

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

15 June 2020

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Richard Hewitt

Alison Hamilton

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Update on Nod Road Japanese knotweed study
- 3) Updates on Japanese knotweed treatment at Hayden Road and Shattuck Homestead
- 4) Review of Black swallowwort at Shattuck Homestead
- 5) Brochures: Printing more of existing ones, and nominations for new brochure
- 6) Woolly adelgid study in Groton
- 7) Speaker updates, and whether/how to do via Zoom or in person

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Minor changes were made live.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept the minutes as edited.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The Motion passed by unanimous roll call.

The second order of business was an update on the Nod Road Japanese knotweed study.

- Olin Lathrop indicated there were no updates to report.
- Brian Bettencourt said the Committee needed to decide when to go back and treat the knotweed the second time.
- Richard Hewitt asked: What about the article Brian Bettencourt found regarding mechanical strangulation of knotweed with hardware cloth?
 - Brian Bettencourt said he found the approach interesting ... but it would likely be way too much work for a stand of that size.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed and said it could be tried in a small area.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he had leftover hardware cloth.

- Richard Hewitt said that homeowners could do it --- a non chemical approach --- the Committee could recommend the approach in a brochure.
- Olin Lathrop added: The Committee could try it on a small plot elsewhere.
 - He did not want to recommend it until if the Committee could see if it works. He suspects the roots could sustain the plants for a long time.
 - Alison Hamilton agreed, adding that Japanese Knotweed evolved on the side of volcanoes in tough soil --- it can grow anywhere.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee can try it and see what happens.
- Brian Bettencourt said: The Committee could try it on the “other side of the path” on the Hayden Rd. extension --- a small patch there. People might disturb it, but that’d be no big loss.
- Alison Hamilton said: Leave a sign, explain what we’re doing.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that there are plenty of other places where knotweed is growing in town.

The third order of business was updates on Japanese knotweed treatment at Hayden Rd. and Shattuck Homestead.

- Brian Bettencourt showed pictures from the end of Hayden Rd., where the knotweed is growing.
 - There is also Asian Bittersweet at the entrance to path. Could be treated at same time perhaps...
 - A Mixture of large and small knotweed --- but ready to cut.
 - Alison Hamilton asked: Where is it?
 - Brian Bettencourt gave an explanation of the Hayden Rd. extension (fire road).
- Brian Bettencourt said: The stand is ready to go. It can be treated at any point now.
- Olin Lathrop indicated that worked well in the past was to have 2 cutters and 1 applicator.
- Richard Hewitt asked: What to cut with?
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Pruners.
 - Richard Hewitt asked: What about a machete?
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Yes that’s possible --- but control is key. You need to cut just above a node.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Who’s around this weekend?
 - Alison Hamilton, Olin Lathrop replied: Yes.
 - Richard Hewitt mentioned that it was going to be hot!
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Hot weather is good for herbicide action!
- Brian Bettencourt said Olin Lathrop is the applicator. He drives the schedule here.
 - The Committee had a discussion regarding availability and timing.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to email the Committee regarding treatment of the Hayden Rd. Japanese Knotweed stand: SATURDAY 20th JUNE, 8 AM at the end of Hayden Rd.

The fourth order of business was a review of Black Swallowwort at Shattuck Homestead.

- Olin Lathrop said there had been lots of activity at Shattuck Homestead.
 - Yesterday, he and Bruce Easom went there.
 - 2 full backpack containers of herbicide applied.
 - Worked along the stone walls. Far, far too much in the fields to do as an individual. Will need a boom sprayer.
 - Also focused along the powerlines.
 - They made a dent in the swallowwort but didn't touch middle of field.
 - Ideal would be to wait 3-4 weeks to mow; they want the herbicide to get down to the roots.
 - Cutting in early July last year seemed to help – cut off the flowers. Then they had to come and treat again - the whole field.
 - Olin Lathrop indicated he would like to try that again this year; there is new recruitment from old seeds this year.
 - They will mow in a few weeks, then hire the forester to spray later on.
 - Alison Hamilton mentioned that she had read that you need to mow repeatedly – it may actually promote growth early on.
 - Olin Lathrop said: The goal is to prevent them from setting seed.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: So you want to go back to Shattuck on Saturday?
 - Olin Lathrop showed pictures of a similar stand of knotweed along Martins Pond Rd: Grown up a lot from last year.
 - Would like to treat Shattuck on Saturday with glyphosate, then come back in fall with triclopyr.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: How big is the Shattuck stand?
 - Olin Lathrop said: About 50-100 feet...
 - Alison Hamilton said: More like 50-75 feet, a narrow band.
 - There's more up the street, on private property.
- Brian Bettencourt said that he'd had a discussion with a homeowner on Hayden Rd. about knotweed on his land: He taught the homeowner about control methods.
 - Olin Lathrop said: Direct folks to the Committee website.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed and said he did so.
 - They had also discussed more private stands of knotweed --- at top of Hayden Rd.

The fifth order of business was brochures: Printing, and nominations for new brochure.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: What's the status, Richard Hewitt?
- Richard Hewitt said that he'd talked to Karen Toumi at the Commissioners of Trust Funds. She's the administrator. She seemed receptive to asking the Commissioners.
 - They just need some numbers (to print, and cost).
 - Olin Lathrop asked: When was the last batch?
 - Richard Hewitt replied: A year and a half ago.
 - Olin Lathrop said: The last batch was 500 of each.

- Richard Hewitt asked: Should we print that many more? The problem is now, there's no way to distribute due to the COVID 19 situation.
- Olin Lathrop replied: The Committee should be thinking ahead – print for the next couple years.
- Brian Bettencourt said: So, the Committee should get a quote for 500 each for 7 brochures.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to send all 7 brochures to Richard Hewitt (in PDF format).
 - Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to get a price quote for 500 each of 7 brochures from Patriot Printing at Devens (doublecheck the name).
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to check Vistaprint for brochures quote and compare prices with Richard Hewitt.
 - After a vendor is settled on, Richard Hewitt will go back to the Commissioners. The Committee will pick the exact size of the batch depending on pricing.

The sixth order of business was wooly adelgid in Groton.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he (and the Committee) had email correspondence with Ryan, a UMass graduate student working on ongoing adelgid predator-exclusion study.
- Olin Lathrop showed pictures of the conduct of the study live on screen.
 - Putting bags on the adelgid-infested branches to exclude predators.
 - This was done high in the air, to keep out vandals etc.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: is there a sign?
 - Olin Lathrop replied yes and showed an image of a sign live on screen – UMass Amherst letterhead. The Committee is listed as contact people.
- Alison Hamilton added that she thinks it's a great study for the Committee --- get information, get visibility too.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What preys on adelgid?
 - Alison Hamilton replied: there's an introduced wasp.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, and added: A native wasp too, and perhaps a fungus. The bags will only exclude wasps.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: The introduced wasp – that's a biocontrol project?
 - Alison Hamilton replied: Yes. The organizers want to see if it "takes", see if the wasps establish.
 - The experiment can't establish which/either predator gets excluded ... just ALL insects.
 - Alison Hamilton added: They're also trying to do some environmental DNA sampling, to figure out what's been there or not.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: How many trees were treated - how many bags were applied?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Three bags on two trees.
 - Each tree is really one excluder, one control (no bag).
 - The Committee next had a brief discussion on types of control for adelgid.

The seventh order of business was speaker updates.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd spoken with David Black, who agreed to do a seminar "once school ended".
 - He reached out again and asked whether David would like to do a talk in Zoom or in Person.
 - Brian Bettencourt felt it was okay to wait, if he wants to wait for in person.
- Alison Hamilton asked: The purpose here is for the general public... how many would attend?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied that his iNaturalist talk was well attended ... but by now, Zoom is getting old for many people --- it may be good to wait for in-person.
- Brian Bettencourt said the he would circle back with David and see what he wants to do.

Richard Hewitt moved to adjourn.

Olin Lathrop seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed by unanimous roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.