

Kevin Luepke, Natural Resource Specialist, Natural Resources Branch (NRB), Fort McCoy; **Jessup Weichelt**, Threatened and Endangered Species Biologist, NRB, Fort McCoy **Rikki Ratsch**, Colorado State University, serving Fort McCoy Wildlife Dept; **Ben Anderson** Soil and Water Technician, Monroe County Land Conservation; **Karen Williamson**, Sparta Township, **Joey Esterline**, Adrian Township, **Mary Hubbard**, Sheldon TSP, **John Sullivan**, Outdoor Educational Coordinator, School District of West Salem; **Pete Quirin**, Sparta TSP (Field trip only); **Ben Johnston**, Wilton Township, **Rachel Martin**, Forester, National Wild Turkey Federation, Richland Center, **Eric Ressel**, Soil Conservationist, USDA NRCS. **Mic Armstrong** Soil Conservation Technician and Scribe.

Instead of the usual “Round Robin”, **Armstrong** attempted to introduce the Round Quaker Parrot, as it is the only bird listed as invasive by the WI DNR. Until we definitively find said parrot (otherwise known as Monk Parakeet) in the county we will probably stick with traditional round the room intros. The meeting took place at Mueller Square in downtown Sparta. The venue offered an outside location to promote COVID guidance and propane heaters to combat the chilly December afternoon.

New Faces. Rachel Martin The new National Wild Turkey Federation forester for Natural Resource Conservation Service in Richland Center. Rachel actually was yet another alumni of the Fort McCoy Wildlife program so was actually a familiar face to some.. Welcome (back) Rachel.

Agenda Additions. None

Report on Field Trip/Pre-meeting- A group met on the bike trail near Speeds Bikes to look at Amur Maple. Prior to the meeting **Johnston** and **Armstrong** walked a section of the trail where volunteers have been cutting and treating amur maple with herbicide and formulated a plan (A) for our next outing this winter. We also met with a property owner who has amur maple adjacent to the fence line of the trail on John Street. He was happy to give us permission to tackle his Amur maple tree problem too. What is the problem? Amur Maple (Ginnala Maple, often marketed under the cultivar name Flame Maple) is a beautiful, stunning small tree that has invasive tendencies. Introduced from Asia, it has no natural pests to keep it in check and can thrive on sandy outcrops as well as in standing water. The cultivar Flame (seed propagated) was released by the USDA Soil Conservation Service about 50 years ago. It is still available in the trade today, although NRCS no longer sends out seeds to nurseries, however, you can still buy seed or plants. In Wisconsin the NR 40 Species Assessment Groups are in the final stages of revising its status, the species already holds a Restricted status, but the cultivars are up for review. **Pete Quirin** was upset as he had shelled out a lot of money for a large flame Maple tree for his landscape. In the fall Amur maple has red samaras (helicopter seeds) and bright orange to red foliage. The problem is that Amur maple is a prolific seed producer and virtually all those seeds are viable, The seeds fly from one place to another with the help of the wind and are a favorite food source for squirrels and other small mammals that will likely carry them away from the parent tree. The seeds also have a pointy little head that is supposed to help the seed working

through leaf litter to the soil but is very good at sticking to clothes and, we suspect, snowmobiles, groomers and probably bicycles too. It has spread from some ornamental plantings in Sparta into an 80 + acre infestation of some lovely oak woodlands along the bike trail. Even our seasoned land managers are amazed at the total domination of the understory it can achieve. Not even buckthorn seems able to survive in the shade of an Amur maple canopy.



Amur Maple (3).pdf

We will be going at it again this winter, cutting and treating stumps with herbicide (certified chainsaw operators only), but we have plenty of spots to cut with loppers and hand saws. Brush needs to be dragged and piled. We have certified herbicide applicators to use the correct type and amount of herbicide on each stump after the cutters move on to ensure regrowth won't occur, or at a reduced rate. Contact Mic to be added to the Amur Maple Reduction email group.

Last Meeting Recap: Luepke requested that, seeing all had received and reviewed the minutes of the September meeting the minutes 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. Two "Play Clean Go" podium style signs with boot brushes have been deployed, one in Amundson Park and the other at Tri-Creek County Forest, The QR barcode stickers were attached to the one in Amundson Park. We have been experimenting with the best way to attach the QR barcode to our hand-held boot brushes for give aways. A small length of gold bead chain (light switch pull) seems to work the best, stringing a laminated circular QR bar code to the brush. When we deploy our other "Play Clean Go" signs/brush stations we will use a sticker QR bar code on each sign to help interested individuals find the MCISWG webpage.

Farmers Market: Esterline likes the new sturdier easel to display the invasive of the week "posters" with pockets for handouts. MCISWG will be presenting a Plant ID session on stage at the Farmers Market on May 14th. **Armstrong** requested a volunteer to help as it does get pretty busy, and Joey has a booth to run. A volunteer will be sought when we get closer to the event

Gravel Fill Certification: Luepke Nothing new to report. Gave a brief summary of the program for our new faces. The idea is to invite some of the gravel producers 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 Association would be the administrator for a \$100.00 membership fee. **Anderson** commented that in the mining reclamation standard includes a statement "no invasive species present

Golden Sands AIS proposal: Anderson said we should list our priorities we want the agreement to achieve. The discussion concluded we need help with a rapid response grant for the

2 infestations of Phragmites in Tomah. We should invite a representative to the next meeting, we will probably be talking about aquatic invasive species and the eDNA survey on Fort McCoy.

Monroe County Cost share Applications for Private Land Invasive Species Management:

Anderson reported that Leis has been paid. Still accepting applications for 2022. Contact Kevin Luepke at kevin.l.luepke.civ@army.mil or 608-388-4331, or Bob Micheel at bob.micheel@monroe.wi.us for more information.

Prairie garden: Esterline hopes one day it will be a poster child for the group.

Fort McCoy updates: Ratsch Crews worked on Honeysuckle, Buckthorn, Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Burning Bush in September, October was Garlic Mustard, Buckthorn, Autumn Olive,(mix of foliar and basal treatments)

November: Basal treatments for Buckthorn and wrapping up foliar treatments of Garlic Mustard Still waiting to start shredding invasive brush species.

Phragmites Luepke. No progress. Hopefully we can get help from the Golden Sands team on the grant application

Knotweed Update, Armstrong. Monroe County Highway Department operator **Tyson Langrehr** came to the site on County Z in Wilton in October, armed with a backpack of Milestone and sprayed not just the ROW but also the adjoining stream banks (with permission from the landowner). Hopefully this will slow the spread of this weed. Unfortunately, we discovered a beaver dam just downstream from the bridge, which on closer examination, was built with cornstalks and knotweed stems woven together as only beavers know how. As the dam is backing water up under the CTY Highway Z bridge, The Highway Department will take it out using precautions to minimize the spread downstream.

Komiskey still has a large oak tree infested with Gypsy Moth caterpillars. Although not present at this meeting she told **Armstrong** that she was unable to find an arborist in her area and would wait until spring to consider the next steps.

Updates from the front line

Esterline has been working on black locust. Disheartened that none of her neighbors do anything.

Armstrong noted that multiflora rose is present on every woodland site he has visited this fall.

Sullivan. Reported they had 120 kids pulling garlic mustard in the outdoor education center, they have a plan to treat buckthorn and has found a lot.

Ressel, said there are Federal funds available to landowners to assist with brush management through the EQIP program.

Future Field Days. Still not able to start planning due to the ongoing COVID_19 situation.

Armstrong forgot to mention (left his customized agenda at home) a new project.

“Hello, I am a Cub Scout Cubmaster for Pack 67 in Sparta. I am wondering if you have any interest in working with our Scouts. Most ranks are supposed to do some type of conservation project and I thought it would be a great idea to partner with others in the community. I would be looking for something in January or later. Please let me know if this is something you are interested in helping out with.”

Armstrong will follow up. **Bryce Richardson** has been in communication.

Next Meeting: **Thursday April 14 th** (1 to 3 p.m.) Location and virtual connections TBD