**Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Final27Nov2023**

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Jonathan Basch

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Richard Hewitt (remote)

Adam Burnett (remote)

Ann Carpenter

Other Attendees:

Leonna Veng (NRWA)

Marisa Browning-Kamins (NRWA)

Alison Dolbear Peterson (Sustainability commission)

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes and action items from Oct 16th meeting
2. Visit from Nashua River Watershed Association Americorp volunteer
3. Review recent work: restoration at Surrenden
4. Discuss Phragmites at Casella
5. Discuss Tree of Heaven and burning bush at Lost Lake fire station
6. Discuss knotweed at GELD
7. Review signage to use for upcoming work
8. Update on any progress on landscaping design standards
9. Discuss web forum
10. All other business

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

The first order of business was review of minutes and action items from October meeting

* The minutes were reviewed
* Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
  + Jonathan Basch seconded.
  + The motion to accept the minutes passed by roll call vote. (Brian and Richard abstained)

**New:**

1. Action for Ben Wolfe to order the Clethra - plan for March planting - pending
2. Action for Charlotte to follow-up with GELD on the knotweed and the small Ailanthus plants remaining
   * Charlotte Weigel: They are happy with whatever we want to do. Do we need an RDA?
   * Olin Lathrop: We will likely need an RDA if we were to treat the knotweed
   * Jonathan Basch: We should put in our map for the town and consider next year for our treatment plan
   * **Action item for Charlotte Weigel to visit the GELD site and survey the knotweed**
3. Action for Jonathan to schedule pulling of Stiltgrass at Town Forest - Done

**Standing:**

1. Ben to purchase additional seeds for the Grant work and schedule planting - Done
2. Ann to determine the cost for the printing/laminating of the signs - pending
3. Send Brian material for a Tree of Heaven brochure - Done
4. Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier- Adam has applied repeatedly on site and hasn’t had response

Charlotte Weigel: will email Adam on the topic

1. Olin to put the topic of town planting guidelines on the agenda for the conservation summit
   * Olin Lathrop: The coming summit will be organized by the Trust not the conservation commission. Brian could be a contact
   * Charlotte Weigel: Pepperell has a great native plant guide. Could use as a reference. Need an assessment of what we have before we start. We could put together a proposal. Might be a good project for a Groton school student. Pepperell has implemented these planting guidelines.
   * Will discuss at next meeting
   * **Action for Charlotte to add topic of town planting guide to the next meeting**

The second order of business was Visit from Nashua River Watershed Association Americorp volunteer.

* Two representatives from the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) attended the meeting, Leonna Veng and Marisa Browning-Kamins to discuss ideas for invasive plant removal projects in the Town of Groton. There is a USGS grant for riparian buffers. Are there any projects in the Town of Groton that might fall under the scope of this grant? If so, the NRWA and the Groton Invasive Species Committee could collaborate. Some key points from the discussion on the topic:
  + **Volunteers:** Leonna would coordinate volunteers. Interested in starting in April - look for about 10 volunteers per session – using only manual control methods (no pesticides). Grant ends in May - will check on when in May. Could do a pre-education session at NRWA on the morning of the treatment. Possible sources of volunteers: Scouts, environmental club at the high school.
  + **Potential Locations:** Town Forest would be a good location, Town Forest has Buckthorn, barberry and euonymus. There is a big stand of buckthorn in the Southwest portion of the Forest. Campbell well site another option and lots of invasive plants in West Groton. Could flag the sites, plants ahead of time. The site must be within the riparian border region determined by the conditions of the USGS grant.
  + **Possible Techniques:** hand-pulling, cutting, weed wrenches. Would need equipment for volunteers. Could ask the Pepperell committee to borrow their weed wrenches. Discussed the possibility of having volunteers cut and licensed applicators treat the cut stumps (e.g., for buckthorn). Logistics might be challenging.
  + **Native plant introduction:** Could potentially be in scope at an appropriate site
  + **Related motion:** Olin Lathrop: Propose a motion to: *support and collaborate with the NRWA to remove invasive species along the Nashua River*
    - Brian Bettencourt seconded
    - Motion passed by roll call vote- one abstention.
  + **Action items on topic:**
    - **Charlotte Weigel: will schedule a site walk in the next month at the TF Action item for Charlotte**
    - **Brian Bettencourt can put the NRWA in contact with Groton Conservation Trust**

The third order of business was Review recent work:

* Review recent work: restoration at Surrenden- Ben provided update via email in advance of the meeting:
* Adam, Ann, Olin, Jonathan, and Ben) mixed together the 5 pounds of deertongue grass (*Dichanthelium clandestinum*) seed and 0.5 pounds of blue stem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) seeds purchased from Ernst Conservation Seeds. We also mixed in the goldenrod seeds that Charlotte had collected from her yard. After assessing the various knotweed treatment areas and noticing that there were small seedlings (including what appeared to be 1st year deertongue seedlings, perhaps from seeds spread last fall) in many areas, we decided to only rake distinct patches where there was little existing vegetation. Ann took photos of where the patches were located relative to the study plots. After the litter layer was removed with a rake, we tossed seeds on the surface of the soil. Adam used a leaf rake to gently mix the seeds with the soil.
* In the area that is closest to the Groton School (the site that gets heavily flooded) we broadcast some seed across the whole area without much removal of litter. The patch of deertongue that established from last year's seeding was still visible and looked good.
  + We have about 1/2 pound of the seed mix left. We also have packets of large-leaved wood aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) and white wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) from the [Wild Seed Project](https://shop.wildseedproject.net/). Ben will keep these in a refrigerator and will distribute these to committee members in January for us to grow as seedlings for spring planting.

The fourth order of business was Discuss Phragmites at Casella

* Charlotte Weigel: Phragmites at Casella, off of Nashua rd. abuts the high school from the back. If we get a hard freeze could map the area. Some of it might be on private property. Hard to know how far back it goes. The amount of water might vary year to year.
* Ron Strohsahl: Heard you can kill Phragmites if you cut it underwater
* **Action for Charlotte to further survey the Casela site and bring the information back to the committee.**

The fifth order of business was Discuss Tree of Heaven and burning bush at Lost Lake fire station

* Garden club reached out about Tree of Heaven and burning bush at Lost Lake fire station. **Action item to visit the site near the lost lake first station building**. Will assess the burning bush for pulling or treatment.

The sixth order of business was Discuss knotweed at GELD

* See above corresponding action item

The seventh order Review signage to use for upcoming work

* moved to the next meeting

The eighth order of business was Update on any progress on landscaping design standards

* Discussed above in the action items - will continue at the next meeting

The ninth order of business was Discuss web forum

* Should be something that the state picks up. The invasive chairman position has not been approved yet at the state level.

The tenth order of business was All other business

* Alison Dolbear Peterson from the Sustainability commission was in attendance at the meeting to request support for a proposal to create a pollinator connector strip, next to the garden at the Groton Center, along the trail next to the leach field. Asking for related committees to write a letter of support for the grant
  + Charlotte Weigel: Is the request just for that connector?
  + Alison: will be approximately 600 feet of planted area along the trail. Connects to the top of spencer circle. There is a second project
  + Charlotte Weigel: The carbon sequestration project (second project) is not moving forward.
  + Adam Burnett: I think the extent we can support this is if they are planting non-invasive or prevention of invasive plants in the corridor
  + Alison: will only plant native plants
  + Adam Burnett: There should be some assurance that it will be monitored to prevent invasive plants
  + Olin Lathrop: I move that we endorse the Sustainability commission plan to construct a native plant strip
  + Adam Burnett: recommend amending the motion to include the condition that plants are native and will be monitored and maintained to prevent invasive plant introduction
  + Jonathan seconded the amended motion
  + Motion passed by roll call with one abstention (Richard Hewitt due to technical difficulties on remote meeting).
  + Alison: application needs to be submitted January 11th.

Ailanthus brochure

* Olin Lathrop**:** **Action to email Brian our own opinions regarding the Ailanthus treatment and then Brian will consider the input and will revisit the topic for next meeting**
* Charlotte Weigel: Could reach out to the person who did the training at Williams Barn *[Chris Polatin, MS, CERP Principal and Restoration Ecologist, Land Stewardship, Inc.]*

Applicator License Renewal:

* Adam Burnett: Can we have the town reimburse for applicator license.
* Olin Lathrop: Can mention that we used the grant to obtain the license. Can reach out to the town for reimbursement
* Olin Lathrop: Renew your license and then send Mark Haddad the receipt.

LanternFly:

* Adam Burnett: Updates on Lanternfly- now reported in Chelmsford. Can live on just grape. However, control of Ailanthus is still considered a key element in lanternfly control

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Ron Strohsahl Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM.