

Megan Mickelson DNR Forester, MCISWG Chair, **Bob Micheel**, Director Monroe County Land Conservation; Monroe County Conservation; **Scott Giraud** , Land Manager (Adrian Tsp); **Jim Raiten** Center for Environmental Management Colorado State University, Fort McCoy; **Jessup Weichelt** and **Kevin Luepke**, Natural Resources Branch, Fort McCoy; **Tim Wilder** Chief, Natural Resources Branch, Fort McCoy; **Chris Barlow** , Landowner, Greenfield TSP. **Randy Poelma** Environmental Science Program Ho-Chunk Nation, Black River Falls; **Matt Modjeski** -Conservation Warden, WI DNR; **Mark Pfost** (Private Lands Biologist, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and Partners for Fish and Wildlife; **Dave Ohnstad** Monroe County Highway Dept. **Skip Frazee** Landowner Sparta TSP; **Michelle Komiskey** -District Conservationist, **Mic Armstrong** Soil Conservation Technician, USDA NRCS and Scribe.

Mickelson apologized for not making the Field trip to Fort McCoy earlier and wondered if Luepke was going to take over as chair. **Wilder** hoped that Mickelson could continue as chair for at least another meeting so that Luepke could learn more about how the group functioned before taking over the responsibilities of the position. **Mickelson** concurred.

Armstrong summarized the Field trip. The combination of nice weather and great advanced publicity from the Sparta paper brought out a crowd (22) . Participants were mostly local landowners, but several Lands Specialists came from The Ho-Chunk Nation as well. The demonstration was led by **Kevin Luepke** of Fort McCoy's Directorate of Public Works with **Jim Raiten** and his crew from Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, Colorado State University, Wisconsin Field Office. Identification of our two buckthorn species and lookalike natives was the first topic, we discussed the shapes of the plants, foliage, and the fact it grows earlier and hangs on later than anything else on the landscape.

We learned correct procedures for herbicide application to buckthorn and other woody invasive species using the basal technique, discussed limitations and when to concede the need for heavier equipment to shred the invaders and treat the subsequent regrowth with foliar sprays. We discussed the different styles and mechanisms of backpack sprayers, vicon seals, the "back saver" harness, and spray nozzles. **Raiten** favors the T-Jet 8002, orientated with the slit vertical, because if you have enough pressure it will give a nice 12" band on the stem and wrap around the back quite well. Stems bigger than about an inch need to be sprayed all the way around, smaller ones just a streak on one side should do it. The disadvantage of basal application is that the dead trees may stand for a few years before falling over. The advantages include efficiencies in herbicide use and labor.

Luepke led a discussion about the difference between Garlon 4 and other generic versions of the same active ingredient (Triclopyr). The main point is to read and follow the label for mixing and application. In addition to the Garlon, they add a "kicker", the herbicide Stalker (Polaris) at 2 %. We were cautioned though, that if applying to buckthorn under the drip line of Oak trees, Stalker has the potential to kill the oak tree too and would not be added to the mix in these locations. The carrier is "bark oil", some come with dye so you can see where you have treated for several weeks afterwards, others you can add dye yourself (do not use water soluble dyes, they congeal with the oil carrier). Their supplier is Rick Schulte of Nutrien Solutions who also deals in smaller quantities including a "short" container of bark oil that allows for efficient mixing of Garlon- for example 2 gallons of oil in a 2 and half gallon container which leaves room for the prescribed amount of herbicide for a handy sized container. Fort uses a short 15 gallon container. You should also be able to purchase all of these products from local co-ops. For just a small area Pathfinder comes in a premixed container of bark oil and Garlon.

A landowner started telling attendees they should try a mix with windshield washer fluid. **Armstrong** cautioned that if the herbicide label did not mention its use, please do not use windshield washer fluid as a carrier or promote its use in this group.

We distributed handouts on buckthorn and an updated local contractor list. When asked about cost sharing **Armstrong** said the DNR foresters would be a good place to start, there are also NRCS funds available through the EQIP program but usually a forest management plan is required. The best thing would be to come to our next Field Day in June where we will cover that in more depth. The Field Day will be advertised in the paper

The next item on the agenda was for **Armstrong** to summarize the annual meeting which is already posted in our website https://monroe.extension.wisc.edu/files/2020/02/Core_Annual-Meeting-Jan-9-2020.pdf

One item from the annual meeting we discussed was a work trailer. **Ohnstad** said the Highway Dept has one that may be suitable. This inspired a discussion about, other than hand tools such as loppers and saws, the complexities of loaning out backpack and other sprayers (who would do maintenance?) and management of herbicides for use by residents of the County. Winter storage of herbicides was one problem we did not have a good answer for.

Komiskey broached the subject of the MOU. The Army had a few requirements relayed via **Wilder** that really do not change the document other than some font issues, a requirement for point of contacts and that the MOU will now have an "Agreement Number" for reference. The effective date will be when the last "Interested Party" signs. **Komiskey** will complete the edits and send back out.

Wilder offered to provide 10-15 buckthorn walking sticks for sale via Farmers Market, profits could be payable to MCISWG. On a more grandiose scale, wattle fence panels could be constructed from buckthorn. **Armstrong** handed out a couple of pages copied from an English book "The Forgotten Arts" by John Seymour, explaining the use and construction of wattle panels.

We congratulated Chris **Barlow** on his honor as the Monroe Co. Tree farmer of the Year. He showed off the new truck he won at the banquet.

We talked about making sure our meetings are well promoted via the Sparta and Tomah newspapers as well as Facebook. Mickelson mentioned the DNR Facebook page is available, but the lead time is quite long.

One way to facilitate improved attendance is to schedule meetings for the year. The group decided on the 3rd Thursday of every other month is what we have been doing for the most part.

Next Meeting: May 7th. 1-3pm at the Justice Center in Sparta.

Field Day at Pineview Campground Fort McCoy, Thursday, June 11th times TBD.

Core Meeting August 6th 1-3 pm

Fall Field Day a Thursday in October TBD, Wellington or Jefferson Town Hall.

Annual Meeting: January 14th 2021, venue and time TBD.

Field Trips will be announced and promoted. Dates will coincide with core meetings and there may be more. The first will be Poison Hemlock with a demo of rosette spraying at the same venue off Hwy 27 as last fall.

A discussion about creating a business card with meeting dates on the back as well as a trifold flier was touched on. **Micheel** would see if his staff could expedite creation of these important promotional tools.

Komiskey said the tabletop display was still in progress.

Wilder hoped we could invite representatives of local suppliers of gravel and fill materials to our meetings to see if they would spray weeds to satisfy the contracting requirements of McCoy but also use to market their product as such even outside of Monroe Co. **Raiten** would endeavor to find out how his contacts in Minnesota was progressing in their effort to promote certification of these nonmetallic mined materials, as well as mulch etc.

Work Events:

Garlic Mustard Pull, Ben **Johnston** will schedule a weekend day in June. **Wilder** mentioned with advanced notice we could get the Challenge Academy out there to boost our bag count.

Amur Maple. The work party in December did not have a satisfying conclusion. Although we did treat some trees with basal sprays and some smaller ones using the cut stump method, The DNR Rangers did not want brush piles so there are still a lot of trees overhanging the trail with viable seeds. Hopefully the next time we organize a work party we will achieve more. We have had two attempts at mapping the large population by drone, but with the line of site restriction on drone flying we could not see the true extent. In January volunteers: **Armstrong, Johnston and Luethe** took advantage of the frozen ground and mapped most of the area by the campground. They found Amur maple was spreading from the state owned area onto private land (and probably vice versa), When those observations are posted in Eddmaps. **Bleuer** has offered to go out and map the rest.

Spotted Knapweed: **Wilder and Luepke** have been researching whether there would be a possibility of getting harvested biocontrols out into the hands of partners (neighbors) to keep populations of this invasive flower in check. Leafy Spurge can also managed with biocontrol insects-flea beetles (*Aphthona* spp.) root feeder, spurge hawk moth (*Hyles euphorbia*) defoliator, and (*Oberea erythrocephala*) stem borer beetle. One idea would be to have a session at the June Field Day (after lunch) on Leafy Spurge.

The peak time for Spotted Knapweed biocontrols (Larinus spp.-seed head feeders, Cyphocleonus achates, root weevil) is August, so perhaps a field trip would be appropriate for educational purposes and possible releases.

Note: for persons doing the releases, will need to get a permit from WDATCP ((608) 224-4581 christopher.foelker@wi.gov).

It could take up to 50-80 days to receive permit (Wisconsin Permit 414 parts I & II).

County Forest: **Mickelson** has been working with the county forest administrator to treat buckthorn around the active trails at Meadowview School. **Mickelson** reported that they had treated the buckthorn in the wooded area behind the prairie planting.

Poelma wondered if anyone had experience with tractor mounted propane weed burners. **Armstrong** built one out of a brush hog in the nineties with help from a Neillsville practitioner. There were other vendors out there supplying the organic producers who burn weeds in corn. Burning weeds may only be a top kill, but the advantage is that any seeds are effectively sterilized

Pfost announced that Mississippi Valley Conservancy was partnering with Kickapoo Valley to host workshops in May.

Phragmites: **Komiskey** has located another population in a marshy area next to the Toro plant on Hwy 16 in Tomah. Once a contact has been initiated with the landowners we will get a closer look and get a voucher sample harvested to send to **Alex Selle** for ID and inclusion in the grant proposal for management of Phragmites (along with the population further west on Hwy 16/ I- 90).