

SUASCO CISMA
Steering Committee Meeting
Great Meadows NWR, Sudbury
January 15, 2013

Members Present: Amber Carr (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), John Dwyer (Maynard Conservation Commission), Lee Steppacher (National Park Service/ River Stewardship Council), Libby Herland (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Laura Mattei (Sudbury Valley Trustees), Barbara Volkle (Friends of Assabet NWR), Dave McKinnon (Lincoln), Tom Largy (Wayland), Lynn Knight (Carlisle), Matt Burne (Walden Woods Project), Gordon Shaw (CLCT), Joan Ferguson (CLCT), Karen Peltó (Commonwealth), Sue Flint (OARS), Alison Field-Juma (OARS)

Annual elections

Libby opened the meeting with a discussion about officers for Cisma. Steering Committee includes 12 members and equally represents the constituencies within the general membership. They have staggered terms. New members were voted in at the fall meeting, so now officers are elected from this newly constituted Steering Committee. Terms for officers are one year. The Admin Committee takes the lead in soliciting nominations with the following objectives; to get new representation in the slate of officers; to work to have the vice chair serve with the intention of becoming chair in the future. The treasurer position is closely tied to Mass Audubon, the fiscal agent, so Mass Audubon rep serves as treasurer (Jeff). There is a hope that more of the general Cisma members will want to become involved in our activities – whether by serving on the Steering Committee, or on one of the subcommittees. We cannot have the organization run by the same small group of individuals into the future. The organization will be stronger with a changing leadership

Laura nominated herself to serve as vice chair, and Lynn offered to serve as chair for the coming year. Lee and Libby will share the duties of secretary and Jeff will continue as treasurer.

Gordon made a motion to support this slate of officers. Seconded by Matt. The motion passed unanimously.

Lynn presided over the remainder of the meeting.

Minutes

September 11, 2012 minutes

- Within the Heard Pond discussion, change ‘finding’ to ‘funding’.
- Karen clarified the correct names of many of the state agencies, personnel. They are MassDEP, Mass Wildlife, Rose is a Trustee Representative. Karen also said that the

financial instrument used to transfer monies between one state agency and another is called an interagency service agreement.

- John said on page 2, second paragraph, where it says 'work has begun on all of them' that the work should be explained.
- Last page, Tom Eagle title is Deputy Refuge Manager for Eastern MA Complex.
- Under wild rice discussion, there should be a clarification that the native stock will be collected by remnant stock along the river.

Gordon moves to approve minutes with these changes. Dave seconds. Unanimously approved.

November 13, 2012 minutes

- 3rd page, clarify that this is a 10 person crew and the wish is to hire through Americorp is possible.
- Last page...current steering committee members whose terms are 'expiring'.
- D. Wayne from Westford Watershed may be on land trust as well. Check on this.

Implementation Plan for Nyanza Settlement Funds

Amber led a discussion about the draft implementation plan which is required to be submitted to the Trustees and approved before any funds will become available to the CISMA. The CISMA has been chosen to manage the water chestnut and purple loosestrife control projects. The implementation plan outlines how the projects will be funded over a three year period, which will be responsible and specific tasks required to accomplish the projects. The Plan proposes that the mapping projects would be completed by CISMA members and a request for proposals has already been issued. USFWS would take the lead in purchase of a harvester for water chestnut control and in hiring a 10 person crew to help with harvesting. USFWS would also purchase canoes for the crew.

Gordon asked about the 10 person crew. He questioned whether having the crew for July and August wasn't too late to be effective. In Fairhaven Bay, by late July many of the plants have already gone to seed. CLCT does hand pulling in late May and June. CLCT also hires a team to help with pulling. IS there a way to coordinate these efforts?

Amber explained that she hoped to hire a crew through Americorps. She has already completed an application but will not know if she has been successful until mid March. If successful, Americorps covers labor costs and provide a housing allowance. She has developed an alternative job announcement in case Americorps does not come through and she needs to hire the crew independently. Timing is difficult because college students are looking for jobs now. The crew would work on Fairhaven Bay in June, but other parts of the river will be hand pulled in July and August.

There are still some issues to be worked out with how to dispose of the plants. Amber anticipates that the crew will coordinate with the local community to dispose of plants. In some towns the local farms are taking the plants and using them for compost.

Amber said that she and Tom Eagle, Deputy Refuge Manager, will be organizing a meeting of those involved with water chestnut harvesting to go over all of these issues in depth. Forty eight thousand dollars has been allocated to hiring of the crew; if Americorps comes through, and there are excess funds, money can go to more hand pulling efforts.

Sue F. noted that mapping of water chestnut will have to be done before hand pulling begins. Amber said that schedules will be refined and revised at the upcoming meeting in order to ensure that mapping is effective.

Alison asked a question about the water chestnut goals outlined on page 4. While biomass should increase in the beginning, if the program is successful it should decrease over time. A sentence could be added that said... ' if successful, the ultimate goal is to eliminate the need for water chestnut control.'

Jeff suggested that the plan needed to clarify these goals. If the goal is an increase of 150% in biomass, the plan needs to be clear what that means. If it means that we will increase our harvest from 10 tons to 25 tons in 3 years this may be hard to meet. If plant growth decreases over time because of harvesting there may be less biomass. Karen suggested that these numbers were performance goals to determine if the project is working. She thinks the Trustees are open to another way of measuring success of the project and we should suggest an alternative in the Plan.

Alison spoke to the issue of mapping the water chestnut and said that monitoring progress in water chestnut control will require as much effort as the original mapping. If mapping is done in 2013, followed by 2 years of harvesting, then the area should be remapped in 2015.

Alison requested that in Exhibit A, the name be changed to OARS.

Alison asked about Exhibit C and whether there was flexibility in the funding of various components of this project. Libby said that she hoped there was flexibility between components if the bottom line figure remained the same. For example, not as much funding as originally allocated may be required at Heard Pond, and the harvester cost might vary from the estimate, so flexibility will be required.

Karen said that the Trustee Council held monthly calls to discuss progress on implementation. The next call is February 4 and it would be good if this Implementation Plan could be submitted before that date. We should let the Trustees know when we need the money so that they can make a formal decision about moving the funds. All Trustees must approve the allocation of funds. Generally the Trustees like to make a decision about distributing funds once a year. Karen advised members to consider when they needed the funds and to anticipate that it would take 2-3 months to administratively move the funds into an appropriate account.

John made a motion to approve the Implementation Plan in concept and instruct the Admin Subcommittee to make revisions as discussed above. Lee seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Review of Proposals

1. Purple Loosestrife Mapping

One proposal was received in response to the RFP, from Mass Audubon. Jeff described the proposal to map loosestrife from Ashland to Concord, and to use this information to propose release sites for beetles. The project will use GIS wetland areas to define the search area and then follow up in the field using mobile mappers and a grid system to determine extent of Loosestrife. In early season mapping will be done based on dead stems from last season, later in the season mapping would be based on plants in bloom. The approach will be dependent on when funds are available. Cornell protocols for mapping beetle populations will be used and these results will be overlaid with plant locations. This will determine where to release beetles. Finally, monitoring will continue to evaluate effectiveness of program.

Lynn noted that the proposal includes coordinating with OARS and this was positive. A single grid system will be used for Water Chestnut and Purple Loosestrife mapping.

There was a question about whether aerial photography could be helpful. Jeff said that DEP was not doing any though he could look in to other options. MIT is working with organizations in Plymouth and they are using balloons to take aerial photos. Matt said that Sewall in Maine has done some flights in the past.

Gordon asked about the extent of the mapping. Jeff responded that he was focused on the river and adjacent wetlands, but if the project went quickly and smoothly he may be able to incorporate more area.

Karen said that farmers want Purple Loosestrife for bees. Could we encourage late mowing to increase wildflowers for bees?

2. Water Chestnut Mapping

Sue Flint outlined this proposal. Mobile mappers will be used to determine where and in what concentration water Chestnut is found in the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers and 130 acres of ponds in the Hop Brook Watershed. Using a grid system, OARS will hire a 2 person crew and evaluate all 'reasonably accessible areas. IN places that are not boatable, surveys will be taken from bridges or by foot. Plan is to start in June, but there will need to be flexibility due to weather. A factor will be created to accommodate growth of rosettes during the season so that percent cover will be comparable throughout the season.

Dave asked about how submerged plants would be mapped, and Sue responded that mapping would have to wait until the plants had reached the surface. Timing of mapping and handpulling will have to be well coordinated.

Lynn asked about the need for monitoring in future years, as was discussed for Purple Loosestrife. Sue said that yes, monitoring would be needed if we wanted to map progress of pulling efforts. Funds for future monitoring are not included in the proposal. Sue suggested that after the entire area is mapped it might be possible to target future mapping efforts.

John asked if the tributaries were to be mapped. Sue responded that they are not included in this proposal but could be done in the future. This might be important if tributaries are contributing seeds to the main stem. One goal of the project is to be able to identify small infestations before they get big and control them.

Amber then outlined the funds available for invasive species projects and how they have been adjusted within the Implementation Plan. These include:

Heard Pond - \$50K

Harvester - \$230K allocated, increased to \$306 K based on estimates. This will include harvester, transport barge, conveyor, trailer and delivery costs.

Canoes - \$35,000

Water Chestnut mapping \$3500. This is too low and has been adjusted to accommodate OARS proposal.

10 person crew - \$48K/year for 3 years. If we are successful in getting Americorps there will be fund available here. If someone else hires the crew there will still be some flexibility, though not as much as with Americorps.

Coordination - \$20K. for support by FWS and Mass Audubon. Trustees have said that between 10-20% can be used for overhead. The Implementation Plan uses 15% with 10% to FWS and 5% to Mass Audubon.

Purple loosestrife mapping -\$. may be more than is needed. Funds can be used to either purchase or raise beetles; though raising them is more cost effective.

Karen suggested that the budget in the plan be annotated to justify some of the changes.

Approval of these proposals will be predicated on approval of the Implementation Plan by the Trustees. Jeff, Alison and Sue recused themselves from discussion of approval.

Barbara made a motion to approve the Purple Loosestrife Mapping project submitted by Mass Audubon. Matt seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Matt made a motion to approve the Water Chestnut Mapping project submitted by OARS. Dave seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Members state how grateful they were to have the depth of expertise exhibited in OARS and Mass Audubon's proposals and their mutual commitment to working together on these projects.

3. RFP for hiring crew

Amber explained that this RFP was to be used only if the Americorps proposal was unsuccessful but she wanted approval of it so she can move forward if need be.

Amber explained that the crew would work in many places along the rivers and would coordinate with local partners helping them with their efforts. Advertising in March is a little late, but payment is pretty good, so hopefully hiring would be successful. Work would be from mid June to mid August. Amber said that other organizations could hire this crew and FWS would take responsibility if others did not.

Gordon explained a bit more about the hiring that CLCT does. They have 4 people for 4 weeks, high school students with a team leader.

Dave moved to approve this job posting for Amber's use in hiring if needed. John seconded. Approved unanimously.

Other Business

Alison asked a question about when funds would be available and if costs could be incurred before. Jeff and Amber will look into this.

Matt announced that Tim Simmons would be giving a talk on Invasive Species, part of the speaker series funded by a CISMA small grant. It will be held at Thoreau Institute on Jan 22.

Possible speaker for the CISMA spring meeting is Elizabeth Farnsworth. Other suggestions are Jen Toro from the Housatonic watershed. Disposal might be a topic of interest in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 3 pm.