

**Kevin Luepke**, Natural Resource Specialist, Natural Resources Branch (NRB), Fort McCoy; **Bob Micheel**, Director, Monroe County Land Conservation; **Steve Natchowicz**, Sparta Township, **Joey Esterline**, Adrian Township, **Howard Garves**, Sparta North, **Ben Johnston**, Wilton Township, **Matt Modjeski**, Conservation Warden, Tomah Ranger Station, **Ralph Weible**, Forester Black River State Forest, WI DNR; **Tim Welch**, President, Village of Wilton **Mark Pfof**, Private Lands Biologist, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. **Michelle Komiskey** -District Conservationist, **Eric Ressel**, Soil Conservationist, USDA NRCS. **Mic Armstrong** Soil Conservation Technician and Scribe.

**Mary Hubbard** sent apologies. **Sandy and Dave Wagner** requested to be taken off the email list as they retired. **Riley Layton** asked to replace **Nick DeHaan** as the contact for the COVIA mine at Tunnel City and sent apologies.

#### **New Faces.**

**Eric Ressel** the new Soil Conservationist for NRCS in Sparta, has experience working with prairies and invasive species management as well as all of the skills and knowledge needed to put conservation practices on the land.

**Ralph Weible** Forester for Black River State Forest came to the meeting to see how this particular CISMA works. Jackson County does not have a group working specifically on invasive species and is not part of the Central Wisconsin Group (Golden Sands). Ralph is concerned with the spread of Black Locust and Phragmites, among other things in the county.

**Steve Natchowicz** landowner south of Sparta, main concern is Eurasian Honeysuckle.

#### **Agenda Additions.** None

**Report on Field Trip/Pre-meeting-** We started with a group of 8 and a 4-year-old gathered on a bridge on County Z with knotweed as a creek side backdrop. **Armstrong** led the meeting off with a brief description of Knotweed and its ability to grow through blacktop, from deep burial, how it has affinity for mortar between bricks and in England if your neighbor has it you may not be able to get a mortgage. We have noticed knotweed in Monroe County often by bridge abutments, is this possibly from riprap used to stabilize them? possibly tying in with the effort to encourage quarries to consider “weed free” certification, or is it just where knotweed washed down the river during flood events takes root??

**Armstrong** had met with the landowner of the streambanks who wasn't too concerned as he believes knotweed on the neighbor's has been there 50 years and he remembers playing in it as a kid, He did, however, grant verbal permission for MCISWG/ Monroe County Highway Department to spray the knotweed on his property.

Is the Knotweed in this site, Japanese (Common Knotweed), Giant Knotweed or the hybrid Bohemian Knotweed? **Armstrong** thought possibly Bohemian, but it really didn't matter.

**Johnston** pounced and said it may matter because NR-40 lists Japanese as Restricted but Bohemian and Giant are Prohibited species, and this can trigger a different response at DNR level- for example eligibility for Aquatic Invasive Species grants. So far, the population has only been mapped as Japanese Knotweed. **Johnston and Luepke** discussed the other major difference in that Japanese Knotweed does not have viable seed as there are not both male and female populations in Wisconsin, however both Giant and the hybrid Bohemian Knotweed do have the ability to set viable seed, increasing the potential for spread.

There are some uses of the plant- it does seem to have benefits for managing Lyme Disease. And there are some recipes online for fine dining options. Garden Clubs used to encourage its use, calling it Mexican Bamboo and offering it in plant swaps. Hopefully this practice has been stopped. More worrying though, there still seems to be a trade in “Fleece flower” including a variegated cultivar, although illegal in Wisconsin, it may be still be available to unwitting gardeners, one way or another.

The County Z knotweed had recently been mowed in the right of way, **Tyson Langrehr**, Program supervisor for the Monroe County Highway Department wasn’t sure if the County had mowed it or the neighboring farmers, who often harvested the ditches for hay.

We agreed to meet in early October, **Langrehr** would have Milestone herbicide and backpack(s). Volunteers from MCISWG have offered to help spray, Hold harmless agreements will be sought and filed, and hopefully we can begin the process of a collaborative effort to curtail one of our worst invasive weeds.

**Micheel** recently returned from a vacation in upper Iowa and reported he saw some stream corridors completely choked with Knotweed, streambanks totally white with flowers.

On the return to Wilton, an area that was infested with teasel was described, the landowner started mowing it a couple of years ago and the teasel seems to have been eliminated. For those wishing to see Teasel, on Highway 131, between Hwy 71 and Tomah, it is spreading along the right of way and on private property between the two lower bridges over the Kickapoo.

**Komiskey** agreed to watch the shelter and hotdogs on the grill while **Johnston** led a group along the new Wilton (Kickapoo) River walk. Kickapoo is an Algonquin word meaning “one who goes there, then here,” an accurate description of a river that manages to flow north, south, east and west for some portion of its 125-mile length. Because the glaciers that missed the Driftless Area did not change its natural course, the Kickapoo River Valley is one of the oldest river systems in the world.\* (<https://driftlesswisconsin.com/explore/kickapoo-river-valley/>) Johnston stopped along the way as we queried the ID of different plants of interest, we found a couple of trees with foliage similar to black locust. **Ressel** thought they were our native Kentucky Coffee Tree; **Johnston** will research to confirm or deny. The walk goes all the way to Highway 71, but we stopped halfway to look at a sandstone bluff on the other side of the river, which had Hemlock trees growing out of it as well as another native evergreen that is a rare find. Canada yew, *Taxus canadensis*, is a favorite food for deer but in this case the cliff did not offer them footing, although you could tell they stood in the river and browsed as high as their necks allowed.

Back at the shelter we dug into hot dogs, chips and some fruits of the Esterline garden.

**Tim Welch** told the story of the River walk. It was an idea of **Gina Rae** the village librarian at the time, she and husband Ben wanted their land along the river to be part of a longer river walk that could potentially go from Highway 71 to the other main road out of Wilton (131). The main benefactor was Al Martin who allowed his land to be part of the walk (behind a Martin Trucking depot). Some pastureland he owns was abandoned and it provides habitat for a multitude of pollinator and bird species. Unfortunately, one landowner was not in agreement, so access was not granted for the section west of the park. Tim explained the legalities of creating the walk and how pleasantly surprised he was that costs were minimal. Local contractors donated time and equipment, the police chief of the day did a lot of work too, a mower was donated, and Tim runs it regularly. Access is either from the Hwy 71 bridge at the east end of town or from the Wilton park. Custom signs are visible at each end. We did find Garlic Mustard along the trail and **Johnston** will be working on that.

**Last Meeting Recap: Luepke** requested that, as all had read the version emailed them, the Minutes of the July 29<sup>th</sup> Teams meeting could be approved (all agreed). Find them at: <https://www.co.monroe.wi.us/departments/land-conservation/invasive-species-workgroup>.

### Action Updates

**Boot brushes and signage: Armstrong.** Before we deploy our Play Clean Go signs and boot brushes **Micheel** is working with Evans Printing on QR barcode/ logo stickers for the signs and 2 sided tags for the handheld brushes.

**Farmers Market: Esterline** wondered if there was a way we could get a sturdier easel to display the invasive of the week “posters” with pockets for handouts, that way it might be possible to find a more permanent spot in the market. **Armstrong** would see what could be done.

**Gravel Fill Certification: Luepke** Nothing new to report. Gave a brief summary of the program for our new faces. The idea is to invite the Gerkes and other vendors to a future MCISWG meeting to meet our group and discuss a gravel/fill certification program. A letter is being drafted for the group to proof. The Wisconsin Crop Improvement Assn would be the administrator for a \$100.00 fee. No other counties in WI have initiated anything.

**Golden Sands AIS proposal Micheel** No new report.

**Monroe County Cost share Applications for Private Land Invasive Species Management: Micheel:** No new report

**Display Printing Update: Komiskey.** Display is ready to deploy, will need some photos printed off to add to the background. Waiting for an indoor event we can attend, post COVID-19

**Prairie garden: Esterline** continues to manage the area for weeds, she is planning on buying some grass specific herbicide instead of the little spray bottles we have been using. Split rail fence in process. Future plans involve one of the small PlayCleanGo signs with hand brush on a chain and hopefully a Leopold Bench for boot scratchers to sit on. (Scout project-anyone??).

**Buckthorn Spritz:** Micheel reported that a quick foliar “spritz” with a standard Garlon/bark oil mix in midsummer resulted in buckthorns turning to toast.

**Fort McCoy updates:** Luepke Crews sprayed the Japanese knotweed on County Highway A. and Highway 16. Also treated Crown Vetch, Spreading Hedge Parsley, Purple Loosestrife, Butter and Eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*), Common Tansy, thistles, honeysuckles, Creeping Bellflower, Common and Glossy Buckthorn, Multiflora Rose, Burning Bush and Black Locust

**Phragmites Tomah sites:** Komiskey-the paperwork for a grant is complicated. Recommend waiting for assistance from Golden Sands AIS this fall. Komiskey talked about the difference between the invasive alien species and native Phragmites.

**Poison Hemlock:** Armstrong reported that he met with the Jefferson Town mower on Marshall Road one day and he was trying to get the owner to remove an old fence which would facilitate mowing the infestation. Armstrong reported finding more places with Poison Hemlock, the latest being off County Y (Fish Creek). Landowner will spray, Unable to find more upstream, but it must be there somewhere.

**Komiskey** still has a large oak tree infested with Gypsy Moth caterpillars. Still having trouble getting information on how/what to do. Although this is Michelle’s last meeting with MCISWG as a District Conservationist, she will be welcomed back to report on the gypsy moth situation and bring goats to any meetings she feels like.

**Speaking for the birds.** This was prompted by a newspaper article by **Kim Mello** about die offs of different bird species. **Johnston** and **Luepke** thought the situation had improved and the problem was never identified in WI, but to still report any dead birds (especially with swollen eyes) around feeders. Contact: Nancy Businga wildlife disease specialist (608) 235 9227 [Nancy.Businga@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Nancy.Businga@Wisconsin.gov) **Luepke** added it was a good idea to do an annual cleaning of bird boxes. Remember Safety First! Wear a dust mask, goggles, gloves etc. Bird baths, boxes and feeders should be disinfected regularly too with a 10 % bleach solution

#### **Updates from the front line**

**Future Field Days.** Still not able to start planning due to the ongoing COVID\_19 situation.

**Next Meeting: Thursday December 2nd (1 to 3 p.m.)** Location and virtual connections TBA

