

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

18May2020

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Adam Burnett

Richard Hewitt

Jonathan Basch

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes from last meeting
2. Knotweed: Plans for Nod Rd., Hayden Rd., and Springfield study
3. Updated plans for speaker series (David Black, others)
4. Collaboration with the Parks Commission
5. Invasives at Shattuck Homestead
6. Printing of new brochures
7. Discussion of wooly adelgid in Groton (added 5/6)

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Minor edits were made.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept as edited.
 - Adam Burnett seconded.
- The motion passed by roll-call voice vote; Richard Hewitt abstaining since he wasn't in attendance at the last meeting.

The second order of business was Japanese Knotweed – Nod Rd., Hayden Rd., and the Springfield study.

- Report on Nod Rd. Knotweed:
 - Olin Lathrop visited that afternoon and took pictures.
 - The knotweed still looks “pretty dead”. Some shoots are up a foot or so.
 - The control plot is growing nicely.
 - Many treated plots are severely impacted.
 - All 10 plots showed an overall big reduction.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: It is likely more time is needed to show differences in efficacy among methods.
 - Richard Hewitt asked: When is the next step (reapplication)?

- Olin Lathrop replied: Learn how to take the knotweed down to zero!
 - Olin Lathrop felt that he didn't want to decide yet on which treatments to re-do in 2nd year; see which worked best in year 1 - and repeat.
 - This could perhaps be foliar spray.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, saying that it was consistent with what he'd observed on private property.
 - Periodic reassessments will need to be made – see the rate of resprout in the different plots.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, and stated that the next few weeks will be a good window for initial re-assessment. By June 1st, a good picture of what worked, and what to repeat, will have emerged.
- Hayden Rd. Knotweed report:
 - Brian Bettencourt was there two weeks ago. He observed minimal new sprouts at that time; will need to recheck.
 - He agreed to re-check this coming weekend.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Does the current COVID19 situation with town government prohibit the Committee from working?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No.
 - The preferred method for control on the Hayden Rd. stand: Cut and Drip, fairly soon.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied that he would wait - until the knotweed is tall enough to cut easily, to be able to see all the sprouts.
 - Olin Lathrop said: Growth is really rapid. Don't need to wait that long.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: You want to get it while young and tender, but big enough to see it all and treat successfully.
 - Olin Lathrop looked up when Nod Rd. treatment was done last year --- it was May 25th.
 - The Committee discussed that it'd been a very cold spring; waiting a couple weeks would be beneficial.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to inspect Hayden Rd. knotweed stand over Memorial Day weekend, and report back on growth and health.
 - He also mentioned that since it was a shadier spot (relative to Nod Rd. stand), the growth would likely be slower.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that there is another stand of knotweed on Hayden Rd., but on private land.
- Springfield Knotweed Study report:
 - Olin Lathrop described going to a UMass course on forestry before the COVID19 shutdown. Some people there were working on Knotweed.
 - Two attendees were talking about starting a study of control methods this spring, in Springfield, MA.
 - Olin Lathrop told them about what the Committee was up to.
 - He suggested that the Committee (and them) swap seminars.
 - The method described by the other meeting attendee was to wait till Fall; cut and drip very concentrated glyphosate.

- Richard Hewitt said: This would be a great comparison study.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Who were these folks? Academics?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: One was with the Forest Service; another was retired. Both were knowledgeable folks.
 - Richard Hewitt said: The Committee should invite them to the Nod Rd. project.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: They probably wouldn't care that much. The Committee should share results once done.
 - Brian Bettencourt described pulling baby knotweed sprouts every week, while walking down Hayden Rd. (roadside patch, with agreement of private landowner friend).
 - The Committee had a discussion regarding the ineffectiveness of pulling.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Is there a need to contact the Springfield folks and say the Committee is starting the Nod Rd. effort up again?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No, they think they know the best methods; we'll be in touch when we're done.
- The Committee had a discussion regarding additional knotweed control methods.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned a recent visit to Shattuck Homestead.
 - He observed copious knotweed along the side of Martins Pond Rd.
 - This is all conservation land.
 - The Committee could get there on the same day they work on Hayden Rd.
 - Richard Hewitt said: Agree, get it early.

The third order of business was updated plans for speaker series (David Black, others)

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd been in touch with David Black. He agreed to do a seminar.
 - He suggested after school winds down.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: That might have to be pushed out-
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: Not if done via Zoom...
- Brian Bettencourt said: If the seminar is done via Zoom, there are no restrictions on attendance, etc...
 - Olin Lathrop said: This might be a good test to see how many would attend via Zoom.
 - Brian Bettencourt described a recent Groton Conservation Trust seminar he recently gave – there were 25-30 attendees.
 - Olin Lathrop said: In person is always better, but it is what it is.
- Olin Lathrop Moved to authorize Brian Bettencourt to set up a Zoom meeting for David Black to talk on invasive species and climate change.
 - Jonathan Basch Seconded.
 - The Motion passed via unanimous roll call.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to contact David Black and suggest a June/July Zoom seminar.
- The Committee had a discussion regarding methods to control questions and flow in Zoom.
- Olin Lathrop said that he'd asked folks at the recent UMass class about having people come and visit us:

- Tawny Kamisky (sp?) said there is a standard rate for that sort of thing, for Professors to come out and speak (on the order of a few hundred dollars).
- Brian Bettencourt said: That's probably for in person visits.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee could probably ask the Commissioners of Trust Funds to fund honoraria if need be.
 - Richard Hewitt agreed – the Commissioners specifically mentioned in previous discussion that they pay for speakers.
- Olin Lathrop said he'd like to get someone to come out and speak about Spotted Lanternfly.
 - He will wait until COVID19 restrictions dial back.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed that lanternfly would be a great topic.
- Olin Lathrop said: There are plenty of other good people / topics, wooly adelgid for example. There's an expert there in Harvard Forest.

The fourth order of business was Collaboration with the Parks Commission

- Olin Lathrop said: This was Adam Burnett's item.
- Adam Burnett reported that he'd asked them about Ash tree work. They said that yes, the Committee could go around and look for Ash trees that were infested.
 - The Committee would then come back and present to them.
 - Richard Hewitt said: I thought the Committee was supposed to ask them for help, to find out where the trees are.
- Adam Burnett said: There was no real help offered on their part; they said the Committee could go look around.
- Jonathan Basch said: At the seminar, we could ask for volunteers to go look around for Ash trees worth saving, tag them for the Committee.
 - Olin Lathrop said: There aren't many left to save.
 - Adam Burnett agreed, and said the situation is really bad. For example, look at end of Indian Hill Rd: There is one large stand of trees, all just this year – all devastated.
- Adam Burnett shared pictures of treated ash trees that he took. They were leafing out. Many looked undamaged.
 - The pictures were taken in Petapawag - all trees that the Committee treated last year.
 - Olin Lathrop said he'd driven through the area that day; it looked like most ash trees were leafing out okay.
 - Trees are alive ... the Committee would see how bad they look this summer.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Will summertime bring out more damage?
 - Adam Burnett replied: Not necessarily, they'd be dead by now.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Are there plans to repeat this summer?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The treatment is supposedly good for 2 years, perhaps even 3.
 - So this year --- the Committee would only work on new trees if they can be found.
 - Adam Burnett added: Some elms were also treated. They seem to be doing okay as well.

The fifth item of business was invasive species at Shattuck Homestead.

- Olin Lathrop said: To recap – the main problem was black swallowwort.
 - It was treated last year with the backpack sprayer along wall and road.
 - Also, the field was mowed before seed pods are viable --- the idea is to slow the swallowwort down, and delay recruitment.
 - The Conservation Commission had a company come in: 3-4 guys with backpack sprayers in September --- again before seeds viable --- treated all plants they could find.
- Olin Lathrop added: He'd been back a week ago --- the area looked good, but he saw some swallowwort popping up along rock walls etc.
 - He would like to do a mop-up spot treatment, and another mow.
 - This would require a turtle sweep.
 - He is authorized to treat.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned: The site also has knotweed. The Committee could treat that at the same time as Hayden Rd. Japanese Knotweed.

The sixth order of business was printing of new brochures.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: Did Richard Hewitt print more?
 - Richard Hewitt replied: Not yet --- he can go back to Commissioners of Trust Funds with another proposal.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The brochures currently in hand are $\frac{3}{4}$ gone. The Committee needs to top up.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Do they fund ongoing work, instead of one-off things?
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: The seventh one has not been printed at all, correct?
 - Richard Hewitt: Yes on both counts.
- Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to approach the Commissioners of Trust Funds regarding printing up the New 7th brochure ... and while doing so, printing another smaller run of the original 6.
- Jonathan Basch asked: Where could we distribute them during these COVID19 restrictions?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: Good question ...
 - Richard Hewitt said: Maybe not for distribution right now, but by fall.

The seventh order of business was Woolly Adelgid in Groton.

- Adam Burnett showed a picture of woolly adelgid on hemlock on Gratuity Rd.
 - The Committee discussed the mild winter.
 - There was general agreement that it would be terrible if adelgid destroyed big hemlock stands in Groton
- Brian Bettencourt said: There are several nice stands in Groton (Indian Hill)
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned Hemlock Grove.
- Olin Lathrop said that he has been tracking adelgid for 6 years or so. After 2016 it got beat back somewhat. But now it seems to be back, especially up in Sorhaug Woods.

- Adam Burnett asked: How do they spread?
 - The Committee had a general discussion on wooly adelgid.
 - The insect hijacks rides on birds, and perhaps spreads by wind as well.
- Olin Lathrop said: There's a new phenomenon of some trees recovering. No one is sure how --- some researchers are working on it.
 - The general expectation is for lots more this year, due to a very mild winter.
- Adam Burnett asked: Are there pesticide injection methods?
 - Olin Lathrop and Brian Bettencourt mentioned dormant oil treatment --- it's very difficult on large trees.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Has anyone tried an injection method?
 - Brian Bettencourt sent an email to Prof. Roy Van Driesche (UMass) to ask. He agreed to report back to the Committee.
- Olin Lathrop said he would ask around.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: He would need to do research on mechanism of action --- it can't just be spread it everywhere.

In general discussion, Brian Bettencourt described receiving a Volunteer Interest Form from another person.

Also: Richard Hewitt led a discussion on the Community Preservation Commission.

- The State reimburses 20-25% typically.
- He wanted to mention how much good conservation, trails, other work around town is funded by CPC.
- For example, Baddacook and Knopps ponds --- the CPC funded treating aquatic invasive species.
- CPC funds could probably be used for invasive treatment on recreation fields and historic property.
 - Perhaps Baddacook, other park areas (heavy bittersweet, other invasives there)
- There was recent discussion among selectmen regarding dropping the CPC entirely or reducing the levy.
- He felt that this needed to get on the agenda officially for the next Committee meeting.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Richard Hewitt Seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.