

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; **Bob Micheel**, Director and **Ben Anderson** Soil and Water Technician, Monroe County Land Conservation; **Joey Esterline**, **Frank Rasch** and **Sue Stump**, Adrian Township, **Mary Hubbard**, Sheldon TSP, **Riley Layton**, Covia Tunnel City Mine Supervisor, (Field trip only); **Ben Johnston**, Wilton Township, **Rachel Martin**, Forester, National Wild Turkey Federation, Richland Center, **Josh Rasmussen**, Forest Wildlife Specialist for the NRCS and Ruffed Grouse Society, Whitehall NRCS, **Chris Hamerla**, Regional Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator for Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council Inc. **Matt Wallrath** Invasive Species Program Manager, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association. **Skip Frazee** and **Mike Pace**, Angelo Tsp. **Mic Armstrong** Soil Conservation Technician and Scribe.

New Faces.:

Josh Rasmussen, the new Forest Wildlife Specialist for the NRCS and Ruffed Grouse Society, stationed in Whitehall, WI and his work area will be the Driftless region. Josh has worked with Emerald Ash Borer mitigation and invasive species control, working for the City of Eau Claire Forestry and Parks and as a Forester in northern Wisconsin.

Chris Hamerla, Regional Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator for Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council Read more: <https://www.goldensandsrccd.org/>

Matt Wallrath Matt is the invasive species coordinator the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association. Matt has an interesting bio, read more about the Association at <https://uppersugar.org/usrwa/staff-board-members/>

Mike Pace came to the meeting to seek help with the buckthorn problem at Spring Bank **Adrian Township**. (More on this later in the minutes).

Agenda Additions. None

Report on Field Trip/Pre-meeting-

We met in the shelter at Swamp Pond **Jessup Weichelt** kicked off the event with a summary of the work so far on the e-DNA survey. Although basically a tool to monitor aquatic invasive species, they were finding lots of positives from terrestrials too, possibly from pollen landing in the water. Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication and none of the lakes on McCoy were sampled, just streams. The project will continue with lakes included, and they will also try to figure out when samples should be taken 3 times per year to account for phenology changes and duration of detection of the trace samples. They will build assays ahead of time for all the species they plan to investigate. **Hamerla** commented that the technique was used to assay Bighead and Silver carp in the Great lakes and Mississippi. **Weichelt** added they were looking at gill lice in brook trout as well. They may look at different brook trout strains, reptiles, and rusty patch bees and other potential threatened and endangered (T&E) species. So far 1400 invertebrates were

tagged and thousands of plants. Some of the studies will end up being published by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Rikki Ratsch demonstrated the use of tablets to assist in mapping invasive (and Threatened and Endangered) species on Fort McCoy. The old method was to have a crew spread out within earshot with the person in the middle manning a clip board. When occurrences were found, the finder would yell out the name of the plant and it would be drawn on the map. **Armstrong** remembered being part of such a crew and that compasses were distributed to each member as it was not uncommon for team members to veer off course. **Ratsch** said they were having some initial trouble with the ESRI GIS app being able to make the conversion to the Army metric grid and needed to sync with past data mapping. The tablets they use are waterproof and it should make the process more efficient and accurate, hopefully saving crew time no longer having to look for species that were mapped erroneously in the wrong place. They are mapping and managing for invasive species and native species on over 60,000 acres.

Kevin Luepke and **Riley Layton**, Covia Tunnel City Mine Supervisor were able to meet and strategize a little on the Poison Hemlock along Hwy 21 which staff from the mine have sprayed in the past with Glyphosate. Discussed better herbicide options that would not kill grasses and prevent unnecessary erosion from bare ground. **Luepke** could assist Riley, if needed, in filling out WDOT forms to apply for a permit in working in the ROWs or possibly coordinate with Monroe Co. Highway Dept too as the Poison Hemlock is partially in the ROW.

Ben Anderson cooked up a 3-course lunch from the tailgate of his truck in the teeth of a 40 mile per hour blizzard. We wolfed 2 packs of perfectly charcoal grilled Foss's hot dogs in less than 2 minutes and gathered everything else up to continue lunch (cookies and assorted bags of chips) in a nice warm meeting room at the Fort McCoy Airport.

Last Meeting Recap: **Luepke** requested that, seeing all had received and reviewed the minutes of the December meeting the minutes could be approved (all agreed). Find them at: <https://www.co.monroe.wi.us/departments/land-conservation/invasive-species-workgroup>.

Annual Report: was read by **Armstrong** and is now posted on our website

Action Plan 2022.

Luepke went over the plan, highlighting some items including the potential coordination with the Challenge Academy. Transport off base may still be an issue although they do have some 13 seat passenger vans.

Farmers Market: **Esterline** said we will have an Invasive ID Day on the stage at The Farmers Market this spring. Set for June 4th we are excited **Kendra Kunding** from Golden Sands RC&D will take the stage to talk mainly about Aquatic Invasive Species. **Esterline** also highlighted the Invasive of the week Posters we have been able to slot into vacant spots on Saturday mornings, they have been designed as self-service displays with relevant information in the form of handouts conveniently positioned. Joey wanted these displays to be manned from now on. **Hamerla** and **Wallrath** both commented that although NR-40 allows displaying live

plants (with propagules removed) for educational purposes it is a grey area of the law and we should consider making pressed voucher type displays. **Luepke** would look into it.

CISMA teleconference: This meeting between all of the Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas will again be virtual. There will be a (2 day) conference partnering with the Aquatic Invasive Species Annual meeting on April 25-26. **Ben Johnston** will be talking about that rotten plant Amur Maple at 11.20 on April 26th. There also may be a fall, in person, CISMA meeting.

Clean Gravel Certification: **Luepke** summarized the program. The Wisconsin Crop Improvement Association would be the administrator for a \$100.00 membership fee (per pit) adding that we intend to invite local gravel processors Gerke and Mathy and has drafted a letter to be sent when we are having a future MCISWG indoor meeting later this year.

Monroe County Cost Share Applications for Private Land Invasive Species Management: Micheel reported that Leis was the only successful applicant last year. Hubbards decided to do something on their own, with advice from MCISWG. Still accepting applications for 2022. All you need is a note describing the problem and a map, then someone from the inspection Committee will come out and make sure they are attempting a reasonable amount and confirm the map. Contact Bob Micheel at bob.micheel@monroe.wi.us Or by mail
ATTN Bob Micheel
Monroe Land Conservation Dept,
820 Industrial Drive, Sparta WI 54656.

Play Clean Go signs: with Boot Brush on chain/ Leopold Benches (17) signs still available. We had put together enough of the brushes for all attendees at the Annual Meeting, each with a QR bar code/ MCISWG logo attached by the gold chain method. The QR bar code help interested individuals find the MCISWG webpage by pointing a smart phone camera at it. No Leopold benches were forthcoming so far. 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. No more of the Podium style boot brush structures will be available. The West Salem Outdoor Education Center has one of the metal signs deployed and request 2 more. They will purchase floor mount boot brushes themselves to deploy with the signage at each trail head.

Amur Maple Reduction: Although the project is in **Armstrong's** back yard **Johnston** and a small crew from the Kickapoo valley come to work on the "Rotten Amur Maple" several times each winter. This year we returned to the area of trail off John Street a few times and the campground area once. We are making progress, even though when you look at the map it is still a bit daunting. Next year we plan to start east of the campground from the outer edges, previously mapped and work our way back using the cut stump method to eventually meet up at previously worked areas. We will first walk the area in fall to see what is working and what may not be successful as treatments and map any new pockets.

Garlic Mustard: **Ben Johnston** will lead a Garlic Mustard pull on the Elroy Sparta Bike trail meeting at the intersection County Highway T near Norwalk, June the 4th (last year they started at 8 in the morning as it was a hot one), otherwise 9 a.m. Our Events page of the MCISWG webpage should be current

Japanese Knotweed: The City of Sparta will continue treating populations by Perch Lake and on Beaver Creek near the library after flowering. The Monroe Co. Highway Dept, hopefully will treat the populations on County Z south of Wilton again and remove beaver dams of knotweed if they should be reconstructed down from the bridges. We talked about addressing the population where the Dustin Creek meets CTY HWY S in Little Falls TSP too.

Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol: No volunteers for last 2 years. Mass rearing cage to purpler pastures

Barberry / Multiflora Rose: Amundson Park, hopefully Brad **Gilbertson** can get a crew going again next winter, basal treating along the La Crosse River towards Hammer Road.

Mapping: Anticipate the crew contracted by Monroe Co. Hwy Dept should be able to continue where they left off before COVID 19 restrictions halted the project.

Cubs Scouts: Bryce Richardson had a successful Garlic Mustard pull with Cub Scout Pack 67 at the West Salem Outdoor Education Center, as well as other Natural Resources based activities. Hopefully we will have more collaborations with local youth groups

That concluded the 2022 Annual meeting

Action Updates

Boot brushes and signage: covered above

Farmers Market: Esterline covered above. **Kendra Kundering** will present on Aquatic Invasive species June the 4th. Joey will help coordinate and set up contacts but will be at the Dairy Breakfast that day. Other MCISWG events during the summer will be announced.

Gravel Fill Certification: Luepke already covered

Golden Sands AIS proposal: The discussion began with a description of the 2 infestations of Phragmites in Tomah, which were positively ID'd by **Alex Selle**. In 2020. Since then, we have tried to follow the "Rapid Response" protocols but still need help writing a grant. **Chris Hamerla** will investigate it. Chris explained how the agreement with Monroe County to assist with outreach on Aquatic Invasive species works and that **Kendra Kundering** will be our regular point of contact. Golden Sands RC&D are also working with the City of Tomah to help map and plan management practices for curly-leaf pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*

Prairie garden: Esterline hopes one day it will be a poster child for the group. Has purchased grass herbicide, the dominant invasive there is still Quack Grass. She used to go there to do weeding and planting new natives she grows on her farm on Wednesday evenings chatting with punters on their way to and from the Sparta Concerts in the Park Series. Joey hopes to do that

again and can always use help. **Reinhard Mueller** and his shovel men plan to add a split rail fence instead of the original created many years ago with help from 4-H but now in rough shape.

Phragmites: Luepke, covered earlier

Knotweed Update: Armstrong. Has not been by to see if the knotweed dam built by beavers had been removed. No one from Monroe Co. Highway Dept at the meeting

Wallrath passed on information to accurately ID occurrences of (Japanese) Knotweed and its hybrids such as Bohemian KW. No cost to us he can supply bags and info sheets. The knotweed hybrids are classified as Prohibited species making them, at least theoretically, eligible for rapid response AIS grants.

Gypsy Moth: Although **Komiskey** was not present we had a brief conversation about the renaming of Gypsy Moth, for a while, after the “Gypsy” moniker was eliminated it became *Lymantria dispa*, since then it became known as Spongy Moth. Will add to next months agenda for an update from **Komiskey**

Display: Armstrong, Weichelt and Ratsch, deployed the long-awaited tabletop display rapidly, discovering that it is a little top heavy and will need to be stabilized with sandbags or some such type of ballast to be actually displayed on a tabletop. The background images taken on Fort McCoy were beautiful, and worth the wait. One side is the pristine oak savannah with flowering native plants in abundance, the other is a similar woodland choked with Garlic Mustard.

Armstrong created some photo add-ons of High Priority Invasive Species, with verbiage copied from the DNR NR-40 website, for the bad side of the display. For the good side he used photos and verbiage of beneficial native plants borrowed from Pollinator Partnership Spotlight Plant Profiles we receive at NRCS. It is still a work in progress and the suggestions received should lead to a great interactive quiz for indoor events.

Fort McCoy updates: Ratsch winding up the shredding season, gearing up for Garlic Mustard. Winter crews still doing invasive plant surveys now with new technology (see report from Swamp Pond Field Trip). Prepping for season’s biocontrol efforts to manage leafy spurge and spotted knapweed. Surveys indicate a few leafy spurge sites low on flea beetles. May purchase more to bolster populations and introduce new/more genetics into the existing population. Also looking at populations of the beneficial seed head beetles, and root weevils for spotted knapweed.

Updates from the front line

Mike Pace wanted to get more information on buckthorn, the members of the Spring bank association off Hwy 21 in Adrian Township have been trying to manage their buck thorn problem for years. This sparked a series of suggestions around the room, cut stump works with a triclopyr in oil during the dormant season, caution to not leave high stumps which can be dangerous if someone falls on them. Basal application was discussed too, but when buck thorn is so thick these 2 methods demand a lot of herbicide. The experienced land managers of Fort McCoy have developed a process where the brush is shredded during winter (frozen ground allows access to more areas), then when the regrowth is 3 ‘tall, or so, spray with a foliar mix of

triclopyr which needs much less active ingredient than basal or cut stump. Best time seems to be just before leaf drop (October). **Micheel** has tried and claims success with **the leaf spritz method** (on barberry, not buckthorn):

“A very effective method for control of leafy buckthorn stems from mid-summer until early fall is the leaf spritz method. This involves using a hand spray bottle containing 20% Garlon 4 diluted in bark oil. Two or three of the upper leaves on each buckthorn stem are given brief "spritzes", so that the herbicide spreads out on the leaves. Within a few days the stem will be visibly damaged and within a week will be dead. This technique is very benign to surrounding native plants, as the herbicide is confined to the upper area of the buckthorn plant. Since small buckthorn plants generally consist of multi-stemmed colonies, it is essential that "all" stems are treated”. <http://www.oaksavannas.org/invasives.html>

Luepke added that if Spring Bank were actively managing on their side, then Fort McCoy crews would re-prioritize treatments the population of Glossy Buckthorn in the area of that joint property line.

Esterline Shared “money saving” tips on off label use of herbicide which MCISWG will not sanction. The label is the law. Using off label diluents could potentially be harmful to health of the applicator, especially wearing gloves made of absorbent materials and could be a risk to others entering the area the off-label mix was applied.

Rasmussen has been fighting buckthorn “all his life”. Has been helping write NRCS Brush Management plans. **Martin** has also been working with NRCS offices on brush management but cautioned there has to be a management plan in place, usually either a forestry plan or managed grazing to be eligible.

Anderson has worked with the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and thought they might be helpful in building educational stations at strategic places to inform recreational users of the invasive species that could be present in that location.

Wallrath has been organizing meetings and working with the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association <https://uppersugar.org/> and the relatively new South Central Invasives Partnership.

Matt also shared some useful links on the whiteboard:

Digital Tri-Fold BMP ROW: <https://forms.gle/wDqo7kdYLiFGQRVJ7>

Knotweed survey: <https://uppersugar.org/protect/isp>

UW-Ext. Renz Weed Science Lab: <https://renzweedscience.cals.wisc.edu/>

Nishigaki-Long Reach Loppers/Futomaru: <https://Hidatool.com>

After the meeting the Loosestrife mass rearing structure along with the tent were transferred to his car for deployment in another county. The rearing structure was recently removed from the

marsh near Ideal Rd in Sparta, cleaned up and greased seeing no groups were interested in helping out at this time.,

Future Field Days. Luepke thought we could resume the program and would look at availability of the north shelter(s) for the Month of June. **Confirmed for June 16th.**

Next Meeting: **Thursday May 26** (1 to 3 p.m.) Pre meeting Field trip North Pavilion area Fort McCoy, Pine View Campground 11.30 am. (see attached map).

Shore lunch (probably hot dogs again) provided.