

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

October 28, 2019
Craftsbury Town Hall

PRESENT: John Brodhead, June Cook, Carol Maroni, Stephen Moffatt, Diane Morgan, Elinor Osborn, Steve Wright

ABSENT: Farley Brown, Susie Houston, Heidi Rich

GUEST: Laura Spence

MINUTES: Minutes of September 23, 2019 approved.

STERLING COLLEGE KNOTWEED STUDIES: Laura Spence reported on two studies of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia Japonica*) undertaken by Sterling College students. The first study was a week-long and involved pitfall traps in knotweed infested areas, perimeters of knotweed infestations, non-infested grassy areas, and streambanks. The traps were set for 24-hour periods. The conclusion was no significant difference in abundance and activity of ground-dwelling invertebrates, such as, centipedes, ants, spiders, beetles, ticks, was apparent.

Lower activity by the invertebrates was found to be true in areas with more litter (leaves, twigs, dead grasses). Conclusion was the invertebrates could forage with less movement. The second study, a semester in length, involved soil composition of knotweed infested areas, perimeter of knotweed infestations, and non-infested areas. Results showed impacts on Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi (AMF) and symbiotic relationship to plants. Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi is beneficial and provides nutrients to trees, grass, and shrub roots in a symbiotic relationship.

Knotweed is one of 10 percent of plants that doesn't form AMF; garlic mustard is another. Conclusion was that Knotweed excretes some toxin over which plants have no defense. Non-infested areas showed 5 X's greater amount of AMF on plant roots. When a neutral plant was grown in soils from the three different areas, the non-infested area soil showed 3 X's greater amount of AMF on the neutral plant roots.

Another test involved creating Knotweed leaf and root extracts which were injected into separate soil samples and in which a neutral plant was grown. Conclusion was Knotweed excretes a chemical which depresses AMF and against which plants have no defense.

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE: Carol reported the collaboration with WonderArts was very successful and the wildlife gardening project completed at the Community Greenspace. Carol Fairbank, executive director of WonderArts, was very supportive and proactive in completing the planting of pollinators which provide food and shelter. Ten perennials were planted in the last session. The next step is putting up signage to identify species.

SELECT BOARD UPDATE: The Select Board has officially voted to establish a Craftsbury Conservation Fund. Questions evolved over whether or not the Fund's purpose, protocols, guidelines, and application document forwarded by the commission was also approved. The Ash Borer Study recommendation, Stephen reported, has met with lukewarm response and non-committal.

Reports of ATVs still using the river were noted and implementation of signage warning of penalties has not been implemented.

Stephen will meet with select board to clarify status of Craftsbury Conservation Fund protocols, get update on ATV river signage, and discuss Ash Borer Tree survey.

KNOTWEED DISPOSAL: The select board's inclination appears to be to truck knotweed to Coventry landfill. The State allegedly throws knotweed back in the woods and outside perimeters are monitored.

Elinor reported on a discussion with Scott Sampson from Casella Waste Management. Knotweed must be in sealed, doubled contractor bags. Permits will be needed by town if trucking on roadway, but there is proviso for exemption. Knotweed has to be buried very deeply if disposed in that manner. Results from earlier research into knotweed disposal and Casella's response were different from the recent investigation as to disposal of invasives. Whether the permit exemption referred to hazardous waste or invasives was unclear. Elinor will continue to investigate.

LITTLE HOSMER MILFOIL: Stephen M. reported a resident was concerned of milfoil moving from Big Hosmer into Little Hosmer and felt the commission should be monitoring Little Hosmer for milfoil. Diane noted the commission had undertaken a survey of boat usage on Little Hosmer in preparation for possibly pursuing a grant. Decision was boat usage was very limited and to take no further action. The wetlands between Little Hosmer and Big Hosmer provide a natural barrier and are a good filter. John has paddled around the Lake to look for milfoil as have other individuals. The State has training sessions for people interested in doing so.

Concern was raised over undertaking projects and spreading the commission too thinly. It was suggested if someone has a concern, he/she should come to a commission meeting and provide background for the issue. Further discussion on monitoring Little Hosmer was tabled until the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS: Carol reported Sterling College will hold a community resource workshop each semester for students. If the commission is going to be involved, then commission materials (i.e., banner, brochures, map of wildlife sightings, posters, tools, etc) should be located in one place in the Town Hall and accessible. She will talk with Town Clerk to see if this can be done.

The next meeting of the commission will be held on December 23, 2019, in the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by June Pichel Cook, Secretary