

MCISWG MEETING MINUTES 05/30/2024

Prior to the Field trip with **John Sullivan** and **Clint Gilman** along trails around the area logged 3 years ago, **Armstrong** set up the “invasive of the week” board in the West Salem School Outdoor Education Center (OEC) building, near Sparta. This week it is Autumn Olive. The display features a couple of leaflet holders loaded with literature about MCISWG, our flier for the next field day and specific information on Autumn Olive. The group were advised by John it is tick season so use appropriate repellants. Clint and John took turns explaining the silviculture and educational aspects at specific stops along the well-marked trail. Sometimes we are on both the Black oak and Red pine trail. The post markers have beautiful etched emblems with a leaf or needles of their namesake tree.

At many of these stops there were interpretive podium style signs, created and installed by student Madison Odenbach. There were also lots of new Leopold benches in the OEC, older ones that had started to deteriorate are often recycled into boardwalks through wetter areas.

Students have been pulling garlic mustard as they make their way around whichever of the trails are the mapped for that day’s educational program.

John talked about how after the timber sale the area that once served as the log landing, where timber is stacked and eventually trucked to final destinations, became a new feature. For a while the thought was for it to be a parking lot, but a change of heart, a grant from an energy company, a prairie was seeded of locally sourced native seed. We would visit the prairie on the way out.

Clint spoke about the trees he has seen regenerating from seed trees or stump coppice and listed Red Maple, Red Oak, Black Oak, and some White Pine. In general, he thought it looked good.

John paused at a barberry, identified a year or two ago on an earlier MCISWG field trip. He had on more than one occasion sent students out to eliminate the menace, however, as we could see, it still stood proud at about 18 inches high. **Armstrong** added that, as it was mapped, they could have opened EdmappS on their smart phone, searched Japanese barberry in the maps tab and they could have had their phone walk them right up on it.

Clint continued his commentary at different types of coppice, some with a little buckthorn competing, others with red maple starting to become prolific. Different harvest cycles are possible too, Clint pointed out a mature aspen stand coppiced 20 years ago. Scarification to enhance oak regeneration is another appropriate manipulation, especially in years with good acorn mast. Timber Stand Improvement is a practice used, for example, to remove competing red maple. He also recommended treating buckthorn before the oak stands go into an 80-to-90-year harvest cycle.

Suddenly an eagle eye in the group said the word autumn olive and this scribe’s heart skipped a beat. Not only had we just set up the invasive of the week display featuring autumn olive, but we had been looking for it since **Eric Ressel** had thought he spotted some at the OEC last year. **Armstrong** mapped the new discovery to EdmappS and tied small pieces of pink ribbon for future identification purposes and hopefully control. It is a species capable of being a nasty understory and can invade into everything from full sun to deep shade.

John stopped by a group of outdoor shelters kids had constructed. One day a kindergartener noticed an owl hanging out by a hole in a tree and they identified it as a Northern Saw-whet.

For our Core Group meeting we loaded up with Clint's excellent pulled pork on an assortment of buns and chips purchased by attendees as well as homemade pasta salad from the vice chair's kitchen. We trooped out into one of the two new fabulous shelters the OEC installed in the past year.

Core meeting.

Gilman suggested we introduce ourselves in lieu of new faces.

Clint Gilman, Forester, WI DNR; **John Sullivan**, OEC Coordinator, West Salem School Forest Outdoor Education Center; **Bob Micheel**, Director, **Brad Robson**, Conservation Agronomist; **Abigael Hill**, Intern, Monroe County Land Conservation Department; **Jessup Weichelt**, Threatened and Endangered Species Biologist, **Jessica Salesman**, Vice Chair of MCISWG; Natural Resources Specialist\Invasive Species Coordinator Natural Resources Branch NRB, Fort McCoy; **Rikki Ratsch**, Colorado State University, serving Fort McCoy Wildlife Dept; **Connie Weedman**, Sparta Township; **Mara Lince**, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator with Golden Sands RC&D; **Karen Williamson** Sparta Township, **Eric Ressel**, Conservationist, **Lucas Romance**, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist; Natural Resource Conservation Service, Sparta;; **Joey Esterline**, Adrian Township and Monroe Co. District 15. Supervisor; **Tammy Lazzeretti**, City of Sparta and member of Bangor Garden Club; **Mic Armstrong**, Soil Conservation Technician and MCISWG Scribe, Natural Resource Conservation Service, under a cooperative agreement with New Solutions.

John Sullivan is retiring this month, and **Clint Gilman** surprised him with the Outstanding Educational Tree Farm award, not just Monroe County but for all of Wisconsin, which John accepted for the West Salem Outdoor Education Center.

The Invader Persuader award was first on the agenda, **Armstrong** handed out nomination forms that should be returned to Clint. **Lily Lefebvre** has since posted a fillable version to MCISWG website. The idea is to honor someone from MCISWG that does the most in the effort to persuade people to take action on Invasive Species. Clint has made a lovely plaque out of a piece of Amur Maple from the bike trail. The winner will be awarded at our Annual Meeting next winter.

Agenda Addition: Scott and Joey brought in a bag of **Cheat Grass** to show the group. They keep finding it popping up on the farm, and it is on County A where it joins Incline Road. **Ressel** mentioned there was some on River Road in Sparta as well as in La Crosse along the River. The stuff is hard to kill and would be an unwelcome visitor in sand country of Monroe County. Familiarize with the plant please and get it reported in EddMaps when found. It is a major contributor to fuel load and wildfires out west.

Outreach Media. **Connie Weedman**, offered to put a note in the Herald's upcoming events section to promote the upcoming Field Day.

Annual Meeting Recap. The meeting followed a field trip to Delaware Road- Soper Creek forest to talk about buckthorn and forest management with Gilman and the contractor who did the work. The Annual

Meeting took place at the Cataract Sportsman's Club. Notes are now posted to the website. A plan for 2024 was developed. Discussion on where to hold the 2025 meeting. The Sparta Legion came up tops as long as there isn't a charge.

Spring Cisma meeting. **Armstrong** and **Salesman** both attended online. **Salesman** found it interesting to hear what different CISMAs are doing. There is now a Box account "a one stop shop for CISMA resources". **Armstrong** explained that the NR-40 revision process was now in the hands of the Governor's Council, public comments and all Species Assessment Groups work complete. It sounds like some species that had cultivar exemptions would now be revised, and some new species including Norway maple are assessed. There will be a statement "soon". The Field Guides will be revised when the new version of the Rule is finalized. Another meeting to put on calendars for all kinds of information on Invasive species and networking is the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference. This year it is in Duluth November 12-14th.

Ressel talked about NRCS practices such as the EQIP Brush management that may be appropriate to the group. NRCS can also fund the writing of Managed Forestry Plans (MFL). **Gilman** added that for large areas of forest MFL plans are good, but he can write Forest Stewardship plans for smaller areas. The question arose if the West Salem School Forest would be eligible for EQIP funding? School Forests are not usually eligible but if a third party took responsibility it might be possible.

David Newman will be taking over the OEC from **John Sullivan**.

Action Updates:

Monroe County Cost-share Applications for Private Land Invasive Species Management. **Micheel** noted that so far, we have not received new applications for 2024. **Armstrong** remembered one that may be outstanding from last year, that he and **Gilman** toured.

Community Garden: **Armstrong** said the old prairie garden has become a community garden with management assists from the Sparta Garden Club. The natives planted by **Joey Esterline** are still there for the most part. Some of the indigenous prickly pear have also survived the transition. Invasives being managed include Garlic Mustard, Crown vetch, Common Buckthorn and a recently discovered clump of Japanese knotweed by the creek. Quack grass is also a major weed. The Garden Club is also spearheading a creek cleanup from the Lovelock Bridge to the Mary Morrow bridge a few hundred yards downstream. "Good", (native) plants have been labelled in white ribbon, and invasives in pink. In this riparian area there are also populations of Leafy Spurge and Norway Maple seedlings as well as the aforementioned. The Garden Club has also planted Grey Dogwood and Juneberry seedlings and plans to transplant native flowers donated by local businessman **Gary Ascher**.

Farmers Market. **Esterline** said the opening event with **Mara Lince** from Golden Sands demonstrating aquatic species she had gathered from Perch Lake earlier went well. **Lince** said she found Pearly Leaf Pond weed as well as native coon tail and wriggling critters such as scuds which went over well with visiting children.

Purple Loosestrife. **Esterline** nothing this year. Still no 4 H group interested.

Phragmites. **Lince** has been following up on the management of the two populations in Tomah off Highway 16. She has been in contact with **Shelby Asher** from DNR. The XPO distribution center is going to control Phragmites on their property. Mara asked if we have a contact at Toro.

Gilman wondered if we should change our agendas to have a section on aquatic invasives such as loosestrife, phragmites etc. and another agenda item covering Terrestrials.

Play Clean Go signs with Scrushers **Micheel**. No update.

Annual Garlic Mustard (GM) Pull. **Armstrong** reported that while a small group worked pulling GM from County T towards the Flume, he walked the route and found that a volunteer had pulled and left a huge bag of the stuff about at the halfway mark. Ben has statistics which I cannot immediately come up with, but it seems like there is a little less GM in the section pulled every year. **Armstrong** reported finding a lone autumn olive near there and on returning to Ben's group, volunteer **Marla Lind** said she was packing a buckthorn blaster and took off to treat the Autumn Olive. At the time we did not know it but it just proves that Marla is a worthy recipient of a 2024 Invasive Species Action Award (formerly known as Invader Crusader Awards). Well, done Marla! [Wisconsin Invasive Species Council Announces Invasive Species Action Awards Winners | Wisconsin DNR](#).

Mapping The Sparta Elroy Bike Trail. **Armstrong** spent many of his days off last winter practicing his hobby, hiking the trail from Rockland, eventually all the way to Elroy. Parking on roadsides that seemed to make for convenient length hikes back to where he left off, he learned there are some places it is inadvisable to get on the trail. One in particular was dangerously steep and high. A subsequent edition of the Monroe County Herald showed why. There was a massive steel viaduct that they backfilled at some point, meaning Kapok Road is not a great place to start a section of trail walking.

The Eddmapps phone app was used to map invasive plants. There were occasional occurrences of Black locust, presumably unwelcome for cyclists due to potential conflicts between thorns and tires; Autumn Olive was found occasionally, mostly in the first few miles east of Rockland, where it was mapped in detail so that a future management effort would not miss any; Amur Maple seems to be confined, at least so far, to the area near the Sparta campground which is already mapped, and a few Multiflora roses were discovered. That sounds almost idyllic, however both sides of the trail, almost in its entirety, are becoming choked with Common Buckthorn, and Eurasian honeysuckle, so much so that there is barely any grass growing under them, which increases the likelihood of soil erosion failures along the embankment. This summer **Armstrong** plans to cycle the trail, mapping the species not observed in the winter months.

Discussion followed about the area of prairie near Rockland, it is the La Crosse River Trail Prairie, a State Natural Area. **Lizzeretti** thought we should try to have a field trip there, mentioned **Jim Rogala** of the Prairie Enthusiasts would be a good person to contact.

June 13th Field Day at Pine view Campground. **Salesman** was nervous as she has never done the field day. Presenters all confirmed. Goats on the Go will set up the same place as last year. Agenda tweaked; presentation equipment lined up. Natural Resource staff have equipment display, plants for ID, signage

and the PX food truck scheduled. Outreach through Farmers market, June Dairy Day display, newspaper and Facebook. We should be good to go.

August 8th Field Day at the Cranberry Research Center. **Armstrong** noted that **Mark Renz** of the UW Madison Weed Science Lab is going to present. No **Matt Wallrath** this time. **Rick Schulte** is coming to talk herbicides. **Ressel** plans on making a power point to go with **Esterline's** talk on native plants to consider after invasive species management, and **Kyle Johnson** from Diversity Landworks is bringing goats again. Agenda by next meeting for discussion.

This is an afternoon program, no lunch provided.

Fort McCoy Updates. **Ratsch** listed honeysuckle, Buckthorn and black locust treatments wrapping up, as well as basal treatments of Glossy buckthorn. April/May Garlic Mustard, on to Leafy Spurge now. Near Hwy 71 and Havendale Avenue, found Purple loosestrife; contacting owner to help manage. Fort McCoy has only a minimal amount of Purple Loosestrife so tries to be vigilant about adjoining populations.

Esterline was worried about Leafy spurge on highways near Fort McCoy.

Updates from the front line. **Gilman** said Buckthorn has been his main focus. Treating with Element 4 (Garlon 4).

Agenda Items for Firefly Farms / Jefferson Township meeting.

Future meetings/Field trips: Bike trail/ State Natural Area, Rockland. **Weedman** to look into.

Lemonweir river walk, Tomah.

Esterline/ Geraud farm October.

The final part of the day was a walk with **John Sullivan** to the Magic Springs area of the outdoor Education Center. Stopping on the boardwalk to discuss a possible prescribed burn in the large sedge meadow, we went on past some poison sumac, certainly something to note in the prescribed burn plan, and arrived at an intersection of the trails. **Jessica Salesman** told me she was remembering her time as a student there as well as the fact that her Dad and his neighbors all helped build the boardwalks and other structures. Speaking of which, to the south there is a magnificent wooden observation tower, which we would not visit this time, instead we headed through the White pine forest, noting the ground has a hollow feel to it, and in reality, the entire area of tree roots is underlain with springs. We passed large tamarack trees, then yellow birch, rare this far south in Wisconsin, until we arrived at the new wooden platform at Magic Springs where a lot of students and teachers learn about the aquatic life, including small fish living in the stream that surfaces for several yards before disappearing underground again. About 200 yds from magic springs the stream pops up again, eventually entering the headwaters of Silver creek.

As the water temperature stays a more or less constant 51 degrees, the Outdoor Education Center can make use of this teaching resource all year. They have found green frog in mid-winter. **John Sullivan**, standing in front of a backdrop of an 8' pine root mass with yellow birch growing vertically from its upper surface, showing off the critters in a minnow trap is a memory I will share with many, many students.

Happy Days John.

A question about whether they would be logging the mature pines in this part of the school forest was taken by Clint who said according to the plan, they would not be harvesting them. There was another area of pine towards the highway that was on a harvest schedule.

Our final stop of the day was the newly seeded pollinator habitat/prairie in the area that was the log landing near the front gate of the OEC. It was good watching **Ressel** on hands and knees discovering and identifying tiny native seedlings with **John Sullivan** happily watching. It will make a great feature and educational resource, so much better than a new parking lot.