

SUASCO CISMA
Steering Committee Meeting
Great meadows NWR, Sudbury
March 2, 2010

Members Present: Amber Carr (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), Ted Elliman (New England Wild Flower Society), Matt Burne (Walden Woods Project), Delia Kaye (Concord Natural Resources), John Dwyer (Maynard Conservation Commission), Freddie Gillespie (Southborough Open Land Foundation/ Sudbury River Watershed Organization), Anna Wilkins (Lincoln Conservation Commission), Lee Steppacher (National Park Service/ River Stewardship Council), Jeff Collins (Mass Audubon), Lynn Knight (Carlisle Conservation Commission), Tia Pinney (Mass Audubon), Barbara Volkle (Friends of Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge), Rick Findlay (Littleton Conservation Commission), Wendy Sisson (Harvard Conservation Commission), Muffy Curtis (Hop Brook Protection Association), Eileen McGourty (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), Russ Hopping (Trustees of Reservations).

No update to last meetings minutes

Formalizing structure of CISMA

Eileen mentioned that there were currently some people holding multiple officer roles and suggested that we formalize the structure of our CISMA by having different members serve in each role. Lee volunteered to be secretary. Since MA Audubon is our fiscal agent Jeff was elected treasurer. Since MA Audubon is not a current member of the steering committee the steering committee voted MA Audubon to the remaining 12th seat. Welcome MA Audubon! Pam from MA Audubon is no longer their contact for the CISMA group. Tia Pinney will be taking her place.

Upcoming Elections: Amber explained that when the Steering Committee was created in May 2009, members were assigned staggered terms, from 1 to 3 years in length. After this first round, all terms will be 3 years, but at the outset, the terms were staggered to ensure in the future that not all members would be up for re-election in the same year. In this way, continuity on the Steering Committee is built into the process.

Presently, there are 4 entities whose terms end in May – Maynard Conservation Commission, National Park Service, Southborough Open Land Foundation and The Walden Woods Project. Amber will send out an email to all eligible organizations asking if they are interested in serving a 3 year term. She will then set up and send out a voting mechanism on Survey Monkey. The official turn over of steering committee terms will take place on June 1 2010. All who signed the MOU will be asked to vote. The official turn over of steering committee terms will take place on June 1 2010. Everyone was reminded that they are welcome at all meetings, whether they are officially on the Steering Committee or not.

Strategic Plan: Amber asked everyone to review the Plan (available on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service site), especially the maps, and provide comments within 2 weeks. The Plan will be distributed at the next meeting.

Google Group: There are now 2 Google email groups. One is for just the Steering Committee and the other includes all interested parties. A number of files are posted on the Google site including the CISMA flyer (which needs an update) and the MOU. Amber is working on also putting up a calendar of events in the watershed.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant: Jeff reported that the CISMA grant application to NFWF was successful and \$50K was granted for work in the watershed. A portion of the funds will be used to support the coordinator position, while additional funds will support an early Detection project led by New England Wild Flower Society (NEWFS). The grant is for an 18 month time period (starting 3/1/2010).

ED/RR Project

Ted will be leading this project which will conduct ED/RR surveys in each town in the watershed. Interest has already been expressed by a number of towns. Using volunteers, surveys of 11 common invasive plants will be made. He will conduct training sessions (mid May to early June) to help volunteers identify and document species. He hopes to have 5 people in each town. Surveys will start in early summer. Ted will review results, determine which species are prevalent in particular areas, and then prioritize sites for management. He hopes to begin to address control issue by late summer.

The project also includes surveys of 30-35 sites of rare plants. Plant conservation volunteers will survey these sites to determine if rare plants are threatened by invasive species.

Ted has written a press release, to be distributed in local papers to recruit volunteers. Steering Committee members may also be helpful in finding volunteers in their towns and organizations.

Ted is now in the process of picking the sites in each town for the surveys. He is focusing on properties with high ecological value, some with ponds. Anna suggested picking some 'edgy' sites where invasives might make an early toehold. She suggested Walden Woods which has few invasives internally, but may be threatened on the edges.

Barbara suggested that the reference materials that are being produced for the trainings may have a broader use and should be made available on the website (in process). Perhaps there could be an on-line slide show available based on these training sessions. ED/RR and Education Committees should work on this together.

Jeff suggested using these trainings as a basis for training for the Steering Committee members and other CISMA members.

Resources for volunteers should build on what has already been created, as much as possible. For example, US Forest Service has an invasive species guide book, with flip pages, useful in the field. Amber is working on a guide for early detection which she will bring to the next meeting. USDA, Weed of the Week is also a useful guide, and can be altered easily to address our issues. John suggested that it might be helpful to have a spreadsheet of existing resource materials with some sort of annotation of their usefulness. This could be put on the Google site.

Coordinator

Amber is already working as a part time coordinator for the CISMA under funding from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Funds from the NFWF grant (which are housed at Mass Audubon) will be contracted to USFWS to contribute to support the coordinator position through the full 18 months of the grant time frame.

Note to all members that the grant depends on a significant match requirement. All volunteer time will be tracked, so keep good records.

Sudbury Foundation Request: Jeff reported that the Sudbury Foundation had provided support in the past, which we were able to use as match for the previous NFWF funding. The Sudbury Foundation was very pleased with the results, i.e. the creation of the CISMA, and they are willing to talk to Jeff and others about possible funding for mapping efforts. Invasive species management is one of the issues that the Foundation is interested in. If successful, funding from the Sudbury Foundation will be able to be used as match for the NFWF grant.

Jeff explained that Mass Audubon has some funding from Intel which they are using to purchase hand held mapping devices (Magellan Mobile Mapper) and working with high school students to map invasives within 50x50 meter grids. Ultimately these grids may be overlaid on maps and an atlas could be produced. He is considering asking the Sudbury Foundation to fund additional mapping devices so more students can participate. Deadline for application is April 1.

Tia suggested that she might be able to take some of the students to work on grids in their own towns. It was also suggested that some of the volunteers trained as part of the ED/RR project might get one of these mobile mapping units to use on their sites. Jeff said he would write the proposal to address a few sites, and this might be expanded over time.

Jeff requested a letter of support from the Steering Committee for this proposal. Freddie made a motion, seconded by Lynn to compose a letter of support for the proposal to the Sudbury Foundation. Motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

On May 27 Blue Hills Reservation will be releasing a weevil to help control Mile a Minute weed. This is the 2nd (after Purple Loosestrife and beetles) approval of a biocontrol for invasives.

Next Steering Committee meeting will be may 11 at 1:30 - 3:30 pm.

Minutes prepared by Lee Steppacher and edited by Amber Carr.