**Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes**

**19Sept2022**

**Via zoom**

Remote Attendees:

Charlotte Weigel

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Ben Wolfe

Richard Hewitt

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes and action items from August 15th meeting

2. Update on current projects coming up or seasonal work completed:

* Priest Phragmites
* Country Club knotweed
* Carmichael Phragmites
* Shattuck swallowwort

3. Discuss knotweed and japanese stiltgrass recently found in Town Forest

4. Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work - Campbell well site/Nod Rd knotweed

5. Update on priority parcels exploration/mapping from sign up at July meeting

6. Discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees

7. Update group on meeting with GDRMS

8. Update on Carole Wheeler Park - RDA to be filed by abutter

9. Northwoods follow up

10. Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) Fall conference: Review Olin's slides for presentation

11. Discuss Garden Club request for increased distribution of Committee flyers.

12. Vote on one person to sign paperwork for grant work reimbursement

The Meeting was called to order at 7:01PM.

The first order of business was review of minutes and action items from August 15th meeting

* The minutes were reviewed, edits were made
* Olin moved to accept the minutes as amended.
  + Charlotte seconded.
  + The motion to accept the minutes passed by unanimous vote.
* Action items were reviewed.
  + Charlotte Weigel to email Michael Scarcia regarding Carol Wheeler Park – **DONE**
  + Action for Charlotte to send email to amend the grant – **DONE**
  + Action item for Ben to purchase seeds - **DONE**
  + Action item for Ron/Brian to exchange brochures to be available for Grotonfest September 24th -**DONE**
  + Action Olin will reach out to Michele to find out what information will be useful for the MACC panel discussion. Will prepare some slides accordingly and distribute drafts to the committee – **DONE**
  + Action item for Olin Lathrop to contact to landowner adjacent to Northwoods to discuss land boundaries and options for treatment – **DONE**
    - Olin said he talked with landowner. Ailanthus is almost certainly on his property. Trail going beside the tree is part of conservation easement. Olin discussed Ailanthus and other invasives in the area including black swallowwort. Olin noted there were several Ailanthus seedlings sprouting up in the area.
    - Olin informed him that members of the committee can help him with removal as private citizens.
    - Charlotte noted that we can just keep an eye out for seedlings in the abutting Northwoods conservation parcel.
    - Landowner will reach out with questions if he needs further advice on addressing invasives.
* Charlotte and Brian to go to GDRMS the week before August 24th and scout out site for possible class invasive species project – **DONE**
  + Charlotte summarized planned activities with GDRMS 7th grade science classes on October 20th including scavenger hunt and tour of invasives around baseball field
* Olin to prepare a management plan for Carol Wheeler Park (on-hold pending Charlotte’s discussion with Michael Scarcia?) – see discussion above
  + 1. Olin created template for RDA and emailed to Mike – if he files RDA it will expedite the process for treating invasives at the park
    2. **NEW ACTION ITEM:** Olin is meeting with member of Park Commission at the park again in the next couple of weeks to catalog the invasive plants there and move forward with the management plan to initiate treatment of invasive plants
* Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier (should we table or set a committee goal of a certain number of verifiers?) – Adam not in attendance

The second order of business was update on current projects coming up or seasonal work completed:

* Priest Phragmites
  + Olin treated yesterday. Phragmites was growing in Spring treatment only plot. No Phragmites growing in the Spring + Fall treatment or Fall treatment only plots. Lots of jewelweed in those plots
* Country Club knotweed
  + No one has stopped by there recently to check out
* Carmichael Phragmites
  + Adam and Olin made heroic efforts to treat yesterday. Charlotte estimated that ½-2/3 of the stand was treated. She hopes to return to map this fall to compare size of stand next year
  + Charlotte mentioned that yesterday they found a second stand in the middle of the swamp. She relayed that Brian thinks he can access by canoe in the Spring next year.
    - Olin noted that Spring treatment only knocks Phragmites back.
    - Ron suggested we could go in Spring, maybe we will be able to return later in the year
    - Charlotte asked if rain continues this fall, if we could access this fall. Ron noted access in southeast corner of swamp via open water. Brian should have the best idea of how to access.
  + Richard moved to approve filing an RDA if needed to cover treatment of a second stand of Phragmites in Carmicheal
    - Motion approved unanimously
  + **ACTION:** Olin will see if RDA filed in 2021 for treatment of first stand of Phragmites in Carmichael swamp covers treatment of the second stand. If not, Olin will file RDA for vote at October Conservation Committee meeting.
* Shattuck swallowwort
  + Sprayed in August

The third order of business was to discuss knotweed and japanese stiltgrass recently found in Town Forest

* Ben found knotweed on private land
  + Small patch on land owned by Gary Wilkins, Jr. Stand is separated from farmed field by about 10-20 feet of trees
  + Ben showed map and pictures of stand
  + Richard said it would be good to get early
  + Discussion on how to do outreach to private landowner when we see high impact stands such as this and help private landowners treat invasives if they want to do that, similar to what was done on Northwoods for Ailanthus
  + Charlotte asked if the stand is small enough to just pull the stems and sparse enough so that surrounding species would prevent bank erosion. Ben answered that digging it out would probably not be sufficient. Olin said maybe we could put off until next year.
  + Olin mentioned we could consider pursuing a grant for broader insurance for one applicator to legally treat on private land along the river to address stands like this. Insurance currently is with town and only covers town land. We need to look at legalities behind doing that. Then can approach landowner and get permission to treat on their land. Unclear if would do on behalf of Wild and Scenic River Council, on behalf of town or as a private citizen. We need to figure out cost.
  + **ACTION:** Ben is going to find out by November meeting how much it costs for insuring a pesticide applicator, and potentially inquire if the Wild and Scenic Rivers Council would be interested in sponsoring for treatments of private land along rivers.
  + Olin thinks might be cheaper for Council to take on insurance and save money overall
  + Richard asked if NWRA has experience with this. Olin said maybe but they do not have licensed applicators. Council has grant money for the river, closer to their aims. **ACTION:** Olin to talk to Michele Girard from Wild and Scenic Rivers Council to see what they think about taking on insurance for applicator
* Charlotte found knotweed on the Nashua River bank in Town Forest and Ron found Japanese stiltgrass at the entrance (around parking lot) to Town Forest
  + Ron showed the location of knotweed. We need to file an RDA for treatment of knotweed.
  + Charlotte and Amy mapped stiltgrass today – there is enough that for two people it would be a lot to pull, but if there were 4 or 5 people could be reasonable. Plants are sending out seeds so we need to pull soon if that is what we want to do. Shallow root system makes easy to pull. We could bag pulled plants.
  + Ron asked if we could treat knotweed and stiltgrass at the same time. Olin said glyphosate would kill both.
  + Olin said we do not need an RDA for the stiltgrass because it is not near water. But for both knotweed and stiltgrass we need permission from the Town Forest Committee – just requires an email request and response for approval if they approve at their meeting.
  + Olin moved to seek approval from Town Forest Committee for treatment of knotweed and stiltgrass in Town Forest, and to file RDA for treatment of knotweed in Town Forest
    1. Ron seconds motion
    2. Motion passed unanimously
  + **ACTION:** Olin to file RDA for treating knotweed in Town Forest
  + **ACTION:** Charlotte to reach out to Town Forest Committee to ask for approval at their next meeting

The fourth order of business was Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work - Campbell well site/Nod Rd

* Charlotte updated group that first treatment of all knotweed stands covered in the grant had been treated at least once. Second treatment will be likely first half of October **ACTION:** Schedule second treatment of knotweed at Campbell Well and Nod Rd.
* Most of what was treated in July is dead, some green stems mostly on river bank.
* Ben updated that deer tongue seed is purchased from Ernst in hand for planting mid-November
* Group discussed the report on grant work done so far to go to Council late this year. Amy Ma will put report together. Receipts should be put into Google drive folder.

The fifth order of business was update on Update on priority parcels exploration/mapping from sign up at July meeting

* Reviewed the priority parcel spreadsheet
* Charlotte noted about half of Town Forest has been walked to look for invasives. So far most extensive stands are in northeast quadrant of Forest including glossy buckthorn and barberry. Barberry, knotweed and stiltgrass mentioned above have been mapped in EDDMapS.
* Brian Bettencourt emailed report on Fritz and Hellen Walker and Batten Woods – found a few large infestations of Asian bittersweet. Olin noted those stands have been there for years.
* Ron walked through Crosswinds. He found some bittersweet but not heavy; it might take 1-2 people a couple of hours to treat.
* Ben noted bittersweet in hedgerows at Surrenden.
* Ron mentioned multiflora rose found in Squannacook, but also lots of honeysuckle on the north side of Bertozzi.
* Charlotte asked if would be useful to present all mapping of invasives to Town Forest Committee to open discussion around getting help with treating plants in the Forest.
* Olin suggested requesting a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Town Forest because we will only discover more invasives, and then we would not have to continue to request permission for treating everything we find. The Town Forest’s main focus is tree harvesting, so they may be happy to grant MOU.
* **ACTION:** Request to attend Town Forest Committee meeting to report invasives found in Forest and to request MOU.
* Ben mentioned that Town Forest Committee may have suggestions of how to get volunteers
* Could we talk to other groups for help, for example Trails Committee? Richard suggested Boy Scouts. Olin suggested sending out volunteer requests to Groton list, which includes all Groton citizens signed up for the email.
* Charlotte asked about the need for educating volunteers. She asked if it might make them more willing to volunteer.
* Richard noted the value in educating landowners on taking care of invasives on their own land – through library or other mechanisms. Olin mentioned his pre-pandemic library lectures and suggested repeating them now that the pandemic has eased.
* The group acknowledged the value in getting back to those larger format presentations for educating the public as well as defining a protocol for targeted education for landowners with high priority invasive plant infestations.

The sixth order of business was to discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees

* See discussion in fifth order of business above.

The seventh order of business was to update the group on meeting with GDRMS

* See action items above.

The eighth order of business was an update on Carole Wheeler Park

* See action items above.

The ninth order of business was an update on Northwoods

* See action items above.

The tenth order of business was to review Olin’s slide presentation for Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) Fall conference

* Purpose of the presentation is to show how our Committee was formed and what we have done since forming so that other Commissions can learn from it and apply to forming their own Committees.

The eleventh order of business was to discuss Garden Club request for increased distribution of Committee flyers.

* Charlotte met with Lisa Theall, Groton Garden Club president to discuss ways to collaborate to increase invasives education
* Lisa requested that we distribute flyers at garden centers in the area.
* Ron mentioned that you could promote in addition to replace invasives with natives
* Richard asked about getting stand to hold them,
* **ACTION:** Charlotte will look into getting stand for holding brochures.
* Olin moved for Committee to approach businesses in town to expand distribution of flyers
* Ben seconded
* Group approved unanimously
* Charlotte and Lisa discussed targeting new homeowners with a welcome packet with condensed info on invasives, could include info on trails. Lisa will discuss at their board meeting in October, and we will wait to hear what they decide to do.
* Ben mentioned getting welcome packet from GELD or town hall – maybe something we could tack onto. Ron said he received something similar from GELD.

The twelfth agenda item is discussing Ben’s receipts for Wild and Scenic Grant work purchases.

* Reimbursements have to first be approved by committee vote.
* Committee can vote to authorize one person to sign the receipts
* Ben showed the receipt to review - $128 of deer tongue seeds from Ernst Conservation Seeds.
  + Olin moved to approve receipt
  + Charlotte seconded
  + Group unanimously approved.
* **ACTION:** Charlotte to write Mark Haddad to confirm process for reimbursement
  + Olin moved to authorize Charlotte to sign receipts
  + Ben seconded
  + Group Unanimously approved

Olin moved to adjourn

Charlotte Seconded

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.