

Invasive Plants Council
Tuesday, July 12, 2016
2:00 pm, Dept. of Agriculture
Conference Room G8-AHartford, CT

Council members present: Theodore Andreadis, Paul Larson, Richard McAvoy, Tom McGowan, Darryl Newman, John Silander, David Sutherland, Katherine Winslow

Others present: Nelson DeBarros (representing William Hyatt), Donna Ellis, Brad Weeks

R. McAvoy called the meeting to order at 2:07pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from March 8, 2016 were distributed and reviewed. P. Larson moved (second: J. Silander) to approve as distributed. Motion Carried.

Updates from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP):

Hydrilla: N. DeBarros informed the group that \$24,500 (State Energy Program funding) and \$20,000 (Federal Aquatic Nuisance Species funding) were used for follow-up survey and treatment (on 7/8/16) of a 9-acre cove at Coventry Lake where Hydrilla was confirmed in 2015. Any future costs will need to be covered by the municipality. DeBarros commented that additional plants were observed beyond what was found in 2015. A public meeting was held 7/21/16 to discuss future herbicide treatments, which were met with some resistance. There are concerns with nutrient releases that can trigger algal blooms. DeBarros stated that Elodea is the other plant material found in the cove and it is resistant to the herbicide, so they don't expect a high amount of nutrients being released. DEEP has concerns with delaying treatment, as Hydrilla would produce turions (reproductive structures) in the fall when it would be too late to apply herbicides.

A BioBlitz was organized at Two Rivers Magnet Middle School in East Hartford on July 3-4, 2016. A global record was set for the number of species collected in one day. A new record for Hydrilla was confirmed in Upper Keeney Cove in the Connecticut River, which was surprising as this location is inaccessible to boats. Waterfowl may have been the source of movement of this aquatic invasive. Water chestnut was also found but was not a new occurrence. There were no immediate plans to address these aquatic invasives.

(D. Sutherland [2:10 p.m.] and T. Andreadis [2:18 p.m.] arrived)

DEEP is losing staff with retirements. There has been a 14% loss of staff the past few years. Wildlife Biologist Paul Capotosto is retiring in September. The loss of seasonal staff positions is having an impact on Phragmites control. The aquatic invasive species (AIS) grants to municipalities funds must be spent by the June 30th deadline.

T. Andreadis mentioned that The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) had a significant budget cut. No layoffs occurred but staff numbers are reduced due to attrition, including the retirement of two inspectors. D. Sutherland commented that Senator Chris Murphy is on the Appropriations Committee and is interested in conservation and environmental initiatives.

Legislative update: D. Sutherland informed the group that the “picture is pretty bleak” and the FY18 budget will be very bad, with existing programs eliminated. The prospects are below 5% of the Invasive Plant Coordinator position getting funded. In the past, there was always the assumption that things will improve, but now there is a lot of pessimism with the chronic budget crisis. P. Larson and B. Weeks reported that there was an attempt to include language to extend the municipal preemption in the Connecticut General Statutes but it was not acted on. The preemption expired 10/1/14. This will be pursued again next session.

Future of the Invasive Plants Council – operating without support: The group discussed the current status of the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) without the support of the coordinator position. Four meetings per year are held, but there is no ability to provide training, conduct research, and produce documents except as a volunteer basis. T. McGowan proposed the creation of interagency Memoranda of Understanding where agencies would donate some staff time to participate in environmental reviews within their expertise, prepare notices and meeting agendas, record minutes, respond to inquiries, and publish the environmental work that other groups are doing. The IPC and CIPWG could hold joint meetings periodically, similar to the general meetings that CIPWG convenes in the years between its biennial symposia. The two groups could report back and forth on their invasive activities and produce a report on the status of invasive species issues.

The group discussed options to generate support for the coordinator position and other needed assistance with invasive plant issues. CAES has a non-profit foundation, and the Connecticut Nurserymen’s Foundation may be able to obtain additional funds. J. Silander suggested the creation of a non-profit group that would be independent of CIPWG that could support these endeavors. Silander and D. Ellis will meet in the future to discuss this further.

Summer intern activities: D. Ellis reported that she has been working with UConn senior Kelsey Brennan, who was hired at UConn as a summer Extension intern. Brennan is assisting with several invasive plant projects, including updating the statewide giant hogweed database, tracking herbarium specimens for invasives included on Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) Early Detection and Research lists, and contacting agencies and organizations in New England and several northeastern states regarding the spread of invasive plants via fill, topsoil, and compost.

Announcements: D. Ellis mentioned the 8th biennial Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) symposium, which will be held on October 11, 2016 at the UConn Storrs campus. Symposium brochures were distributed to the group.

N. DeBarros reported on a bamboo site visit that occurred 4/21/16 to Fairground Rd. in Woodbridge, attended by DeBarros, W. Hyatt, and Caryn Rickel. They walked to a bamboo

population established on a bank of the Pomperaug River, but it was unclear where the plants originated. Exposed, loose rhizomes were observed. There was no evidence of new populations developing and the group concluded that there was an infrequent likelihood that they will develop. D. Newman commented that bamboo is very difficult to propagate in a nursery. J. Silander stated that there is still no data that bamboo is establishing on its own.

The remaining meetings scheduled for 2016 will take place on Sept 13th and Nov 15th.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 3:33pm.