

**SUASCO CISMA
Spring Meeting
March 8, 2011
Garden in the Woods**

Present:

Tia Pinney(Mass Audubon), Bill Brumbeck (NEWFS), Sharon Williams (WCLT), Vivian Kimball (WCLT/Westboro ConCom), Annie Reid (WCLT), Barbara Volke (Friends of Assabet River NWR), Betsy Griffin (Friends of Assabet NWR), Bryan Connolly (MA Natural heritage& Endangered Species Program), Tom Rawinski (US Forest Service), Matt Burne (Walden Woods Project), Anna Wilkins (Lincoln Land Conservation Trust), Thad Soule (Town of Chelmsford), Jeffrey Collins (Mass Audubon), Lee Steppacher (National Park Service/River Stewardship Council), Allan Fierce (Org for the Assabet River), M. John Dwyer (Maynard ConCom), Russ Hopping (TTOR), Russ Cohen (MA Dept of Fish and Game, Div of Ecological Restoration), Debbie Dineen (Town of Sudbury), Stephanie Wilsen(USDA/NRCS), Ted Elliman (NEWFS), Lynn Knight (Carlisle Land Stewardship Commission), Rick Findlay (Littleton Conservation Trust), Priscilla Ryder (Marlborough Con Com), Laura Mattei (SVT), Freddie Gillespie (SOLF/Southboro Open Space Commission), Whit Beals (New England Forestry Foundation, Libby Herland (USFWS), Amber Carr (USFWS).

Welcome and introduction of new members. Libby Herland , chair of the CISMA welcomed everyone to the spring meeting. After all members introduced themselves new members were recognized. New members are:

MA Natural Heritage Program, represented by Bryan Connolly. Bryan is the state botanist and will be a great asset to our work.

Stow Conservation Trust. Allan Fierce is the representative (he is also representing OAR today).

Treasurer's Report: Jeff Collins reports on state of grants and finances. On going grants:

\$50K from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This covers partial costs of coordinator, and ED/RR training and surveys led by NEWFS. Funds were also used to purchase some mobile mappers.

\$11K from River Stewardship Council. Funded Sudbury Weed Education and Eradication Team (\$1K), Beetle Rearing Project, led by SVT (\$5), web design for CISMA website (\$5K).

Match to NFWF grant includes:

\$15 K from the Sudbury Foundation to collate mapping information.

\$15K from Intel to Mass Audubon to pilot a mapping project.

\$15K in-kind volunteer hours for ED/RR project.

We proposed a 2-1 match for this project, so we still need approximately \$50K in matching funds. If there are any local projects that may be applied, contact Amber or Jeff.

Annual Priority Actions for 2011. Amber reviewed the hand out (attached). She encouraged people to continue to volunteer from ED/RR and control projects.

Announcements. Barbara Volke raised the following issues for members to consider:

- There is a check off on the MA Income tax forms (line 32a) to support the Natural Heritage Program. There has been a downward trend in contributions and funding for this program which we would like to turn around.
- Federal budget is tenuous with potential for decreases. This has affected the FWS discretionary funding. Thanks to FWS for their support of CISMA.
- FWS is undertaking a visioning process for all wildlife refuges for next 10 years. Topics covered include landscape area planning, invasive species and partnerships. We should comment on these and highlight how the CISMA model is working. Comments due by 4/22. Look for guidance on Americaswildlife.org.

The Vine (A check in from all members). Libby asked each member to briefly report on top priorities, species, challenges and assistance needed from CISMA)

Barbara Volkle – Friends of Assabet NWR will continue to work on removal of invasives on the Refuge.

Lynn Knight - Carlisle Land Stewardship Commission said work on town properties will likely be focused on bittersweet and loosestrife. High School students will be doing a beetle ranching project. One girl has mapped loosestrife and Japanese knotweed.

Anna Wilkins – is reporting for the Lincoln ConCom though she is now working for the land trust. The town is sponsoring the annual Garlic Mustard pull in May. They are concerned with Phragmites on the Sudbury River near Baker's Bridge Rd. They are doing a treatment to Tree of Heaven in the center of town. Need to wait and see its effectiveness. They are trying some different methods to address Japanese Knotweed. Town is trying to focus on specific spots to keep weed free. They collaborate on water chestnut removal. Want to collaborate on grants to support efforts.

Rick Finley – Littleton has 2 projects underway. First is Japanese Knotweed project. They have created a brochure, 'weed razing' and sent it to every household to see who wants to participate. Secondly, he initiated a volunteer training for herbicide application, but is facing insurance issues. Can the CISMA get some sort of umbrella policy to cover members?

Russ Cohen – DCR is also focusing on replanting native species. He will be doing a talk at SVT entitled Nibbling on Natives, 4/6 from 7-9 pm.

Bryan Connolly – NHP focuses on endangered plants and would like the ED/RR reports to ensure they are not encroaching on endangered plant sites. NEWFS helps to monitor some of these sites. He questioned some of the ED species and asked whether they should be on the official State list, including Cork Tree. He offered his help to CISMA – send him photos of plants that need identification. He could help get bulk rates for invasive plant guides to distribute at trainings.

Tia Pinney – Drumlin Farm is doing a major ecological management plan which will list priority species. Many will need monitoring including Garlic Mustard, Swallow-wort, Cork Trees (removed), Dames Rocket(pulled), Buckthorn. They are in process of creating a system to prioritize areas for treatment and then when to return for follow up.

John Dwyer – Maynard has held 2 work days with volunteers. They are struggling with how to get volunteers out and how to motivate them. They do not have a license to treat with herbicides. Bittersweet and Knotweed are big in Town. Concom is trying to encourage residents to clean up their own yards.

Whit Beals – NE Forestry Foundation is FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified as ‘green’. Their management plan recognizes invasives and they are managing them. They are short staffed with little funding. Logging contractors asked to eradicate invasives. Toody Woods has received a USDA grant to address how to control burning bush. He will make the report available when it is completed.

Ted Elliman – NEWFS is working both inside and beyond the watershed. Outside, they are doing a project in Salisbury on Broad Leaf Pepper Weed in tidal areas. In the watershed they are leading the ED/RR project. They will need new volunteers to continue the project this summer. They would like to encourage more high school students to participate. Please contact Ted if you have contact suggestions. They are adding new species to the list of ED/RR species. They have found infestations of Stiltgrass in Framingham and Mile a Minute in Littleton and Westford. Each is being controlled. A new Flora Guide of New England by Arthur Haines will be out in July.

Allan Fierce – OAR is pulling Water Chestnut in Stow near the Gleasondale Dam. Volunteers from Intel are helping. They need more canoes, which FWS, MAS and Natural Heritage all said they could possibly supply. They would like to do some systematic mapping to determine what is happening with Water Chestnut over time.

Freddie Gillespie- Southborough Open Space Commission is working to remove Bittersweet on an 88 acre conservation area. They received a federal Grass land Reserve Grant to clear the area. They have not done a management plan yet. After 5 years of chemical control they hope to only have to mow the site. They are also doing an inventory of the Town Forest. Southborough Open Land Foundation is working on a project with the Beals family on their 56 acre farm. They have received a WHIP grant to work on 6 acres intensively. They have done invasives treatment and now have to manage the property. It has had many challenges including funding, organizing volunteers and receiving permits for work in wetlands. They would like assistance from CISMA on volunteer management and a training workshop.

Lee Steppacher – The River Stewardship Council is not managing any lands or specifically any invasive species themselves but wants to support others that are through the CISMA. These partner organizations are helping to protect the river and uplands from invasives. This year the RSC has allocate \$5K to CISMA to help with 3 projects: a photo project to document phenology of plants with photos that can help with identification, a project to work with high school students to engage them on invasive issues, funds to support Aquatic Hitchhiker signs .

Laura Mattei- SVT took the lead on the beetle ranching project for CISMA last year. In addition they mapped invasives at the Desert natural Area and have done targeted manual removal with volunteers. They are looking for funding to take on a large area. SVT participated in SWEET’s Garlic pull.

Russ Hopping – TTOR has been doing a project to remove Black Swallowwort at Old Manse, in partnership with Minute Man NHP. Focus is on river banks and open meadow, and herbicides are being used. This is the 3rd year of the project. They are trying to document results. Also working at Southborough Chestnut Hill Farm, developing a management plan, then prioritizing actions. May ask for help from CISMA. He suggested putting CISMA success stories on the website.

Debbie Dineen – ConCom has had funding and staff cuts so Debbie is really needing to focus. She is working with SWEET and NEWFS and conducted several work parties with volunteers. Focus is on Bittersweet in an historic road bed on conservation land. So far there has been very little regrowth and planning 4 more work days this year. Town is working with DCR to develop a forestry management plan. When completed, the Town will be eligible for funds. They have already applied for support to work on Nobscot Mountain, but have not heard yet. Town is pulling Water chestnut in Carding Mill Pond and hosting a Garlic Mustard pull (there is a 7 foot stand of garlic Mustard and could be a good photo!).

Sudbury is experimenting with Phragmites removal. They do not use chemicals unless Ted applies them, so in the fall they have cut the seed head off and covered stalks with black plastic. They are waiting to see the results.

Amber Carr – FWS is coordinating Water Chestnut harvesting within the Refuge. There are many fewer in the impoundments after 2 years of harvesting. FWS has been releasing beetles for Purple Loosestrife control. Also working on a Black Locust project at Assabet NWR. There are problems with root suckering, and she is wondering if others have any suggestions. Also wondering if anyone has experience with Cypress Spurge. FWS continues to do mapping at great Meadows and Oxbow. Also ED monitoring.

There was a question whether Black Locust is an invasive species. Tom Rawinski does not consider it a problem and Bryan Connolly says it is a nitrogen fixer (which is a good thing).

Matt Burne – Walden Woods has not done an inventory of their lands and are not sure what invasives are present. Matt wants to do this. Garlic Mustard is at the Institute and Bittersweet and Buckthorn are at the farm. DCR has written a resource management plan for Walden Pond and identified Tree of heaven and Swallowwort on the property. Maybe this can be sued to try to engage DCR with the CISMA.

Priscilla Ryder - In Marlborough, ConCom has treated Milfoil and Fanwort . A logger from DCR removed Tree of Heaven. Should the Town do anything else? Priscilla had a question about controlling phragmites and monitoring results. Perennial Pepperweed has been found along the highway, and is being addressed by MADOT (Tara Mitchell).

Westborough Land Trust– Honeysuckle is a problem on their land. They are raising beetles for Purple Loosestrife control and using boy scouts for the labor. They have received funds from a local civic club and also from a Staples Education Grant.

Follow up for CISMA:

- Put success stories on website, especially those non-chemical practices
- Report on how to treat burning bush should go on website
- Sponsor volunteer management and training
- Investigate umbrella policy for insurance for herbicide applicators

Presentation by Tom Rawinski, USDA Forestry Service, Durham, NH.

Tom gave a great slide presentation (see attached) and discussed the need for an ecosystems management approach to invasive species. He suggested that we needed to take a ‘big picture’ approach to both plant and animal species; That we not look at each species in isolation, but as part of a system; That we identify resources of value and protect them; That we focus on prevention and early detection; And that we consider the long term commitments that are necessary to make changes and decide if we are able to make those commitments. The second portion of Tom’s presentation focused on management of deer which he believes is a true threat to natural biodiversity and needs to be actively managed.

The meeting closed at 5 pm.