

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) Minutes from the November 20, 2013 General Meeting

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) Steering Committee held a general meeting on November 20, 2013 at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Valley Laboratory in Windsor, CT. The meeting opened at 11:10 a.m. and was attended by approximately 30 people. CIPWG Co-chair Donna Ellis (UConn Dept. of Plant Science & Landscape Architecture) welcomed everyone. Brief introductions were made by the attendees, and a sign-in sheet was distributed.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Donna Ellis thanked The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station for hosting today's meeting and providing coffee and tea. She also thanked the UConn Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program for providing other refreshments.

2. CIPWG Speakers' List

The CIPWG Speakers' List was distributed for updates and additional speakers. The Speakers' List is posted on the CIPWG website and provides contact information for members who are available to give presentations on invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives.

3. 2013 Volunteer Projects Summary

Donna Ellis discussed the CIPWG request for volunteer invasive plant control projects that took place during 2013. Following the request that was sent out via the CIPWG list serve, eight organizations and/or municipal groups from the towns of Glastonbury, Groton, Lebanon, Niantic, Stratford, Vernon, and Winchester submitted invasive plant management project proposals, which were reviewed by the CIPWG Steering Committee. All projects were approved and were promoted via the CIPWG website and list serve in order to recruit volunteers to assist with invasive plant control on public properties in seven towns (two projects occurred in the same town). Project leaders were given a feedback survey during the fall for their comments regarding the assistance that CIPWG was able to provide in promoting their events. While only a small number of volunteers were recruited for some of the invasive plant control projects, the project leaders appreciated the publicity provided via the CIPWG list serve, website, and website calendar. Those who responded to the feedback request stated that they plan to continue the projects during 2014.

One of the project leaders, Dick Rowley from Glastonbury Partners in Planting offered the following comments on the feedback survey:

Although your survey did not ask about this, our group has felt all along the way that you, Logan (Senack) and the UCONN/CIPWG effort have provided moral support, inspiration, encouragement and a source of hope on what might otherwise seem like a hopeless cause. That solid point of reference is something we have navigated by and without it we would probably still be struggling to "invent the wheel."

4. Municipal Update

Alan Spier from Glastonbury Partners in Planting (GPIP) provided a summary of their invasive plant control and outreach educational events that occurred during 2013.

Residents met with the Town of Glastonbury Manager and the Parks and Recreation Department to form a partnership, where the residents would provide the volunteer help and the town would assist with large equipment and herbicide applications if deemed necessary. Riverside Park along the Connecticut River was selected as the area where the event would occur, and a 3-acre area near the new dog park was the target site for Oriental bittersweet control. Seventy-six people volunteered for one of two shifts on September 28th to remove the invasive vines. Small groups worked together, not only battling the bittersweet but poison ivy and ground nests of stinging insects. Alan provided details of the very successful work day, which was well-promoted and was also attended by Goodwin College students from East Hartford. While this is not the end of the control efforts and years of follow-up work will be needed, there are now improved views at the park and GPIIP has established a relationship with the Town of Glastonbury. GPIIP members have a website (www.gpip.org) and several YouTube videos that can be accessed from their website with details and photos about the project.

5. Mile-a-minute Vine Distribution and 2013 Biological Control Update

Kathleen Nelson from Mad Gardeners gave a PowerPoint presentation about distinct populations of the annual invasive vine mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) that were first identified in the early 2000's when this species was first becoming established in the state but are now becoming more contiguous. She showed maps of Bridgewater and Roxbury, CT and discussed survey and control efforts for mile-a-minute that she has been leading for many years. Kathleen discussed sites where the vines appear and that are more closely associated with bird places but where deer would have difficulty accessing, such as under multiflora rose shrubs. Mile-a-minute is not generally found in the woods or in meadows. Donna Ellis provided a PowerPoint update on the biological control project for mile-a-minute using the beneficial weevils *Rhinoncomimus latipes*. In this fifth year of the project, 8,210 weevils were introduced in five towns (Ridgefield, Roxbury, Stonington, Stratford, and Woodbury). A total of approximately 33,000 weevils have been released to date in 17 Connecticut towns. Mile-a-minute vine has been confirmed in 39 towns in the state.

6. Invasive Plant Alerts

Donna Ellis, Kathleen Nelson, and Logan Senack discussed the status of Japanese hops (*Humulus japonicus*) and mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), two invasive plant species that are becoming more abundant in the state. Donna showed photos of the two plants and how to identify them. Mugwort was listed as "invasive" by the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council earlier this year.

7. Strategic Planning for the Connecticut River Watershed

Cynthia Boettner from the Silvio Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge informed the members about the partnerships working on Early Detection (ED) in the Connecticut River Watershed. One of the goals of the project is to let people know about ED species to gather more information on them. The intent is not to alarm people that the species will automatically be moved to an invasive plant list. Regarding strategic planning, GIS analysis is being conducted to find out the most important areas of the watershed to protect, based on rare species and critical habitats. There is a subcommittee working on this project but others are needed to help. For ED and Rapid Response (RR), Ted Elliman examined each state invasive plant list to develop a manageable list for the Connecticut River watershed. Cynthia distributed a draft list of ED plants and requested

feedback on where these species are found. There is a plan to develop a Strike Team to target new infestations. One interesting idea from UMass is to provide training on invasive plants for students and offer internships for invasive plant control during the summer.

Cynthia also talked about the water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) control efforts that the Conte Refuge has been working on with the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and Massachusetts partners. Management of this aquatic invasive has been underway since 1997.

8. Invasive Plant Training Programs

Logan Senack provided an update about several invasive plant training programs he had presented and others that he is developing for municipalities and state agencies. He and Penni Sharp organized a program for the CT Association of Wetland Scientists, Logan presented at the CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, and he is currently working with Bruce Villwock to develop a workshop for the CT Department of Transportation (DOT). One of the goals is to create a standard presentation on invasive plant identification, control, and legislation. Logan also informed the attendees about the Les Mehrhoff Invasive Plant Walk in Mansfield, CT that was installed on a DEEP property this year.

9. 2014 CIPWG Symposium Planning

The 7th biennial CIPWG invasive plant symposium will be held in the fall of 2014. Penni Sharp and Charlotte Pyle have kindly volunteered to serve as Co-chairs of the Symposium Planning Committee. The first symposium planning meeting will take place in the afternoon, following the CIPWG general meeting. Everyone was encouraged to attend the planning meeting and participate in the development of the symposium program.

10. CIPWG Website Update

Logan Senack informed the group about recent updates to the CIPWG website and future plans to make the management of the site more streamlined and allow several people to assist with updates and other changes. One possible addition to the website is to create a message board for municipalities or other groups to report on invasive plant activities. Logan requested feedback on this idea.

11. Open Forum – Idea and Information Exchange

The meeting attendees discussed various topics during the open forum.

- Sigrun Gadwa (Carya Ecological Services) talked about the invasive plant species that trap rock ledges are particularly vulnerable to, which include tree-of-heaven, winged euonymus, and garlic mustard. There is a need for a protocol for safe removal of the invasives that would not harm the native plants in these critical habitats.
- Bruce Villwock provided a detailed summary of CT DOT invasive plant control activities along state roads and federal highways. Management efforts occurred for mile-a-minute, kudzu, and Japanese knotweed.

- John Anderson (Aton Forest) requested information on strategic planning for invasive plants. He has received some valuable responses to date from the Town of Norfolk and other sources.

12. Other Old or New Business

- a. Donna Ellis mentioned that preparation of the 2013 CIPWG Annual Report is underway. The report is a summary of CIPWG activities, educational outreach, and management and will be posted on the CIPWG website, sent out via the CIPWG list serve, and included in the 11th Annual Report of the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council.
- b. Everyone is encouraged to submit calendar items on the CIPWG website.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Ellis, CIPWG Co-chair

19 December 2013