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Southwest Wisconsin Weed Management Area Steering Committee Meeting Wednesday, November 5, 2014

MINUTES

Attendees:

Mike Engel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Private Lands
John Exo, UW Extension
Cathy Cooper, Richland County Land Conservation
Gene Hausner, Sauk County and Southwest Badger
Ben Johnston, Kickapoo Valley Reserve
Leon Wolfe, Lafayette County and Southwest Badger
Mike Finlay, DNR Forester
Michael Putnam, DNR Invasive Species Grants
Brentt Michalek, Sauk County Land Conservation/Zoning
Kendra Niemec, U.S. FWS Refuges
William Kiser, U.S. FWS Private Lands
Lynda Schweikert, Grant County Land Conservation
Katie Abbott, Driftless Area Land Conservancy
Dan Bohlin, Private Landowner
Patrick Dayton, Southwest Badger
Paul Ohlrogge, UW Extension Iowa County
Laura Paine, Southwest Badger
David Troester, Crawford County Land Conservation
Travis Bunting, Crawford County Land Conservation
Jim Weber, Landowner
Cindy Ramseyer, Lower Kickapoo Initiative
Randy Mell, UW Extension
Cara Carper, Southwest Badger

Welcome and Introductions

Each person introduced themselves and their representation.

Presentation: What is a “Weed Management Area” or “Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area?”

Cara Carper provided a brief, but thorough, powerpoint presentation on WMAs/CISMAs, including benefits of WMAs/CISMAs and how others are set up. (If you are interested in a copy the presentation, please contact Cara at cara.carper@swbadger.org.)

There was a brief discussion about how much is known about what is being done about invasives in southwest Wisconsin.

Past efforts in Southwest Wisconsin

Southwest Invasive Species Team (SWIST) – Katie Abbott and Paul Ohlrogge were involved in the first, and final, meeting of the SWIST in 2010. The person who was expected to be the coordinator got a different job. The team did not continue to meet, due to lack of resources to do coordination. Volunteers took on the project of mapping invasives on all of the highways in Iowa County, and due to that effort, the Iowa County Highway Department changed their mowing patterns to minimize the spread of invasives.

Greater Sauk County Invasive Team – John Exo was part of the team. At the time the team was formed, there were many groups in Sauk County doing active control efforts, and in some case duplicating efforts. They were not sharing knowledge, equipment or other resources. However they realized garlic mustard and other species rapidly spreading. The group prioritized education and mapping initially. That turned out to be futile. Then they turned to resource sharing. They received a “Pulling Together” grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – for control, but not a coordinator. The effort lasted for 8 years, but the team died in 2008 for lack of a coordinator. John estimated the coordination job would take 10 percent of someone’s time.

Southwest Badger’s role

Southwest Badger received funding from DNR to do the initial coordination of the CWMA/CISMA. Southwest Badger also applied for a NFWF grant, but just found out we did not receive this funding. Southwest Badger did receive a small “Monitoring Grant” from DNR. Through this grant we can provide training for highway crews, training for volunteers and some workday events. If anyone would like to be on the subcommittee to determine the priority area and priority invasives to tackle with this grant, please contact Cara. So far Paul Ohlrogge, Cindy Ramseyer and Jim Weber offered to be part of the subcommittee (with Southwest Badger staff).

What would a Weed Management Area look like in Southwest Wisconsin?

We had a brief discussion on whether this group would cover invasive terrestrials, aquatics or animals?

Points that were made include: We should focus on streams and roadway with both terrestrials and aquatics. We should be most concerned with newcomers that will affect us economically. We could look for funds for counties to increase mowing frequency. Private landowners own most land in our area, and many landowners have no concern for invasives. We need a component to touch those folks.

What is currently being done to deal with invasives?

How could this group help those efforts?

Southwest Badger – currently has an Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist (Don Barrette) on staff. Don does monitoring and education in Southwest Badger’s 9 county area. We receive DNR Aquatic Invasive Species grant funding for this position. However there is a great deal of competition and funding is limited.

Foresters – DNR and for- and non-profit foresters talk with landowners every day. Invasive species are always addressed.

Randy Mell – Randy mentioned the Driftless Forest Network (DFN) has an e-newsletter with periodic articles about invasives. We could potentially use that tool more. It goes out to 1,600

landowners over a 12 county area. The Hixon Forest in City of La Crosse is working on the extent of terrestrial invasives. They will be writing grants soon to do control/

Mike Finlay – Mike agreed that the DFN is powerful effort (www.mywisconsinwoods.org). We need to sell landowners on taking action. DFN has the social science research on how to get a landowner to engage.

Mike Engel and Bill Kiser – U.S. Fish and Wildlife can leverage funds for landowners. They match landowner dollars 1:1. Every project they do has an invasive species component. Their definition of “Private Land” is non-state and non-federal, so can work with counties and others.

John Exo – John stressed it will be important for this group to focus – at what level can we be effective? He has a regional role rather than working individually with landowners.

Opportunities to work on invasive issues ebb and flow.

Jim Weber – As a private landowner, Jim has been the recipient of grant funding for invasive species work. He has been working with adjacent neighbors (mostly farmers), but finds it hard to interest busy farmers in dealing with invasives. He has used DNR’s WFLGP (Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program) as cost share. WFLGP is limited to landowners with a forest stewardship plan.

Cathy Cooper – Richland County received a DNR Rapid Response grant. The hardest part is getting volunteers to help. They have spent days every year cutting and treating Japanese Knotweed. They are finally seeing results, but now have found more. They are starting to work with the county highway shop (which also mows township roads). With help from Don Barrette at Southwest Badger they tapped into an Illinois TU club to do some mapping. They also identified Phragmites that Southwest Badger sprayed this fall.

Ben Johnston – Ben is the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Invasive Species specialist. He has a GIS database of sites where he’s found invasives. He often stops along roadsides to manage purple loosestrife. His work covers Vernon County and he lives in Monroe County, so notices invasive species there too.

Mike Finlay – DNR forester Mike works with WFLGP program a lot. County DNR foresters touch a lot of landowners. He walks at least 3,000 private acres per year. He looks at broad resource concerns on property, and that always includes invasives. He pointed out the importance of having someone from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as a partner, since NRCS has funding for private landowners to deal with invasives.

Bill Kiser – Every one of Bill’s projects has invasives issues. US F&W has funded \$80,000 of projects from Buffalo to Richland County. The best way to spread knowledge is good professional relationships (like with Mike Engel and Erin Holmes).

Mike Putnam – Mike is now overseeing the Weed Management Area Private Forests Grant program. They include a 75% match and are good for 2 years. There is an April 1 deadline. DNR’s Rapid Response grants target prohibited (highest priority) and restricted invasives with 100% funding. The Rapid Response program is not competitive. DNR Suppression Grants have some funding to target species. DNR’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (formerly Endangered Resources) also has a little money. DNR’s Aquatic Invasive Species grants are better funded than the others, but very competitive. Mike lives in Sauk County and is aware of others organizations that are working on invasives, including: Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance (dealing with Badger Army Ammunition); Prairie Restoration groups; Sauk Prairie River PAL (Project Association Ltd.) <http://spriverpal.org/riverpal/index.html> does pulling work with their volunteers. The Prairie Enthusiasts also have some land in Sauk County.

Kendra Niemec – Kendra is the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge manager from Waubesa to Rock Island. U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists are doing invasive species work. They are hiring a forester with Audubon. They work on biological control with purple loosestrife. They also do a lot of volunteer recruitment. Kendra is in touch with many

groups along the river. They also can provide technical expertise, and have a Friends of the Mississippi group that can do lots of education and outreach. U. S. Fish and Wildlife can also help identify grants.

Brentt Michalek – Sauk County has been working with farmers with Grazing Grants to identify issues with invasive species. Twice a year they host a Youth Education Program for 6th graders and one session is about invasives. They do a “Garlic Mustard Pull” with the high school students, but only one student showed up last year. Lately they have been doing more with lake invasive species issues. Brentt has found Door County as a good model. Door County has one staff person dedicated to invasive species because they see it as a necessity for tourism. Cherrie Noldan has been doing research with her goats at Badger Army Ammunition to attack invasives. *Cindy Ramseyer* – Cindy listed nonprofits who work with landowners: Her group, the Lower Kickapoo Initiative; she is also involved with the Blue Mounds Area Project; Upper Sugar River Watershed Assc. She emphasized that many landowners don’t want to use chemicals and wondered how we could get that information out to people? Cindy does many one-on-ones with landowners, and it’s good to be able to direct them to resources.

Dan Bohlin – Dan is a private landowner has been battling IS for years using EQIP, WFGP and WHIP cost-share. He is thinking about next generation. He suggested whatever model we use, think of it as an institution not dependent on one person. It needs a multi-generation, long-term approach. Hunters are very active on the landscape – maybe tap into hunter organizations to keep them from making mistakes on the land they are managing (such as planting invasives in food plots for turkeys and deer. Dan uses fire as a management tool. It’s good to mention as an option.

Lynda Schweikert – Grant County worked with Don on mapping aquatic invasives. Grant County is an invasive species “gateway county” for rest of state. Lynda works with pollinators and promoting them. There is a bill to convert roadsides to pollinators. Perhaps we could also use that funding to eliminate invasives as we plant pollinators. Monarchs are also becoming a big issue and more funding could be coming.

Katie Abbott – Katie agreed that we need to encourage natives in to compete against invasives. Driftless Area Land Conservancy works with a few landowners with permanent conservation easements, and theirs is a long-term relationship. DALC also discusses invasive species issues in their newsletters to members. They do education and outreach at workshops for landowners and cover invasive species as a topic. Katie added that private contractors can help people find funding for work on their land.

Paul Ohlrogge – Through UW Extension, Paul works with Katie at DALC and Cindy at Blue Mounds project. Paul provides education to many networks of private landowners. He mentioned there are UW Extension weed specialist who can help, including Jerry Doll (retired) and Mark Renz. Paul has found many people who would like to get working on their own land, rather than needing volunteers. He said they are thinking about doing landowner workshops every year, rather than every other, because they are so successful and well-attended. The Master Gardener Program is also willing to be a resource.

Laura Paine – Laura’s Grazing Broker project targets grasslands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. As contracts expire, the goal is to convert these grasslands to well-managed pasture by establishing rental contracts with livestock producers. The project just began last spring. To date, in addition to CRP landowners, the project has had a lot of interest from landowners with idle grasslands and old pastures that have grown up to brush and invasives. Laura has worked with these landowners to develop grazing plans that utilize livestock grazing to help control these invasives and return the grasslands to higher quality vegetation.

Dave Troester – Dave has been with Crawford County 3 years. Prior to that, he worked at DNR, so he has extensive experience with on-the-ground control. His colleague Travis also has

extensive experience. However, they have very limited staff to get work done. He has been working with Don, and an intern spent time with him. Don has done outreach at Fair and events and is finding more Japanese Hops all the time. The county owns a sprayer to rent out to landowners. Dave would like to see that used more on invasive species (30 gallon pull behind an ATV). It would be okay to take it out of the county. They charge \$50/day to use it.

Travis Bunting – Prior to working in Crawford County, Travis was a crew leader for natural area contractor. He did the work for grant funded projects. He pointed out the need to consider what the area being treated is going to look like in 3 years. When you fight a dense population of invasive species it may still look the same in three years. It's better to start where it is not as dense.

Equipment available:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife – Lots of equipment and lots of rules; walk behind mowers, saws, hand tools, backpack sprayers; 3 point sprayer in Iowa County; ATV sprayers; grass drill will be stored at Iowa County

If we developed a Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding (MOA/MOU) F&W can help more.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve – hand sprayers and personal gear – can go to other counties – no charge – inter-agency sharing is stressed and Ben may come with the equipment

DNR Foresters – Richland County - hand seeder, tree planters; direct seeders; backpack sprayers; hand tree spuds

Most foresters have some equipment. (need formal agreements with group)

Vernon County has pull behind and weed winch.

DNR could also house partner equipment.

What other projects should be done?

Who will undertake those efforts?

Brainstormed ideas

Need for an MOU/MOA

Build volunteer base – through DFN and WWOA, TU

Work with DFN to put a calendar in place for events

Set clear goals and sustainable model for coordinator

Determine what is needed for coordination level Meetings? Email? website?

What is the baseline forever?

Narrow to certain types of landscapes (high priority)

Level of involvement at which we can be effective and sustainable

We could have conference calls instead to keep people connected and share (one hour or less)

Low level of input for high level of effectiveness

Central clearinghouse role

- Equipment; volunteers; workshops

What are the needs? What are the gaps? Need to know where to go for brochures, info.

Focus on private landowners – what's limiting them? Awareness, frustration

Need a doable management plan; “don't do nothing”

MFL (Managed Forest Law) and CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) participants already have management plan (and those with Easements). They might be folks to target (work with people who are already engaged).

This could be a separate, private group (with president and other officers) to coordinate.

It would be good to have a place to report successes and failures to help us help landowners (Listserv type coordination)

Focus on Rapid response and early detection

Identify other organizations/individuals to join these efforts

Corps of Engineers might help – Randy Urich or Bobby Jackson would be a good partner
Need NRCS as a partner – perhaps Brian Hillers/Erin Holmes/Patti Jackson Kelly

Set next meeting date

Meet again face-to-face in January or February – move meeting around to have organizations host, with option to have conference call. Cara will send a Doodle poll to identify the best date. Send out homework assignments between meetings.

We need to think about getting work done before field season starts.

June is Invasive Species Month

We need to answer the question: Why people should not quit working on IS?

How are we going to sell it to people? We need a good line to use on people (messaging)

Homework Assignments – to be completed before the next meeting in early 2015

- 1) Review these minutes carefully and “respond to all” with changes and additions.
- 2) Continue to add to the list of equipment that is available in this area in the fight against invasives. Southwest Badger will start a spreadsheet with information.
 - Information Needed: type of equipment, where it is located, contact person, specifics on use/rental
- 3) Let Cara know if you are interested on being part of the subcommittee for the Monitoring grant work.
- 4) Identify additional partners who could be involved with these efforts and send names and contact information to Cara.
- 5) Southwest Badger will start a spreadsheet of events, activities, services, resources and funding sources. Please send this information to Cara.
- 6) Southwest Badger will take a crack at an MOA/MOU before the next meeting. Please review and comment.
- 7) Respond to the Doodle poll for our next meeting.
- 8) In the next couple of weeks, Southwest Badger will put together a “brainstorming survey” to inform decisions at our next meeting. Please respond to the survey and forward to others who might be interested.
- 9) Please share this information with others who are interested.