one 1L bottle!
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: That kit will work with both bottle types?
 - Olin Lathrop replied Yes, and the high volume kit will help if the Committee needs to rig up something custom.
 - Currently, the Committee is waiting till weather gets warmer to try the kit.
- Richard Hewitt asked: When to treat the trees?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Right after leaf out, sometime in April probably.
- Olin Lathrop added that the Committee will need lots of help.
 - Richard Hewitt asked whether week days or week ends only will be a go? Week days better for him.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that he can take some time off occasionally to do Committee work during the week.
 - Brian Bettencourt said that during the week is really tough for him.
- Richard Hewitt asked: Around Petapawag, there is lots of Asian bittersweet as well ... can the Committee get rid of that as well?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied - Yes.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, saying that no one would object to the Committee clipping bittersweet.
 - Brian Bettencourt said that clipping is inadequate; the Committee would need to cut and paint the stumps w/ Roundup.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Permission would be required to do that, and it would probably have to done on a separate day. The full time will be required to treat 12 ash trees, especially since this will be the first time trying the method.
- Olin Lathrop added that the material will ship by end March at the latest.

The third order of business was the Invasives class at Prescott.

- Olin Lathrop described the genesis of the class: When talking with Jack Petropolous about Nod Rd. knotweed stand ... Jack Petropolous' wife organizes Prescott classes and suggested that Olin Lathrop do one regarding invasive species. He's happy to do it.
- Olin Lathrop said he will do three classes. Two evenings and then a field trip. Last week in April, 1st week in May.
 - Richard Hewitt said he would like to take that class! Also would like to hand out brochures there for the Committee.
- Olin Lathrop said he will lean on the Committee brochures and web material.
- Olin Lathrop described a field trip the class would take: They will go to Nod Rd. knotweed, Petapawag for EAB, Asian bittersweet.
 - Brian Bettencourt and Richard Hewitt agreed this was a great idea.
 - Richard Hewitt said the class would help with the Committee membership drive; he would show up to help out.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked – is there publicity for the class?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Prescott does all that.

The fourth order of business was Chestnuts and Red Mulberries.

- Brian Bettencourt said: Adam Burnett is not here – he’s the main chestnut man.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Since Greta Marks-Strouble is no longer attending – what becomes of her red mulberry seedling?
 - Brian Bettencourt emailed Great Marks-Strouble. He will pick up the tree if she allows.

The fifth order of business is Eliades – next steps at that site.

- Olin Lathrop said : There is not much going on.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: We understand it couldn’t get mowed this fall – what about this spring?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The problem is the bird nesting season. Too muddy/snowy before Vesper sparrow season typically...
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: But if you never mow ... it’ll never be a field habitat...???
 - Olin Lathrop said that’s correct; it’s frustrating.
- Brian Bettencourt, Olin Lathrop, and Richard Hewitt took an Action Item: Whoever is in the neighborhood over the next month or two, go take a peek and report back!
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that he was afraid that Phragmites is likely back. Better control of Autumn olive was achieved. He felt that the Committee should hit both again.
- Brian Bettencourt added: Bundle and cut (Phragmites) was too difficult – it’s likely that foliar spray will be applied next time.
- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee should definitely do more Autumn olive control – that was effective!

The sixth order of business was Nod Rd. knotweed - next steps.

- Olin Lathrop said that he’d talked to Jack Petropolous again. He had said a good idea was to use a rotating-blade heavy duty weedwhacker type thing. He has one. We can borrow.
 - Brian Bettencourt said – that sounds dangerous!
- Olin Lathrop added that it would have to wait till a little later in the spring.
- The Committee reviewed a map of the area on screen.
- Olin Lathrop asked: How can the Committee mark off some plots? For a good study the plots should be clearly defined.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Would the marks/tapes go all around each plot?
 - Olin Lathrop said no - just straight shots back from the road.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to go to hardware store, see what options they have for marking off the knotweed plots --- stakes, numbers, etc.
- Brian Bettencourt added that he would be a stickler for replication and controls!
 - Olin Lathrop agreed they were necessary elements of a controlled study.
- Olin Lathrop added that one interesting plot is full of Virginia creeper.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that no one at the recent Keystone meeting had ever done a controlled experiment on knotweed control! Folks would love to see it published.
 - Brian Bettencourt said – that’s a great idea – where to publish it ...?
 - Olin Lathrop said the Committee could figure that exact item out later.
- The Committee had a discussion re/ the number of plots to mark off and treat.

- There are several combinations of different methods. A true factorial design yields large sample sizes quickly. Foliar, stem inject, glyphosate, triclopyr, concentrations of both chemicals all could be explored.
- Olin Lathrop added: Even a weed scientist professor at UMass whom he'd spoken with didn't know the best method... he wants to see it published.
- Brian Bettencourt led a discussion on the use of a 50:50 mix of triclopyr and glyphosate. The Committee felt that was only allowed if it was bought premixed.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, saying it was a Federal offense to use a pesticide off-label.

The seventh order of business was new brochure progress.

- Brian Bettencourt debuted the new Black swallowwort brochure.
- The Committee reviewed the draft brochure on screen.
 - Minor corrections and edits were made.
- Richard Hewitt said – put in a picture of native common milkweed! For comparison.
 - Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop both agreed that was a good idea.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to get a good picture of common milkweed, insert into the brochure at an appropriate spot.
- The Committee made some further edits to content, and added new sentences.

The eighth order of business was brochure printing.

- Richard Hewitt reported that he'd gotten a quote for 5 brochures @ 200 of each. 2 sided, color, pre-folded. \$294 at Minutemen Press at Devens.
- Richard Hewitt said he'd also called Karen Twomey at the Commissioners of Trust Funds. She said funding was likely available.
- Olin Lathrop moved to authorize Richard Hewitt to go get funding and if successful, to go ahead and get the brochures printed.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The motion Passed unanimously.
 - Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to get Commissioners of Trust Funds or other funding for brochures, and go get them printed.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to finish the swallowwort brochure, and send PDFs of all 6 brochures to Richard Hewitt for printing.
 - Richard Hewitt said he would actually ask for 300 copies of 6 brochures. The cost will probably end up around \$500.
 - Olin Lathrop said he felt this was a great use for the Commissioners of Trust Funds dollars.
 - Richard Hewitt said that they maintain Bertozzi and one other area.
- The Committee discussed where to put the brochures (trail heads etc.).

The ninth order of business was a report from Spotted Lantern Fly Course.

- Olin Lathrop said he went to the class; it was a pretty scary topic. This is a large fly, a distant relative of gypsy moth. It's a big problem just north of Philadelphia and the Amish part of PA.

- The fly is harmless to people. It drills down into living tissue of trees, sucks out juices. Also, the feces have so much sugar that the secondary effect of infestation is fungal growth.
 - The fungus kills understory plants.
- The fly is attracted to Tree of Heaven.
 - Brian Bettencourt said - Great! That's an Invasive tree!
- Olin Lathrop agreed, and added the fly is also unfortunately attracted to grapes and other trees. It is not totally host specific.
 - One way to kill the Spotted Lantern Fly is chemical stem injection into Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus).
 - There is a lot of active work on this. It looks like pheromone traps will be successful.
 - Brian Bettencourt said - Gypsy moth history teaches us the pheromone traps won't be 100% effective.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Is this an immediate threat to our area?
 - Olin Lathrop said: Not if you don't think 2-3 years isn't a threat. The flies hitch rides on everything.
 - Olin Lathrop added: They lay eggs on just about everything! The eggs are covered with a waxy substance.

The tenth order of business was Black Swallowwort in Shattuck Homestead status.

- Olin Lathrop said he really wants the Conservation Commission to do control of swallowwort this year. The key problem is dealing with the turtle restriction. It will require lots of volunteers.
- Brian Bettencourt said – the Committee can help organize volunteers with Darcy Donald (turtle maven).
- Richard Hewitt added: Paul Funch mentioned that Trails folks would be willing to help.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What is the timing of turtle restriction?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Timing is unfortunately also when it would best for killing the plant. The Conservation Commission is likely to mow in May or June. We want to treat afterwards – see if any have seedpods.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Is the Conservation Commission on this?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes.

The final order of business was getting more members, and a possible presentation to Garden Club.

- Olin Lathrop reported that at the recent Conservation Forum, he'd talked to Garden Club folks; they were vaguely interested.
 - Richard Hewitt said: Get them in the Prescott class!
- Olin Lathrop said they want a presentation to them – they do that regularly.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: He would love to do a presentation.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to contact Susan Goehringer about good dates/times for Invasives Comm presentation to Garden Club; copy Brian Bettencourt and introduce. This is to be done prior to next meeting!

Olin Lathrop: Moved to adjourn the meeting.

Richard Hewitt: Seconded.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.