

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

20July2020

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Olin Lathrop

Brian Bettencourt

Alison Hamilton

Jonathan Basch

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Update on Nod Rd. and Hayden Rd. Japanese Knotweed treatments
- 3) Shattuck Homestead update
- 4) Finalization of new brochures print run
- 5) Plans for speaker series
- 6) Updates on Phragmites around town
- 7) Member status updates

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Minor changes were made to the draft minutes.
 - Alison Hamilton noted that there were many fewer exclamation marks this time.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept the minutes as amended.
 - Alison Hamilton seconded.
 - The motion passed by unanimous roll call.
- The Committee had a discussion regarding the process of posting of minutes online.
 - Brian Bettencourt reported that after each meeting (if minutes were approved), he emailed them to the town “minutes” email address per IT guidelines.
 - Olin Lathrop looked (live) on the town website, to double check that all minutes are being posted.
 - Looked like all was up to date.

The second order of business was the Nod Rd. and Hayden Rd. Japanese Knotweed treatments.

- Olin Lathrop said that regarding the Nod Rd. study – there was nothing new since last year’s treatments.

- He had taken pictures and notes regarding the site.
- The anecdotal evidence was that knotweed was quite susceptible to triclopyr.
- It appeared that there was better efficacy at half strength, and even better at quarter strength.
 - It was possible that the full strength kills the leaves so fast, that the herbicide doesn't have time to get down to the roots.
- For glyphosate, half strength worked as well as full strength.
- He would like to experiment further with various strengths of triclopyr, during this year.
- Brian Bettencourt said: It would be nice to quantify the effect.
 - Would have to take pictures ... quantify the percentage of green in an image. A computational approach.
 - The Committee had a discussion regarding the quantification and replication of the results.
- Olin Lathrop said that he'd noticed that the height to which a stand grows back is fairly consistent.
 - Measurement of the height of each plot post-treatment could be a good measure of efficacy – the plants really tend to grow at a similar pace.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that the Nod Rd. stand is ideal for this kind of work – a relatively consistent plot to plot environmental conditions.
 - Jonathan Basch added that another good method is to test hypothesis via switching around the order of the plots (treatments) in subsequent years.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed but added - does the history of each plot's treatment affect future responses?
 - One could subdivide plots, but that would be very small plots with poor levels of heterogeneity.
- Alison Hamilton asked: Are all treatments done at about the same time?
 - Olin Lathrop replied Yes.
 - Alison Hamilton said that temperature and humidity are what control transpiration (largely). So contemporaneous application of herbicide is very important.
- Alison Hamilton took an Action Item to survey the Nod Rd. plot and brainstorm methods for repeat treatment. She will email Olin Lathrop to coordinate.
 - Olin Lathrop said to keep a close eye out for the orange tape (markers).
- Brian Bettencourt brought up the topic of the Hayden Rd. knotweed treatment.
 - Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd been out and looked, the weekend before last.
 - In general – the application was highly effective.
 - There were a low number of small plants still standing.
 - Olin Lathrop showed pictures of the stand live on screen.
 - Olin Lathrop said: If this area could be treated again in the fall with triclopyr, it will severely knock back the stand.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that some small areas did escape treatment entirely, under some shade trees, and on the other side of path.
- Olin Lathrop also showed pictures of the Shattuck Homestead knotweed treatment.
 - Alison Hamilton said there was more on the other side of the street there.

- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee should go back in the September time frame, when large plants start to flower.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: For ALL stands that the Committee is working on?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes – apply dilute triclopyr to all.

The third item of business was Shattuck Homestead update.

- Olin Lathrop showed pictures from July 20th.
 - The Turtle sweep took place the previous Saturday, with mowing immediately thereafter.
 - The taller swallowwort plants were thus chopped off prior to seed pod maturation --- this slows them down.
 - The Conservation Commission will likely repeat the professional spot treatment with backpack sprayers.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What about the area along the rock wall?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It was treated a few weeks ago, follow up is likely this fall.

The fourth item of business was the new print run of brochures.

- Brian Bettencourt said it was unfortunate that Richard Hewitt could not attend the meeting as he oversaw the effort.
- Olin Lathrop said that he'd talked to Richard.
 - Even with (Olin Lathrop's) VistaPrint family discount, Richard Hewitt's quote with the Devens-based printing company is still superior.
 - The Committee will go with that company.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that Richard Hewitt did go talk to Karen Tuomi – and he will go to the full Commissioners of Trust Funds.
- Olin Lathrop moved to authorize Richard Hewitt to get 500 copies each of 7 brochures, asking the Commissioners of Trust Funds to fund the print run.
 - Alison Hamilton seconded.
 - The Motion passed via unanimous roll call.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to contact Richard Hewitt and ask for a status report on the Commissioners funding the print run.

The fifth item was plans for the speaker series.

- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that David Black was on board, after school starts.
- Olin Lathrop said he would like to wait till after in-person meetings are possible - likely next spring.
- The Committee had a discussion regarding Zoom meetings.
 - The recent Groton Conservation Trust seminar on trails was attended by 60+ (Zoom only).

- The Committee discussed possible seminar topics/speakers and their suitability for Zoom vs. in-person meetings.
- Brian Bettencourt asked Olin Lathrop: Any updates on the speaker from UMass? Tawny (sp?) Comiskey, regarding the Spotted Lanternfly.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Not at this time. Preliminary contacts only were made. Spring is most likely for a seminar.
- Olin Lathrop said: In Fall 2021, he would like to do another series at the Library.
 - A possible topic would be a general update on what the Committee has been up to, the methods and results of general invasive control efforts around town.

The sixth item of business was Phragmites around Groton.

- Olin Lathrop showed pictures on screen, taken that day.
 - In one perspective, looking down the ditch at Eliades where the Committee treated the Phragmites.
 - The Phragmites looked all dry and dead - definitely not green.
 - It almost looks like last year's stand.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: The most recent treatment was last fall; the Phragmites was pushed down and sprayed.
 - Olin Lathrop said: It's very odd looking – it's not laid down, but it's not green. Did it spring back up?
 - He reported walking down among the Phragmites, poking around, and finding it dead to the ground.
 - In contrast, Cat-tails are all green.
 - This almost seems too good to be true?
 - Brian Bettencourt said this could be drought-related, and asked: Are cattails more drought resilient than phragmites? What's the root system like?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: This indeed must be last year's growth, since it's tall and has tassels on top --- there wouldn't be time for that in this year's growth.
 - It's a very mysterious result; how could it have been so effective --- just a foliar spray.
 - Alison Hamilton reported that she'd just looked live at the literature --- drought does indeed seem to harm phragmites leaf area, etc.
 - Olin Lathrop said yes, but we had a wet spring ... you'd think it would pop up then die young.
 - In close-up photos, the Committee saw no green growth at all.
 - In further discussion, the Committee noted some small non-Phragmites plants growing there in the site.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What about other stands around town --- how are they looking? Perhaps look at some stands of Phragmites in other, wetter areas, that were not treated...
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to go look at other stands of Phragmites around town, with varying water levels, and see how they are doing. All Committee members are to conduct similar reconnaissance around town.

- Alison Hamilton said she would look for sites varying in sun/shade/moisture.
- Brian Bettencourt said he could look around the eastern part of town.

The seventh item of business was member status updates.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he needed to do his re-swearing in.
 - Alison Hamilton said she needed to get official appointment at the Town Clerk.
- Brian Bettencourt said that every Committee member should check with the Town Clerk regarding their status.
- Brian Bettencourt asked Carole Greenfield is getting our Committee member emails --- How do we handle her request regarding community discussions and seminars for neighborhoods?
 - Jonathan Basch said: The Committee could give her a “kit” of brochures that she could disseminate around the neighborhoods.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, saying the Committee needs her (or someone else) to volunteer.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to reply to Carole Greenfield and ask if she’d be willing to talk to neighbors and distribute our brochures.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed with the plan, saying Carole could be an “ambassador” of sorts.

Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn.

Alison Hamilton seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously via roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.