

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, **Brandon Phill** Intern, Monroe County Land Conservation; **Joey Esterline**, Adrian TSP and Monroe Co. District 15. Supervisor; **Clint Gillman**, DNR Forester, Tomah Ranger Station; **Connie Weedman** Sparta TSP; **Kendra Kunding**, Regional Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator with Golden Sands RC&D; **Mic Armstrong** Soil Conservation Technician and Scribe.

New Faces.:

Connie Weedman from Sparta, recently retired from mental health field, exploring activities in pursuit of a lifelong interest in conservation and the natural world. A nice connection between the natural world and mental health is that activities in the natural world provide perhaps the best benefit to mental wellness of any activities, save perhaps activities that effect reduced social isolation, but increasingly sees the impacts of invasive species on properties she visits (see updates from the front line).

Brandon Phill grew up in Madison WI. Currently one of 2 summer interns with the Monroe County Land Conservation Department, Brandon went through the Boy Scouts as a child and earned eagle scout at the age of 14. Through this process and time spent with father and grandfather Brandon learned to love and appreciate the outdoors and became an avid outdoorsman. He took that passion to college and just recently earned a bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Environmental Science at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Now pursuing a master's degree in Aquatic Science, again at UWL. With all of information gained and skills learned throughout all these processes and life Brandon is excited to further his career and see what the future has in store!

Kendra Kunding, explained that Golden Sands Resource Conservation and Development Council, now celebrating its 50th year, will be helping Monroe County with projects relating to Aquatic Invasive Species.

Agenda Additions. None

Report on Field Trip/Pre-meeting- **Armstrong** said there really was not an official premeeting but we walked the La Crosse River trail as far as the iconic "Fort McCoy Invasive Plants and Shrubs" informational sign, to scope the area out for a possible activity at the upcoming field day.



Annual 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>.

New Chairperson transition: Luepke asked the group if anyone interested as he will be retiring from duties as chair this fall. No hands raised. Add to next meeting agenda.

Action Updates

Farmers Market: Esterline We have the stage reserved for an Aquatic Invasive Species Demonstration on Saturday June 4th with Gillian Taylor of the Golden Sands Resource Conservation and Development Council.

Clean Gravel Certification: No update.

Monroe County Cost Share Applications for Private Land Invasive Species Management: Anderson – No updates. We discussed going back to the old eligibility criteria- attendance at one of our field days. We will need a signup sheet at the next Field Day.

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 stated at 8 in the A.M. as it was a hot one), otherwise 9 A.M. Our Events page of the MCISWG webpage should be current.

Armstrong passed around the MCISWG trifold brochure which now has an insert with upcoming events.

Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol: Esterline would like to do something, possibly next year, possibly with a 4 H group. Yay.

Prairie Garden: Esterline Moving house, did not have time to spray.

Phragmites: **Luepke** gave a brief synopsis of the Phragmites in Tomah, 2 sites just off Hwy 16 /I-90. MCISWG is ineligible for Rapid Response grant. **Kundinger** said **Shelby Adler** is the new DNR Water Resource Management specialist for Monroe Co. Kendra would follow up with Shelby.

Spongy Moth: No update

Cub Scouts: No update. Discussion with **Clint Gillman** about possibly meeting at the West Salem School Outdoor Education Center, (in Sparta), again to walk the area recently logged as part of their forest management plan.

Fort McCoy updates: **Luepke** reported they will be making purchases of biological control agents for Spotted Knapweed and Leafy Spurge to bolster existing populations. **Ratsch** and crew have been busy treating Garlic Mustard a discussion about the mix used, (Stock Solution Recipe with Oust), which does kill everything for at least a year. Also sprayed, (with different mixes), were Leafy Spurge, Cypress Spurge, Eurasian Honeysuckle, and Siberian Pea-shrub. The Challenge Academy pulled 17.5 large bags of (untreated) Garlic mustard from the campground area. Crews will be transitioning to Wild Parsnip, spotted knapweed, non-native thistles and Purple Loosestrife in the near future.

Esterline mentioned Japanese Barberry and how it seemed to show up following timber sales especially in woodlands previously grazed. Treatment options were discussed. Consensus was to use a foliar spray when the plant is actively growing with triclopyr in an aqueous solution (follow the label) spray the whole plant, or a basal application of triclopyr in bark oil during the dormant season, catching every stem. Good questions for the Field Day.

Field day:

Forestry: **Charles Mentzel** (Fort McCoy Forester) and crew will demonstrate the power washer and talk forestry and dealing with invasive species.

Ratsch and crew will demo spraying equipment.

Possible demonstration with biocontrols (phenology dependent).

Invasive Plant ID, **Ratsch** will collect samples either live (no propagule) or voucher. Prefer to use just Fort McCoy materials to avoid possibly introducing something new from outside.

Kundinger will bring a display of aquatic invasive species (no live propagules).

Poelma (via email) will bring Invasive species Field Guides to give away.

Armstrong will bring Play Clean Go handheld boot brushes with the MCISWG logo and QR barcode attached, a sign-up sheet and the Invasive plant of the week outdoor easel.

Luepke is working on getting a food truck to the event at lunchtime.

Updates from the front line

Weedman said she was concerned about Garlic Mustard and Barberry popping up in the County Forest off Festival Road. Connie also visits the Tri Creek County Forest and was concerned about Invasives plants there too. (**Anderson** took a note).

When putting these minutes together I couldn't immediately find what Connie had said and sent her an email asking her. Here is the response regarding the Festival Road County Forest:

"2-3 weeks ago I hiked the southern (about 2/3) of the proposed cut, and it has heavy buckthorn on the edge of the woods along the farm road, but only a few buckthorn in the woods. The woods have occasional small areas of a few plants of garlic mustard. I only saw one large area of garlic mustard, and that in a draw. I only saw one barberry during the whole hike. I was in the northern part of the proposed cut about two years ago, and I remember an occasional buckthorn there, but not many at all. I plan to hike that part again soon so see what there is for invasive plants in there now. There may be other invasive plants that I am unfamiliar with. My skills are far from expert.

I think it safe to assume that a logging project will dramatically increase garlic mustard in the short term by spreading existing seed around. Then, the increased light will create the right environment for buckthorn to take off throughout the site over time, and also spread seed around? I don't have enough experience to know what to expect from the barberry, especially as there is not much there to start with but believe it can be expected to spread also with increased sunlight.

When I was in there, much of the forest floor was covered with the spent plants of spring beauties and trout lilies, multiple other ephemerals. So, the character of the woods as it exists now is very beautiful, increasingly rare. It has the highest diversity of plants of any of the Monroe County forests that I know of and seems quite well worth saving from that standpoint."

Next Meeting: **Thursday August 11th** (1 to 3 p.m.) Pre meeting Field Trip to the Tomah School Forest. Details to follow