WNY PRISM Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, September 24; 1:00 – 3:00 pm  
Conference Call

In Attendance: Lynn Greer (USACE – Buffalo District), Jennifer Dunn (DEC – Great Lakes Office), Mike Shaw (NRCS), Colleen Keefer (USFWS – Great Lakes), Mark Bogdan (DOT), Claudia Rosen (BNW), and Aaron Heminway (Parks).

Steering Committee/Partner Updates

Lynn Greer (USACE): There has been little education and outreach amid COVID-19 and efforts have focused on completing field work, including Hydrilla surveys and treatment, within COVID-19 restrictions. Currently working with WNY PRISM and the E&O Working Group on opportunities to use graphic artists and videographer to develop videos on invasive species, awareness and what people can do.

Jennifer Dunn (DEC): Followed up on a new report of Hydrilla in Orchard Park. The plant has been identified as Brazilian elodea, and not Hydrilla, and are currently seeking management recommendations for the landowner. This is the first report of Brazilian elodea in WNY.

Mike Shaw (NRCS): Working with a few new landowners on habitat restoration projects where they are working on invasive species removal including buckthorn, honeysuckle and multi-flora rose.

Mark Bogdan (DOT): Active construction projects include paving and ramps. Controls have been put in place to avoid invasive species at staging areas and to avoid spreading species. Efforts involving the bike path/Robert Moses replacement in Niagara Falls continue with work to finalize contracts.

Colleen Keefer (USFWS): Field work was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions but were able to assist USACE with Hydrilla work and completed the annual water chestnut survey resulting in a handful of plants being removed from the canal. This winter, USFWS will reassess the water chestnut project to determine if the project/survey area can be reduced. Completed benthic surveys and some additional boat work that resulting in finding a water chestnut infestation within the Genesee River. Will reach out to and work with FL-PRISM to address the infestation.

Claudia Rosen (BNW): Claudia is attending her first Steering Committee Meeting and is excited to be involved – otherwise no updates from BNW.

Aaron Heminway (Parks): Made great use of the Regional Strike Team/Technicians and AIS Strike Team which remained in WNY due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The AIS Strike Team worked on frog-bit removal at Buckhorn Island, removing over 20,000 lbs, using 900 person hours and conducting invasive species surveys throughout the region including Grass Island. Survey efforts for beech leaf disease increased this year due to a number of reports across the region. BLD has been found in Orleans, Niagara, Erie, Chautauqua, and Wyoming Counties. Parks has released biocontrols for EAB and knapweed. Current funding for the AIS strike team is finished and there is uncertainty when it comes to capacity for Technicians and other seasonal staff for next year due to state budget concerns.

PRISM Updates & Discussions

- General Updates
Summer/Seasonal Staff – The WNY PRISM Crew will be finishing up at the end of next week (October 2), joining our Boat Stewards who finished on Labor Day (September 7). Our special project folks have also mostly finished, including the Survey and Monitoring Technicians for slender false brome and yellow flag iris and flowering rush.

Fall/Seasonal Staff – We have decided to keep our GIS Technician on staff through the end of the year; she will assist with end-of-year reporting, geodatabase development and FTE training. We are also hiring two Research Assistants to assist with data organization and analysis. One will work on a phenology project using iMap data while the other will work on a variety of projects involving early detection and WISPA data.

FTE are currently working a maximum of two-days in the office and three-days either at home or in the field. This will continue through the fall semester.

Fall Partner Meeting will be held remotely on October 22, more information to follow.

Aquatic Programs
- The Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager position closed on Monday, September 21 and we are currently reviewing applications. Our goal is to have someone on board early in November.
- Emily Harrower, Southern Lead Boat Steward, has been helping us finish up the Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program for the season. She’s been working on inventory, data and reporting, and is providing us with a draft end-of-season report. Emily’s last day will be Wednesday, September 30.

Preliminary Numbers
- >21,500 inspections (increase of 5,000), >51,000 interactions (increase of 14,000), and >1300 interceptions (decrease of 500).

Terrestrial Programs
- Crew Assistance Program Crew will finish up next week. It’s been a very hectic summer as we’ve tried to fit in as much of our originally planned stewardship work into a shortened window due to COVID-19 restriction. With the field season finishing up and the ability to spend more time in the office, we’ll be able to provide more information on project work soon.

Early Detection Programs
- Red swamp crayfish was reported to iMap and WNY PRISM. The photos provided were inconclusive, so Dr. Pennuto plans to conduct a site visit to confirm the identification. (update: red swamp crayfish has been confirmed).
- Water Hyacinth
  - Water hyacinth was found at two sites this year. One was a previously known site that we’ve been monitoring and had been hyacinth free for 3 years. The second is a new site reported on 9/14, at Buckhorn Island State Park. We removed 6 plants from the first site and reported the second to Parks who have plans to follow-up.
- Water Lettuce
  - Water lettuce was reported to us by BNW in mid-August at Hyde Park Lake. Marcus went out to confirm identification and pulled 30-40 plants the following Monday. We determined that a full survey of the lake would be needed, but with Marcus finishing up, we turned to one of our survey and monitoring techs.
still with us and Alex went out on August 20 to complete a full survey. Alex
removed 291 plants during the initial survey and we’ve continued to monitor
this site.

- Slender False Brome & Japanese Stiltgrass
  - We surveyed over 43 sites and 64 miles of trails for terrestrial early
detection species.
    - We found one new section of the Groveland Secondary Trail in
      Genesee County that has slender false brome and worked with
      the DEC while they treated the species with herbicide.
    - We found 7 new sites with Japanese stiltgrass infestations. These
      sites, along Cazenovia and Eighteen Mile Creek, were prioritized
      for surveys based on our Japanese stiltgrass habitat suitability
      model. We removed over 23 bags of Japanese stiltgrass this
      season by hand-pulling.

- Education Programs
  - Education and Outreach Working Group met remotely on Monday, September 22.
  - WNY PRISM will be hosting a fall webinar series. The series will include weekly webinars
    held on Thursdays at 2:00 pm. The first webinar will be held October 15 and the last on
    November 19. October 22 is the Fall Partner Meeting, and there will not be a webinar
    this day. Topics will include winter ID and spread prevention, managing woody invasives
    in winter, emerging aquatic threats and an APHIS session on ECFF and PPV.
  - The Fall eNewsletter will focus on biocontrols and will be release in early October,
    ahead of the fall partner meeting.

- Grants
  - Received a one-year extension for our CWMA project, it will now end June 30, 2021.
  - Finished year one of Tifft/Greenway habitat restoration grant/project that funds efforts
    to remove buckthorn from the Mosquito Junction area of the preserve and to restore
    with native vegetation.
  - We received funds through LEWPA for a one-year project to install native seed at sites
    that have seen invasive species management and are in need of vegetation to help keep
    invasive species coming back. We developed two seed mixes, one for riparian areas
    and the other for upland and/or mesic sites and have identified three sites for planting.

- Opportunities
  - IPM Partnership Grant is open and awarding up to $200,000 for 2021, with a
    maximum of $50,000 per award. The program supports projects that foster the
    development and adoption of integrated pest management (IPM) methods
    including three project types: IPM Applied Research, IPM Working Groups, and
    IPM Communications. Applications are due November 12, 2020 and more
    information can be found here: www.northeastipm.org/rfa/partnership
  - NFWF Bats for the Future Fund - NFWF is seeking grant proposals to slow or halt
    the spread of white-nose syndrome disease (WNS) in North America and
    promote the survival and recovery of WNS-affected bat populations and
species. This Request for Proposals will award approximately $600,000. Applications are due November 12, 2020. Learn more

- Pesticide Regulatory Update
  - DEC is working to streamline categories – there are currently 28 commercial and 7 private. Vegetation Management will include 2, 3A, 3B, 3C, and 6A and Aquatic Pest Control will include 5A, 5B, 5C.
  - Many changes to Certification and Training were discussed, but these seemed less certain. Included are changes to apprentice training requirements, redefined supervision terminology, CEU needs and record keeping fields.
  - One proposed change involving eligibility for certification is of concern. It shifts eligibility away from experience in favor of length of employment, requiring at least 8 consecutive months of experience. This has some serious impacts for our seasonal staff since our field season is only 5-6 months long.
  - Comments about the regulations can be sent to PestRegs@dec.ny.gov.

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, October 22, 2020 – Fall Partner Meeting
1:00 – 3:00 pm
Location: Webex

Thursday, November 19, 2020 – Steering Committee Meeting
1:00 – 3:00 pm
Location: Webex