

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

26Apr2021

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Jonathan Basch

Olin Lathrop

Alison Hamilton

Ron Strohsahl

Agenda:

1. Review of Minutes from Previous Meeting
2. Action Items Review
3. Article in Groton Herald about the Committee --- progress
4. Batten Woods / Campbell Well site permitting status
5. Plans/timing for new sites in spring/summer
6. Inoculating ash trees for Emerald Ash Borer
7. Plans for follow-ups at previously treated sites
8. Recent public outreach check-ins
9. Forsythia in Crosswinds
10. Multiple invasive species in Squanacook / Bertozzi WMA

The Meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.

The first order of business was Review of Minutes from last meeting.

- The minutes were reviewed and edited live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
 - Jonathan Basch seconded.
 - The motion to accept the minutes passed by unanimous roll call.

The second order of business was Review of Action Items from last meeting.

- Action Items:
 1. Olin Lathrop to let other Committee members know when he plans to try first treatment of Carmichael Phragmites, and to ask for help.
 2. Olin Lathrop to talk to Water Department. about treating knotweed on Campbell Well Site (part of RDA process).
 3. Ron Strohsahl to informally take a walk down the Bertozzi path, past the monument, look for multiflora rose on right; contact Charlotte Weigel and rest of Committee to see if they want to come.
- 1:
 - Olin Lathrop said that the Committee was not ready for the first treatment; pending RDA and site walk; see below.

- 2:
 - Olin Lathrop reported that the action item was in progress: The Water Department is taking it up at their meeting 4/27.
 - It would be great to have coverage from another committee member since he will be busy at Conservation Commission.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: So that's Tuesday the 27th at 7:30 PM?
 - Olin Lathrop said that he'd checked the agenda online --- the Committee was not on the agenda --- a member needs to show up and pipe up.
 - The RDA was written but not filed. The project needs permission of the landowner (Water Department.).
 - The Commission had said it was going to be taken up at the next meeting.
 - Jonathan Basch volunteered to show up at the Conservation Commission meeting. He will bring the RDA (Olin Lathrop will send to him directly). He will ask for consideration.
 - Olin Lathrop said he will email the Water Department. to remind them that the Committee was supposed to be on the agenda.
- 3:
 - Ron Strohsahl reported that the action item was complete; he'd emailed the whole committee.
 - He took pictures at the site. The Committee took this up as Agenda item #10 below.

The third order of business was progress on an article in the Groton Herald about the Committee.

- Olin Lathrop said that he'd talked to Russ Harris, who said he'd be delighted to do it. He advised Olin to "Please wait till political season is over" for best timing.
 - After town meeting would be the right time.
 - Olin Lathrop has some guidelines for the article from Russ Harris: Number of words, including a picture or two, and to "keep it interesting".
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to draft the Herald article, and circulate to the Committee for edits and comments.
- Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd spoken with Connie Sartini at the Herald. She is totally on board. So, both people at the Herald are positive regarding this article.

The fourth order of business was Batten Woods / Campbell Well site permitting status.

- Olin Lathrop reported that the RDA had been filed for working on Phragmites at Batten Woods (Carmichael Swamp). It wouldn't be taken up at the Conservation Commission meeting on 5/27, but will be at the next meeting (May 11th).
- Olin Lathrop also reported that the Campbell Well RDA was written but not filed (see above); it needs approval from Water Department.
 - Once Jonathan Basch gets approval, he will let Olin Lathrop know, and he can try to get approved at same Conservation Commission meeting in May as Batten Woods.
- Brian Bettencourt said that would be great, because then the Committee could get out Memorial Day weekend and do some work.

The fifth order of business was Plans and Timing for new sites in Spring/Summer.

- Brian Bettencourt introduced the topic: Different types of plants, different sites --- necessitate different timing.
- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee has permission to treat Phragmites in the Priest Conservation Land – that should be done in the Fall (via the flatten and spray method).
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that the Ash Trees at Petapawag boat launch need a refresh for Emerald Ash Borer treatment.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: 13 trees were injected with systemic insecticide. When should the treatment be repeated?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It's best to wait till good leaf-out, so the trees are drawing liquid up from the base of the tree.
 - Olin Lathrop said he has the equipment, but it would be good to have at least one more helper to take records of application amounts, frequency, and results. He has to report back to the state and keep good records.
 - It is also good to bring a tape measure and chalk, to mark trees for diameter.
 - The whole process is not difficult; the initial treatment took an hour.
 - Ron Strohsal and Charlotte Weigel volunteered to help.
 - Jonathan Basch also reported being interested.
 - Olin Lathrop said that he wants to do the treatment on a sunny day when the trees are drawing up.
 - Charlotte Weigel asked: So what does that mean for timing?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: 2 years ago, the treatment was conducted on June 1st.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to propose a date for Emerald Ash Borer treatment at Petapawag and contact the Committee members for help.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: What's the evidence of efficacy?
 - Olin Lathrop reported that he'd been around town that day, including Petapawag. Those ash trees looked to be in good shape, in contrast to other places in town. He saw evidence of little branches; no blanching; no insect exit holes.
 - Alison Hamilton reported remembering a site on a Conservation Commission walk that was really infested.
 - Brian Bettencourt reported recently seeing Emerald Ash Borer just over the line at a site in Westford.
 - Olin Lathrop said that the Committee should also repeat the site in Deerhaven development. That was done later in the summer.
- Alison Hamilton asked about the Japanese Knotweed stand at the Country Club (off Lovers Lane).
 - Jonathan Basch said that the stand was on a steep hill; if the Committee had a ladder they could drop down the hill --- that would be helpful.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied that he had an extension ladder we could use.
 - Jonathan Basch said this was a good call; a scouting-out trip should go first.
 - Olin Lathrop said this treatment will be cut and drip.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: So, Memorial Day weekend or beyond would be ideal.

- Jonathan Basch took an Action Item to scout out the Lovers Lane Knotweed, to propose a date for a control visit based on size/condition of plants, and circulate to Committee for volunteers.
- Olin Lathrop described followup at the Hayden Rd. Knotweed stand.
 - Olin Lathrop reported that he'd went around looking at various places in town ... including Hayden Rd. That site looked encouraging.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed --- he visits that site frequently.
 - Olin Lathrop said there was no new growth coming out of the dead clumps; only some new plants coming up between old clumps. These are probably sprouts from tips of roots. Those are not big enough for treatment yet. Once they're grown up, he would recommend hitting with foliar spray. He won't need help; it will only take 10 minutes.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and compared it with a similar site on the Hayden roadside at the "top end" of the road.
- Olin Lathrop reported on followup at the Shattuck Homestead Japanese Knotweed stand.
 - Olin Lathrop said the Knotweed looks completely dead. There are no new ones visible popping up among dead stems.
- Charlotte Weigel asked: How long does permission to treat last, for a given site?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The RDA is good for 3 years (per the Conservation Commission). Permission from landowner is for as long as specified.
 - The Hayden Rd site for example is not wetland – so no RDA is needed → the town owns the land → the Committee can treat for as long as needed.
 - Alison Hamilton agreed with this assessment.
- Brian Bettencourt asked about the Batten Woods (Carmichael Swamp) Phragmites --- Does Olin Lathrop still want to treat earlier in the summer?
 - Olin Lathrop said Yes; the reed is dispersed; flatten and spray won't work well. He will just need one person to help point the way. He needs the plants to be a couple feet tall.
 - Charlotte Weigel asked: If this is experimental work ... should the Committee be treating some early, leave some untreated, and then come back and do in the fall.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Good idea.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Scientifically, that makes a lot of sense. But this is Carmichael Swamp, a critical area --- the Committee wants to hit the Phragmites early and hard. By Fall, we know what mature phragmites looks like --- we'll know what effective control looks like.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: If there's another stand in town that's larger and more mature, we could block off into two or more pieces, treat some twice, others just once.
 - Jonathan Basch asked: What about the bike trail?
 - Olin Lathrop and Brian Bettencourt replied: No; that's largely private land.
 - Charlotte Weigel took an Action Item to look for candidate site(s) with Phragmites, preferably larger more mature stands, on public land, where the Committee could mark off 2 or more blocks to do a controlled experiment on single vs. multiple applications. Additionally, she will discuss with Olin Lathrop whether/how the Priest Land Phragmites could be a good candidate.

- Charlotte Weigel asked: what's the timing?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Preferably when the plants are a couple feet tall (for early application).
- The Committee had a discussion regarding good aspects of the Eliades site --- the goal would be to look for something similar.
- Olin Lathrop reported that he'd been back to Eliades again --- the Phragmites is still dead. There are now some small cat-tails growing up amongst dead Phragmites stalks.
- The Priest land – the RDA already is filed – this could also be a good site.
- Brian Bettencourt added: The Nod Rd. Knotweed site still needs followup.
 - The Committee next had a Discussion regarding what they'd learned from the Nod Rd. treated plots.
 - Charlotte Weigel asked: Is that work written up anywhere?
 - Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, and pointed to the location of the documents.

The sixth order of business was Inoculating ash trees for Emerald Ash Borer.

- This item was covered in Action Items Review above.

The seventh order of business was Plans for follow-ups at previously treated sites.

- This item was covered in Action Items Review above.

The eighth order of business was Recent public outreach check-ins.

- Brian Bettencourt reported on recent correspondence from Carole Greenfield: People loved the Committee's brochures. She was organizing a Bittersweet brigade in her neighborhood.
- Brian Bettencourt also reported on contacts from the Harvard Conservation Commission, a private citizen from Auburn, and another from Pepperell.

The ninth order of business was Forsythia in Crosswinds.

- Ron Strohsahl reported that a couple weeks ago, while walking along Crosswinds Dr, he saw a plant that looked like honeysuckle. It was actually Forsythia.
 - But he also noticed a separate patch, farther East in on the trail that continued into a neighboring yard. Treatment would have to be very careful.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Is Forsythia considered invasive?
 - Jonathan Basch replied that he'd seen it along the road on the way into Boston this past weekend. He agreed though that it's not often seen outside of yards.
 - Ron Strohsahl looked up forsythia live; it is considered invasive.
 - The Committee had a discussion regarding the escape potential and invasiveness of Forsythia.
 - Ron Strohsahl took an Action Item to research Forsythia as a potential invasive and suggest (potential) control on Conservation Commission land by Riverbend. Specifically, one of the single Conservation Commission parcels in the development (202-52).
 - Olin Lathrop looked quickly --- 202-52 is not wetland; an RDA wouldn't be required.

- Alison Hamilton said she wasn't sure --- she'd been looking around online --- there was confusion as to whether Forsythia is invasive or not.

The tenth order of business was Multiple invasive species in Squanacook / Bertozzi WMA.

- Ron Strohsahl reported that he'd recently walked the site where Charlotte Weigel noted multiflora rose. He'd found a couple spots where other invasives are found.
 - He showed map live on screen.
 - Along the path to the swimming hole at the bend in the river:
 - He found honeysuckle just past parking area.
 - He also checked out potential black locusts on the South side of the trail ... he was not sure if they are that species. Regardless, they do not look like healthy trees. He needs to go back and check them out. They might be dead already.
 - There is Multiflora rose right before the trail split: Just one big rosebush. It should be easy to control.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: But Bertozzi is State Land.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The Committee would have to contact Fish and Wildlife in Ayer ... Pat Huckery is the contact.

The last item was Open Discussion.

- Brian Bettencourt reiterated a plea for a Secretary. He discussed his template for minutes, and the nature of the role.
- Olin Lathrop asked: He'd sent an email to Alison Hamilton regarding a backpack sprayer --- was that received?
 - Alison Hamilton said she did not get the email.
- Brian Bettencourt next discussed the Priest land and the bittersweet infestation there.
 - Olin Lathrop discussed the Stewardship Committee and a potential application for a state Habitat Grant.
- Alison Hamilton reported finding a new plant in the field by her house.
 - Alison Hamilton took an Action Item to send pictures of the new potential invasive in the field to Ron Strohsahl for botanical identification.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Alison Hamilton Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 PM.