Steering Committee/Partner Updates

Peter Pasnik (DOT): The DOT has been experimenting with pollinator planting, reduced mowing and Phragmites treatment at the 179 and Route 5 junction.

Marcus Rosten (BNW): Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (BNW) is currently planning its Buffalo River Stewardship Series which will include an invasive species monitoring program at Seneca Bluffs and a kayak safety fair. They are also working with Erie County to develop a long-term invasive species management plan throughout Erie County’s area of concern. This work is currently focused on obtaining landowner permissions. The Town of Tonawanda would like to partner with BNW and WNY PRISM to do an invasive species management and native planting effort along 2-Mile Creek. Lastly, the Annual Shoreline Sweep is planned for Saturday, April 25 and will take place over 25 sites throughout western New York.

Colleen Kolb (USFWS): The benthic ID of samples taken this past field season are close to completion, having processed most of the 30,000 gastropod samples and still having to do the bivalve and arthropod samples. Work is progressing on the genetic assessment of 13 species internationally recognized as high risk invaders. This will inform eDNA development for both new fish and invertebrate species. The canal plant and fish survey done each year is looking for new sampling sites between Tonawanda and Albany.

Aaron Heminway (Parks): The Strike Teams of NYS Parks received an overhaul. Now each region will have teams of 2 people that will work in one region throughout the 4-month field season to do mapping, removal, etc. Unfortunately, this means the loss of the forest health specialist. Letchworth State Park has a bid out for emerald ash borer and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) treatments at Letchworth State Park and surveys for HWA at Darien Lake and Lakeside Beach State Parks have not found any new infestations. Albany is beginning to standardize their invasive species management plans. Meanwhile, NYS Parks has Parks-specific management plans that mandate the removal of frog-bit to certain levels and the monitoring and removal of 5-6 species on a target list including Phragmites, multiflora rose, buckthorn, etc. Lastly, NYS Parks has posted several invasive species management positions and any help spreading the word about these positions would be appreciated.

Jennifer Dunn (NYS DEC): DEC will once again have an intern who will be available to help partners on occasion. This position will help facilitate the attendance of many different partner organizations at this year’s Canal Fest (July 19-26).

Paul Fuhrmann (E&E): The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning has moved forward on several management plans which include a collaborative effort with NYS DEC and WNY PRISM. This program makes good use of assessment, evaluation and the knowledge base found in the Buffalo/WNY area. Similarly, the Native Plant Collaborative meetings have been very successful, and they are
currently working with Erie County to develop a native plant database and website. Paul has also been engaged with the deer management group at Tifft.

**Lynn Greer (USACE):**

- USACE will participate in the WNYPRISM Boat Steward Training scheduled for May 19 or 20.
- Hydrilla Project Tonawanda Creek/Erie Canal: Tentative treatment dates are scheduled for the week of July 26 with spot treatment tentatively scheduled for the week of August 23.
- Unity Island Aquatic Plant Control: A three year construction contract was completed in fall 2019 that included demonstration of management strategies aimed to improve wetland quality and function by reducing coverage and spread of AIS (specifically Phragmites, tree of heaven, mugwort, and purple loosestrife), coupled with active restoration of native wetland plants, increase native plant and animal biodiversity, and minimize impacts to threatened and endangered wetland species on a 10 acre site. Monitoring and adaptive management will continue through September 2020.
- Buffalo River Submerged Aquatic Vegetation: The purpose of the project was to restore native aquatic habitat along an urban corridor to include the installation of in-water structure features such as locked logs and rootwads, and native planting of submerged and emergent vegetation. Work at 2 of the 3 locations (Savarino and Irish Propane) was completed at the end of calendar year 2019. In spring 2020, the third site (Ellicott) will have additional work done to bolster the locked log structures to mitigate substrate migration and protect submerged aquatic vegetation.

**PRISM Updates**

- **Rails to Trails Volunteer Program with the Town of Tonawanda**
  - We’ve held our first in a series of events designed to survey and manage the invasive species along the Town of Tonawanda’s Rails to Trails Pathway. This event saw 29 people attend who learned some invasive species ID, how to download and install the survey form and basic removal techniques. Follow up events will be held in May to teach volunteers how to survey and June/July to manage the invasive species along the trail.
- **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Trainings**
  - We held an HWA volunteer training on Saturday, February 8 at Chestnut Ridge Park with 32 volunteers. Overflow participants necessitated a second event on Saturday, March 14 at Emery Park. Volunteers signed up for additional plots at Chestnut Ridge to survey for HWA. This volunteer initiative has led to the first confirmed report of HWA at Chestnut Ridge Park. Management follow-up is unknown at this point.
- **Seasonal Hiring**
  - WNY PRISM is currently seeking applications for our many seasonal job openings. We are hiring 3 Invasive Species Management Assistants, 1 Education and Outreach Assistant, 1 GIS Analyst, 1 Early Detection Survey Technician, 18 Boat Stewards. We are also looking to develop some special project positions to assist with data collection, such as targeted surveys for yellow flag iris and flowering rush.
- **Annual Report**
  - Work on the 2019 Annual Report is progressing, a draft will be presented to the Steering Committee by early March.
- **Early Detection Program**
• Slender False Brome – The final report for the Great Lakes Slender False Brome Working Group Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant is coming together. WNY PRISM and the Working Group will continue to work on slender false brome outreach and management. The next Working Group Meeting is scheduled for April 8 at Genesee County Park and Forest.

• Mile-a-Minute
  o WNY PRISM will facilitate an upcoming working group meeting, currently being scheduled, to discuss last year’s efforts and plans for 2020.

• Japanese Stiltgrass
  o We would like to develop a Japanese stiltgrass working group, similar to the mile-a-minute effort, and are currently working on getting stakeholders to the table. In the meantime, we are looking to hold a management workshop this summer, aimed at training volunteers in identification and removal

Discussion Topics

• Crew Assistance Program Requests
  o We received 21 requests from 13 partners this year.
  o Requests totaled >40 days, not including projects clearly outside of WNY PRISM capacity. The 2020 CAP/Crew schedule has ~20 days available for projects.
  o Projects were reviewed for completeness and scored based on established criteria (priorities, sustainability, partnership and capacity) by Andrea and Lucy.
  o Proposal and scores were presented to the Steering Committee and further prioritization took place.
  o Clarification on a few projects is necessary to finalize selections and we’ll reach out to those partners. Once clarification is received, final selection of lower ranked projects will be based on time and capacity.

• New NYS PRISM Network Logos
  o SLELO, Capital Region, LIISMA and APIPP recently changed their PRISM logos and DEC asked if the remaining four PRISMS were interested in doing so as well, using the template developed.
  o Consensus that our current logo is strong and well-established, it clearly identifies WNY PRISM and represents the region and organizational purpose.

• Partner Meeting Reorganization
  o During our strategic planning process, partners requested additional meetings for early detection updates, approaching region/emerging species, resources for the supervisors of summer seasonal employees pertaining to reporting protocol and species of interest, and a general protocols update. These could be integrated into the Spring Partner Meeting, eliminating our guest speaker time. Steering Committee agrees that this would be a good use of everyone’s time.

Upcoming Meetings

Spring Partner Meeting – Thursday, April 16, 1 – 3pm; Webex/Online

Steering Committee Meeting – Thursday, June 18, 1 – 3pm; Great Lakes Center Field Station