

CT Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday, December 9, 2008
2 pm, Valley Laboratory
Windsor, CT

Council members present:

Lou Magnarelli, Mary Musgrave, Philip Prelli, Les Mehrhoff, Bill Hyatt, David Sutherland, Paul Larson

Others present:

Donna Ellis, Nancy Murray, Logan Senack, Mark Brand, Rose Hiskes, Dick Shaffer, Bob Heffernan

1. Musgrave called the meeting to order at 2:07 pm, and welcomed the new Invasive Plant Coordinator (Logan Senack).

2. The minutes for the 11/06/08 meeting were reviewed. Magnarelli requested to amend the minutes to spell out the initial use of the abbreviation “RFP” (Request for Proposals). A motion was made (Prelli) and seconded (Larson) to approve the minutes with the change. **The 11/06/08 minutes were approved with the change.**

3. Approval of Annual Report: Musgrave explained the format and composition of the Sixth Annual Report of the Council, and the group discussed changes to the draft.

-Sutherland suggested changing the wording of a sentence on page two of the cover letter, and after discussion, the group decided to remove the sentence in its entirety.

-In the section titled “Overview of Current Activities”, it was decided that the wording would be modified to identify the Coordinator by name and to reflect the fact that he has now been hired.

-Hyatt suggested changing the sentence ending with “DEP” (page 3, paragraph 3 of the cover letter) to reflect the fact that the status of enforcement ability by DEP officers for banned plants is still unclear. After discussion, Musgrave suggested adding “At this time, DEP’s enforcement authority is unclear, and the Council is looking at suggestions for legislation that would clarify the enforcement function”.

Sutherland moved to approve the report. Hyatt seconded the motion and **the group approved the annual report with the changes.**

Mehrhoff suggested adding a discussion of the lack of definite enforcement authority at a future meeting of the IPC. Prelli suggested that Hyatt could look into ways to implement the enforcement function through DEP, and report the results at the next meeting of the IPC.

4. Updates on Program Funding, Invasive Plant Coordinator and Grants to Municipalities Request for Proposals:

a. The status of the Invasive Plant Coordinator position was discussed at this meeting—the position has been filled.

b. Hyatt reviewed the status of the Grants to Municipalities RFP and noted that 41 applications had been received from a total of 37 municipalities. When totaled, the funding requests exceeded \$950,000 and municipalities were offering over \$630,000 in matching funds. The amount of available grant funds (\$175,000) will only be able to partially address these needs. The grants committee plans to recommend specific proposals by the January Invasive Plant Council meeting, and, due to the high demand for funds, provide rationale and reasoning for the prioritization and selection of some projects over others. Hyatt also reported that the applications for funding appear to be relatively evenly split between aquatic and terrestrial projects.

c. Mehrhoff expressed concern that some criteria, especially with regard to the control of early detection species, may be unreasonably weighted to show preference for newly discovered invasions. Hyatt explained that the ranking criteria allot only 5 points of the total 76 for this category. Musgrave asked to defer further discussion of this matter until the next meeting, due to time constraints on today's agenda.

d. Magnarelli had asked that the issue of future program funding be raised with the group. Discussion followed regarding the possibility that the Invasive Plant Program had already been listed by DEP as an area for potential cost savings.

e. Sutherland suggested discussing, at the next meeting, a strategy for dealing with the possibility that the program will be cut or reduced. Hyatt added that the issue of the current \$140,000 unspent funds should also be discussed. Sutherland and Magnarelli agreed, and Magnarelli acknowledged the challenges posed by the current budget situation.

f. Sutherland suggested creating a core budget representing the minimum funding level required to keep the program, so that it can be taken to the Appropriations Committee. Hyatt suggested setting the minimum at a level to continue the Invasive Plant Coordinator and ANS positions, in addition to adding to the Grants for Municipalities funding to better meet the needs of all applicants for the grants.

g. Mehrhoff asked if the number and distribution of people, municipalities and regions standing to benefit from the projects can or should be taken into account when disbursing grants. This was not part of the scoring rubric developed by DEP.

h. Musgrave and Sutherland suggested adding a “funds available” line to the Grants for Municipalities Worksheet created by Murray, and Magnarelli advised a title change for the document.

i. Sutherland moved (Magnarelli seconded) to add the grants worksheet, after edits, to the Annual Report. **The motion passed. The document will be returned and added to the**

annual report after editing and additions. Commissioner Prelli stated that he **opposed** the previous motion and expressed concerns over the addition of the grants document to the report. He felt that the annual report should focus on the prior significant accomplishments of the past year's programs and not on any proposed future programs since the grants have not yet been dispersed and the results of the projects are not known.

5. Update of research project at UConn- Dr. Mark Brand: Musgrave welcomed and introduced Dr. Mark Brand, Professor of Horticulture at the University of Connecticut, for a special presentation. The group was invited to ask questions during the presentation, which focused on progress toward developing sterile cultivars of *Berberis* species and *Euonymus* species. Twelve cultivars of *Berberis* produced fewer than 400 fruits/year for the past three years in Dr. Brand's experimental plots, and he reported that his estimated timeline for developing and evaluating sterile barberry plants is 5-11 years.

Dr. Brand discussed the ability of seedlings from purple cultivars of *Berberis thunbergii* to revert to green foliage, given the proper (low-light) conditions, and presented a possible "invasiveness index", a measure which would take into account several factors including seed production, germination, establishment, and vigor to better quantify a plant's invasiveness. Dr. Brand also explained recent work using Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphisms to determine the genetics and parentage of wild or non-cultivated *Berberis* plants.

If possible, the presentation materials will be made available for members of the Council who were absent.

The Council thanked Dr. Brand for his presentation and noted with appreciation that he has so far appeared three times to provide information at Council meetings.

6. Other old or new business: Hyatt advised posting and displaying the minutes (and agendas) for the Invasive Plant Council on the website of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) and providing a link from the DEP website and/or other locations, to satisfy the legal requirement for reporting of the activities of the Council. He suggests this method since it would increase efficiency and decrease the time needed to make the minutes publicly available.

Prelli moved to post the minutes in this manner, Magnarelli seconded, and **the motion was passed.** The minutes will be posted on the CIPWG website, and a DEP website will link to it. This will satisfy requirements to make the minutes publicly accessible by the DEP.

7. Adjournment: Magnarelli moved to adjourn the meeting, Mehrhoff seconded, **and the Council decided to adjourn at 4:08 pm.**

The next meeting is scheduled for (Tuesday) Jan 13, 2009, 2 pm at the Valley Lab in Windsor, CT.