

**Invasive Plants Council
Minutes
January 29, 2004**

Present: Dr. Anderson, Comm. Gresczyk , Mr. Larson, Comm. Leff, Dr. Mehrhoff, Dr. Musgrave, Mr. Sutherland, Mr. McGowan

Absent: Mr. Goodwin

The Meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM by Chairman Leff in Room 1A of the Legislative Office Building.

Chairman Leff had the members of the council introduce themselves to members and the audience.

Chairman Leff distributed two recent articles on Invasive Plants for the Council's information.

There was a motion by Dr. Anderson to accept the minutes of January 13, 2004. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larson. There was a correction offered by Mr. Larson to change "how these fruit grow," to "how these seedlings grow." The minutes were approved as corrected by a voice vote.

Comm. Gresczyk spoke on the activities of the Department of Agriculture with regard to invasive plants. The Department has no current policy about investigating pet stores for selling invasive plants. He assured the council that the department stands ready to assist in this effort. They usually send someone to each pet store twice a year to check on; condition of the store, pet lemon law issues, certificates and licenses. Dr. Mehrhoff offered to help train Department staff if necessary.

Chairman Leff started a discussion on the report to the Environment Committee. The council agreed to delay the report so that it could be done properly. It was noticed that the deadline for the Environment Committee to conclude its business for the 2004 session is March 17th.

Donna Ellis from the Invasive Plants Working Group spoke about biological controls of invasives. She pointed out that these controls are really about controlling, not eradicating. There is research being done on Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed, Milfoil, Multiflora Rose and others. She spoke specifically about work being done on Purple Loosestrife. There are beetles that they are using to try and fight purple loosestrife. They started a program in 1996 to put these beetles in infested areas to see how they could control purple loosestrife. They have over 300,000 biological agents in over 40 sites around Connecticut. She showed before and after pictures to illustrate the success they have had. They are currently recruiting "farmers" to grow beetles for them to be used in this project.

Sandy Breslin from Audubon CT spoke on National Audubon's efforts on Invasive Plants. National Audubon has two publications addressing invasive plants primarily concerned with the impact they have on bird habitat. At the Audubon's Greenwich Center they have the mile-a-minute plant that they are fighting. Audubon CT is in the process of hiring a part-time staffer just to work on this problem.

Chairman Leff started the discussion on what the "final" Invasive Plant List would look like. Dr. Mehrhoff distributed suggestions he had on what the list should look like. The consensus of the council was to use Dr. Mehrhoff's suggestion of a dagger notation for plants not already naturalized in CT.

There was a motion by Dr. Mehrhoff to add Tansy Ragwort onto the Invasive List. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sutherland. The motion carried on a voice vote.

Comm. Grescyk and Dr. Anderson voiced concerns about not including plants that are invasive on farms. Dr. Mehrhoff pointed out that the statute clearly states the list should only pertain to natural places that are minimally maintained. He also said the council needs to make a distinction between noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Mr. Larson made a motion to put an asterisk on Robinia psueudoacacia (Black Locust.) The motion was seconded by Dr. Anderson. The motion carried on a voice vote.

Comm. Grescyk voiced concerns over the inclusion of Reed Canary Grass on the list. He said that this is a very common crop on farms in CT. Mr. Sutherland and Dr. Musgrave agreed to develop language to present to the council on how to deal with agriculture related issues.

Dr. Musgrave also suggested that maybe the council consider adding a cover page to the list that would offer explanation of the list. This issue was tabled until next meeting.

Ban List:

Chairman Leff started the discussion on developing a ban list. Comm. Grescyk asked questions about how this list would be implemented. Mr. Sutherland suggested that such a list might be phased in to give growers a chance to adjust. Dr. Mehrhoff stated that he is concerned about peoples livelihoods and he understands that this must be considered in finding the best solution for CT. Mr. Sutherland pointed out that he feels landscaping is a luxury, agriculture is a necessity. Mr. McGowan stated that he is also sympathetic to the nursery industry but he hasn't seen any evidence of economic impact (on the industry) of banning aquatic plants and maybe that's where the council should start. Dr. Anderson agreed with this assessment of aquatics. He also pointed out that the economic impact of what these inasives do in our state is quantifiable. The rest of the ban list will be much harder to quantify the impact. Bob Heffernen (in the audience) from the Green Industries said that cut flowers vs. potted plants is an issue to keep in mind. Would banning a plant mean they couldn't be sold as a cut flower?

Chairman Leff pointed out that the ban list will be only a recommendation and that the General Assembly will make the ultimate decision on these plants.

Dr. Mehrhoff noted that some of the cut flowers could be very problematic, especially the ones that are actually seed pods.

Mr. Sutherland suggested that the council identify the plants which would be the biggest economic impact on the industry and lets do research to really educate the council on what the economics are.

Chairman Leff asked Mr. Larson to prepare ballpark estimates on what the economic impacts of the ban list would be.

Comm. Grescyk asked the council to consider the export potential of CT plants. He asked how banning these plants would impact the growers because nationally these plants will still be in demand. Mr. Larson asked the council to consider what the goals of the ban list would be. Mr. Larson suggested that if the law does prohibit the moving and possession of the banned lists this would mean if a plant grows on your land you are in violation. Even if you dig it up to eradicate this plant you are technically in possession.

There was a discussion about the future location of meetings. Members are concerned about the location of meetings in the LOB because of parking issues during the legislative session.

Dr. Anderson will have someone give presentations on cellular identification of aquatics and aquatic weed control.

Mr. Larson suggested that the council look into funding recommendations for the council. Dr. Anderson suggested that the council bring this issue up with the Chairs of the Environment Committee.

Chairman Leff asked to move the time of the March 11th meeting to 1:00 PM. There was a consensus to make this change.

There was a motion by Mr. Larson to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dr. Anderson. The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emanuel Merisotis
Clerk- Environment Committee