

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

20May2019

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Richard Hewitt

Adam Burnett

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Status of Petapawag ash tree efforts
- 3) Report on Chestnuts and Red Mulberries
- 4) Eliades land autumn olive and Phragmites – next steps
- 5) Nod Rd. knotweed – next steps
- 6) Next brochure – progress on printing
- 7) Black swallowwort in Shattuck homestead – status
- 8) Getting more members, possible presentation to Garden Club
- 9) More public presentations
- 10) Report on interview w/ Groton SchoOlin Lathrop student, other communications
- 11) Any Other Business

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

The first order of business was review of minutes from the March meeting.

- The draft minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Minor changes were made.
- Olin Lathrop moved to approve the minutes as amended.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

The second order of business was Petapawag ash tree efforts.

- Olin Lathrop reported visiting the site on the previous Sunday; the trees were just barely breaking bud.
 - Brian Bettencourt noted that it's been a cold spring.
 - Adam Burnett agreed and added that they're slow as a species.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: So what's next ...
- Olin Lathrop said he would keep an eye on the trees.

- Adam Burnett said that in about 2 weeks, timing would be right to treat the trees.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item: When it looks like time for the Ash Tree effort, to ask for Committee/volunteer help in advance.
- Brian Bettencourt said that the likely weekend would be the one following Memorial day weekend.
- The Committee viewed the application apparatus (Olin Lathrop brought in).
 - Olin Lathrop demonstrated the assembly and use (no chemicals actually opened), including the self-sealing plastic plug to guide the needle.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that Riverfest is Jun 9th.

The third order of business was a report on Chestnuts and Red Mulberries.

- Adam Burnett said he had not ordered any mulberry plants yet.
- The Chestnut proposal is tabled for now.

The fourth order of business was Eliades land – next steps.

- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee was at risk of dropping the ball on Eliades; Vesper swallows are the issue. No one can touch the place.
- Olin Lathrop reported that he'd also stopped by Eliades a month ago, and noted that the Phragmites is back.
 - Brian Bettencourt said that it was likely the Committee treated too late in the season.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, and added that treatment was needed in back to back years.
 - Adam Burnett agreed; it must be hit twice.
- Olin Lathrop said – the committee should do foliar application this year.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and proposed to do control later in the summer.
 - Olin Lathrop said an ideal time would be September.
 - Adam Burnett said that 1st week September would be perfect; very effective timing in his experience.

The fifth order of business was Nod Rd. Knotweed.

- Olin Lathrop asked: Has everybody read the plan?
 - (YES) – all committee members.
- Richard Hewitt said he felt that it was a perfect site.
- Brian Bettencourt mentioned his concern regarding lack of replication of treatments (plots).
- The Committee had a discussion re/ the treatment plan.
 - Olin Lathrop said: It is a multi-year study, don't forget.
 - This yields pseudo-replication within plots.
 - The Committee discussed swapping treatments between blocks in future experiments.
 - Adam Burnett said that plots should be as uniform as possible.
 - Olin Lathrop added: the site is open to the South and sun – all plots get similar insolation.
- Brian Bettencourt added: This is an exploratory study only.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed; The Committee doesn't know what to expect ... and will use following years to try the best combinations of treatments.

- Brian Bettencourt said: Let's talk about measurement.
 - Olin Lathrop said the basic idea is to wait till next spring (after treatment); see what pops up.
 - Adam Burnett proposed number of stems per square foot as a metric.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: This is difficult, as the plants are super clumped.
 - Richard Hewitt proposed just taking photos; measure trends only.
 - Adam Burnett said a good compromise is to measure number of stems per square yard or meter, only measuring a subset of squares per plot.
- Brian Bettencourt mentioned his concern regarding the lack of blinding to treatments, and recommended blinded analysis in future years.
- Olin Lathrop said that photos are fine for now, and mentioned seeing a great example of a field, half cut early in season.
 - Brian Bettencourt and Adam Burnett discussed measuring some plants at random in each half of a plot, in that case.
 - Brian Bettencourt and Adam Burnett took an Action Item: They will apply a quantitative metric this year, even though the Committee agrees this is a Qualitative, Exploratory study only.
- The Committee next discussed timing. Some of the blocks are to be CUT.
 - Jack Petropolous could cut Wed., Thurs., or Fri. of 3rd week May.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he can't make it during the week.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to email the Committee regarding timing of cutting of knotweed this week.
- Olin Lathrop proposed the coming weekend as a great time to cut below a node and drip in herbicide.
 - A record keeper will be required - How much material, how many cuts.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he could help on the coming weekend.
 - The weather to determine as well.
- All present Committee Members took an Action Item to email the list and coordinate knotweed cutting this weekend.
- Olin Lathrop said he would like to do some foliar spraying as well.
 - Brian Bettencourt said it would be desirable to try to get the different treatments done as close together temporally as possible.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, and added that with more volunteers, more work could be done more quickly. With spraying – no help is needed.
- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that regarding volunteers, he'd had recent communication with the Scouts. Communication with Evan Morse was described and reviewed.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Can the Scouts be involved when there's herbicide use?
 - Olin Lathrop and Adam Burnett replied: Probably not.
 - The Committee discussed having Boy/Cub Scout volunteer efforts focus on manual pulls.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he would tell Evan at Scouts that the Committee would love the help; it would have to be on a manual pull effort, or the turtle sweep.
 - Adam Burnett added: Bittersweet would be perfect.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: Garlic Mustard too.

- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to ask Nik Gualco about the timing of a turtle sweep at Shattuck, and to report to the Committee such that the Scouts could be involved.
- Adam Burnett and Olin Lathrop agreed that a fun backup plan would be pulling bittersweet at Sorhaug woods.

The sixth order of business was brochure printing.

- Richard Hewitt reported that the Commissioners of Trust Funds agreed to pay for the whole thing. 300 copies each of 6 brochures. \$290-odd in total.
 - The copies should be available 3rd week of May.
- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee should give a bunch to Rick Muhlke.
- Adam Burnett added: Riverfest June 9th – a great spot for distribution.
- Brian Bettencourt added that the Library is a great idea.
- Adam Burnett said: The Committee can have as many RiverFest tables as they want at the Trails Committee for example. Two tables.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed – and said get two tables, put them in an L.
 - Adam Burnett said he would cut some invasive plants and put them on the table.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he was camping that weekend and couldn't attend.
- Richard Hewitt added - regarding library distribution – the Committee will need to talk to Vanessa and get permission.

The seventh order of business was black swallowwort at Shattuck Homestead.

- Olin Lathrop said that mowing must be preceded by a turtle sweep. The Conservation Commission is planning on this. Darcy Donald is on board.
 - Brian Bettencourt said - Darcy will take care of volunteers; also, this is where Cub Scouts would be great.
- Olin Lathrop said that there was no direct treatment planned for swallowwort - just mowing.
- Olin Lathrop reported that the effort was currently tied up in red tape. The Conservation Commission is leading the here.

The eighth order of business was new members / presentation to the Garden Club.

- Olin Lathrop reported that he'd talked to the Garden Club again at a recent town meeting; the gave a very lukewarm response.
 - Brian Bettencourt said that was surprising - Suzanne is a really warm and engaging person.
 - Olin Lathrop said: She wasn't there.
- Olin Lathrop said he had a better idea ... this led to the next item:

The ninth order of business was more public presentations.

- Olin Lathrop said that Carole Greenfield had been in touch. She may join the Committee.
 - The Prescott class fell through.
 - Carole's idea was a lecture series at the Library. She'd talked to the library; they agreed it's a good idea.

- Olin Lathrop said he'd followed up with the library. The Committee could sponsor an official lecture series.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he would love to help.
 - Olin Lathrop said this would be just one or two species per talk; keep it simple.
 - The Committee discussed the idea.
 - Adam Burnett said the focus should be on the material in the brochures.
 - The Committee discussed the level of class material and focus.
 - Olin Lathrop said that the series should be one per month and use lots of pictures. Maybe a field trip after each class.
 - Richard Hewitt said he would like one quick survey class to begin the series.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and said that way folks could also just go to the ones they want to.
 - Adam Burnett said there should be just a handful overall.
 - Olin Lathrop said: Don't forget, this all depends on what the library wants – their idea was once a month!
 - Adam Burnett and Brian Bettencourt agreed: The first seminar would be an overview.
 - What's an invasive, why does it matter, and then present the rogue's gallery.
 - Next lay out the schedule of individual lectures (plants).
- Adam Burnett moved that the Committee endorse and commit to doing a series of talks at the Library.
 - Olin Lathrop seconded.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- Olin Lathrop said he would tell the library tomorrow.

The tenth order of business was communication with a Groton School student and other communications.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd spoken with Lily, a David Black student. She was writing a paper about Invasive Species and control. The paper was to be submitted to the Nashoba Valley Voice.
 - The Committee discussed the effort.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he'd asked to see the draft before publication, and asked the Committee if that was a correct move.
 - Olin Lathrop and Richard Hewitt replied: Yes, that's okay. They have a right to say no, but they will probably agree to do so.
- Brian Bettencourt also reported a contact from a town citizen – asking about garlic mustard along the bike path.
 - The Committee discussed Bettencourt's positive but noncommittal reply.
 - Adam Burnett said – Garlic Mustard along the bike path would be a perfect venue for boy scouts.
 - Brian Bettencourt said the Scouts would love it even more – you can eat the plant! He felt it would be a fun project.

The eleventh order of business was Any Other Business:

- The Committee discussed the potential for Phragmites arriving at the Great Carmichael Swamp.

- Adam Burnett said that Phragmites can invade a permanent, woody/shrubby swamp like that.
 - Brian Bettencourt said - I'm going to keep my eyes on it then.
 - Adam Burnett described how Phragmites creates its own habitat by dropping straw.
- The Committee discussed Army Corps of Engineers efforts on Phragmites in Mill Pond in Littleton.
 - A similar project could someday happen in Groton too according to federal law.
 - The Corps is treating 38 acres of solid Phragmites in Mill Pond.
 - First, they will treat the phragmites with glyphosate.
 - Next, they will dredge to increase depth; pump the material into the Phragmites area; and convert it back to a forested swamp.
 - The effort won't kick off for a few years.
 - The town pays 35%.

Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn the meeting.

Adam Burnett seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.