

WNY PRISM Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 17; 1:00 – 3:00pm
Conference Call

In Attendance: Andrea Locke (WNY PRISM); Sharon Bachman (CCE Erie County); Jennifer Dunn (NYS DEC); Nate Drag (NY Sea Grant)

Steering Committee/Partner Updates

Sharon Bachman (CCE Erie County): Sharon has joined the Erie County Environmental Management Council and has begun reviewing reports. Continuing swallow-wort biocontrol work in Clarence and a new site in Orleans County. Moths were released in late May. Moths were released on the same date but while larvae were seen in Clarence they've not yet been seen in Orleans County. May work with Laura Bailey on a possible property owner field day.

Jennifer Dunn (NYS DEC): DEC is still working to hire regional invasive species biologists, but Region 9 has yet to receive one. Won't be getting an intern again this year but will be able to have volunteers to assist with *Hydrilla* surveys.

Nate Drag (NY Sea Grant): Megan Kocher, Great Lakes Outreach Coordinator, will serve as New York Sea Grant's representative on the Steering Committee. Nate Drag, Great Lakes Literacy Specialist, may occasionally attend when Megan isn't available.

Colleen Keefer (USFWS): USFWS has completed spring eDNA work for Asian carp and began early detection monitoring work and Erie Canal fish surveys.

PRISM News and Updates

- Steering Committee Representatives
 - Megan Kocher, Great Lakes Outreach Coordinator, will serve as New York Sea Grant's new representative on the Steering Committee.
- WNY PRISM Staff
 - Emily Thiel resigned her position as WNY PRISM's Education and Outreach Program Manager in March. After updating the position description and receiving approval from DEC, we posted the position.
 - Cecilia Pershyn will be joining WNY PRISM as our new Education and Outreach Program Manager, starting on July 1. Cecilia is a graduate of the Great Lakes Environmental Science Professional Master's program at SUNY Buffalo State and has spent the last four years working as the Blue Economy Program Coordinator.
- Senate Bill S699B
 - Senate Bill S699B was passed in the Senate but was not brought up by the Assembly before the end of the legislative session. The Bill, if signed into law, would ban the use of neonicotinoids, including as used in seed coatings. It does offer an exception for invasive species but the rules and regulations that would allow for use to manage invasive species are not outlined. If passed, development of such regulations would fall to DEC.
 - More information on the bill can be found here:
<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s699>

- Seasonal Staff
 - The WNY PRISM Crew started on May 3. This includes 3 Invasive Species Management Assistants (Jason, Lyndzie and Aubrey), and 1 Education and Outreach Assistant (John).
 - Jason is with us for his third summer. He was a Boat Steward in 2019 and an ISMA in 2020.
 - The Northern and Southern Lead Boat Stewards started on May 21, a few days before the Boat Stewards/Environmental Educators. Vincent and Jesse, our Lead Stewards, returned from working as Boat Stewards last summer.
 - We currently have 3 launches open, for which we are continuing to work on filling. We did have stewards in place at all but one of our launches at some point during the hiring process, but a few backed out just prior to the season starting and two shortly after. We are re-evaluating how to generate applications for these more rural launches such as Bear Lake, Onoville Marina and Sans Souci Park in Holley.
 - For our Early Detection Program, we hired 2 Survey and Monitoring Technicians. Amanda, returning for her third summer, will work part-time before heading to veterinary school in August. Sonya, who worked with us as a Data Analyst last fall, will work through the end of the year, and Melissa is back helping with GIS projects.
- Project Updates
 - Invasive species removal as part of the Priority Lands project, funded through the USFS CWMA GLRI program, is complete. We are now finishing up data collection and taking photo points for the final report.
 - Work to fence the pond at the Park School, to contain the red swamp crayfish was completed with a lot of assistance from students, faculty, and parents. They've been trapping the crayfish and will continue to do so. We were able to provide frozen specimens to USFWS for DNA testing.
 - Work has begun on the 2021 Crew Assistance Program projects. The Crew has already completed some survey work and completed a native planting at Reinstein Woods. Upcoming projects include invasive species removal at Rattlesnake Hill and several knotweed removal efforts.
 - The Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program started over Memorial Day weekend. Early data show a small decrease in the number of inspections from last year, perhaps more in line with data from 2019.
- Grant/Funding Updates
 - The Crew has begun work on the Tiffit/Mosquito Junction Restoration Project which involves invasive species removal and native planting/restoration. We are in year 2 of 3 of this project.
 - We are just past mid-way through our Japanese stiltgrass and slender false brome rapid response grant/project, funded through DEC. This project involves multiple partners and focuses on removal of isolated stiltgrass infestations within Erie County and an infestation of slender false brome at Letchworth State Park.
 - Sonya Bayba will be taking over some of the project management responsibilities for this project due to Brittany's transition to the Terrestrial Program Manager position.

- We received both USFS CWMA/GLRI grants submitted late last year. The *Western New York Japanese stiltgrass Early Detection and Rapid Response Project*, submitted by WNY PRISM and the *Invasive Species Management to Protect Rare Habitats at Alexander and Houghton Preserves* project submitted by the Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York and for which WNY PRISM is a sub-awardee.
 - Sonya will assist with project management for the Japanese stiltgrass project.
- WNY PRISM did not submit a proposal to the Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefits Program, to support our Tonawanda Rails to Trails Program. This was a casualty of Emily's departure – we didn't have the time to develop a proposal.

Discussion Topics

- Proposed Budget Amendment
 - WNY PRISM will be seeking a no-cost budget amendment for years 4 & 5 of our current contract. This budget amendment will take unexpended funds from years 1 & 2 and apply them to years 4 & 5.
 - Staff/Organizational Structure
 - WNY PRISM will seek to add an additional full-time staff member. In addition to the Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager, Education and Outreach Program Manager, and updated Terrestrial Program Manager, WNY PRISM will seek to create a Field Operations Manager.
 - The Field Operations Manager position will allow for expanded stewardship efforts, greater integration of our aquatic and terrestrial programs, improved effectiveness and efficiency of field activities, additional field activities while seasonal staff are not on board and will allow for greater ability and flexibility to accommodate increased requests for assistance from state partners.
 - Contracts
 - Current funding for contracts is minimal and primarily only covers maintenance and hosting for WNY PRISM's website.
 - Funding will be placed into the contracts line to cover the cost of updating the WNY PRISM logo per DEC's mandate.
 - Additional funding will be placed into the contracts line to provide for updating the WNY PRISM website, both to improve functionality and organization, and to address the updated logo.
 - Conference
 - WNY PRISM canceled the planned invasive species management conference, originally budgeted for last year, due to COVID-19. As part of the budget amendment, WNY PRISM will propose moving those funds to year 5 (2023).
 - Supplies, etc.
 - Remaining funds will be distributed between other categories including supplies and travel.
- New York Invasive Species Awareness Week (NYISAW)
 - NYISAW was held June 6 – 12, 2021.
 - WNY PRISM held 5 events (Launch and Learn, Kick-off Webinar, Invasive Species and Pollinators Webinar, and 2 Walk and Talks at Seneca Bluffs and Great Baehre Swamp)

and attended a Farmers' Market. Attendance was low. The Great Baehre Swamp Walk and Talk had the highest attendance with 8 attendees.

- Webinars were recorded and posted on WNY PRISM's YouTube Channel. Since posted the Kick-Off Webinar was viewed 29 times and the Invasive Species and Pollinator Webinar has been viewed 12 times.
- Several potential reasons for the low attendance were discussed including webinar burnout from COVID-19.
- Suggestions moving forward include working to have events finalized and promoted earlier, developing more events in partnership with interested groups, not depending too heavily on social media and encouraging partners more strongly to share event information with their networks (volunteers, interested groups) and event calendars.

Upcoming Meetings

- Next Steering Committee Meeting is August 19 @ 8:00 – 9:00 am
- Fall Partner Meeting is October 21 @ 1:00 – 3:30 pm
- November Steering Committee Meeting may need to move due to NYS Invasive Species Conference.