

**WNY PRISM Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, August 19, 2021; 8:00 – 9:00 am**  
**Conference Call**

**In Attendance:** Aaron Hemminway (NYS OPRHP), Colleen Keefer (USFWS), Christopher Pennuto (WNY PRISM/GLC), Megan Kocher (NY Sea Grant), Andrea Locke (WNY PRISM)

**Steering Committee/Partner Updates**

Aaron Hemminway (NYS OPRHP): The Strike Teams will continue to work through the first week of October doing mapping and removal projects throughout both the Niagara and Genesee Regions. Surveys for *Hydrilla* will take place within State Parks along/within the Niagara River. Biocontrol work includes knapweed and emerald ash borer. Knapweed projects ongoing at Darien Lakes and Woodlawn Beach State Parks. Emerald ash borer work is taking place at several parks in Niagara and Erie Counties. There have been some supply chain issues with receiving biocontrols, but things are moving along. Beech leaf disease monitoring plots will be visited this month.

Colleen Keefer (USFWS): The electrofishing and plant surveys have been completed within the Erie Canal. No new invasive species were found, however a new water lettuce population was found and reported to iMapInvasives (WNY PRISM has added this site to our monitoring list), and a handful of water chestnut were found near the dog park. Staff continue to assist with Hydrilla efforts. Early detection and fish monitoring efforts continue with crews out in PA and Irondequoit Bay this week. The benthic program involves collecting gear after being set in June, looking at colonizers, and local crayfish trapping sites have shown a good diversity and no invasives.

Christopher Pennuto (WNY PRISM/GLC): Along with graduate student Alexander Krest, Chris has been out monitoring WNY starry stonewort sites, as identified in iMapInvasives. They were not able to find it in Chautauqua Lake or Buckhorn Island State Park and are unsure for the reason as this point.

Megan Kocher (NY Sea Grant): NY Sea Grant summer teacher workshops have finished up as teachers are preparing to head back to school. They have a lot of outreach material, mostly focused on the 'stop aquatic hitchhikers' campaign which they would like to share. Contact Megan if you are interested in getting some of these items.

Jonathan Townsend (Chautauqua County): Roger Tory Peterson Institute, in partnership with the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, has continued to survey for water chestnut in the Outlet (area below Chautauqua Lake). They have found and pulled plants twice this season and plan to return a couple more times. The infestation is significantly smaller than last year.

**PRISM News and Updates**

- WNY PRISM Staff
  - WNY PRISM welcomed Cecilia Pershyn as our new Education and Outreach Program Manager on July 1, 2021.
  - Several Boat Stewards are finishing up this weekend to head back to school but the official last day at launches will be Labor Day, Monday, September 6.
  - Crew will finish up on Friday, September 24.

- John Montgomery, E&O Assistant, will continue through the end of the year. He will help with events including the Fall Partner Meeting as well as the fall newsletter, social media and other outreach items.
- Sonya Bayba, EDRR Survey & Monitoring Technician, has accepted a new position and will be leaving WNY PRISM at the end of August. Sonya was originally expected to remain with us through the end of the year.
- Budget Amendment Request
  - A budget amendment was submitted to DEC for approval in July. This amendment will allow WNY PRISM to use unexpended contract funds from years 1-3 of our current contract during years 4 and 5.
    - For the most part, funds were not spent due to COVID-19 spending restrictions during 2020 and staff turnover causing breaks in salary use.
  - The requested amendment will place unexpended funds into personnel staff supplies, and travel budget lines.
  - Personnel will include a new position, the Field Operations Manager, and (much needed and deserved) salary increases for Program Managers.
    - Plan to begin hiring process for a Field Operations Manager as soon as approval is received, for a desired start in January.
  - We hope to hear sometime within the next couple months.
- Project Updates
  - Japanese Stiltgrass Volunteer Workdays.
    - We have held 2 of 5 planned Japanese Stiltgrass Volunteer Workdays. Upcoming workdays are schedule for August 21, August 28, and September 11.
    - Turn out has been great for the first couple workdays and we have good registration numbers moving forward. We've had 27 volunteers donating a total of 48.5 hours, so far.
- Grant/Funding Updates
  - We have completed and submitted our final report for the Priority Lands Invasive Species removal and Volunteer Monitoring Program. This USFS CWMA/GLRI project resulted in 162.5 acres managed for invasive species, 181 acres monitored annually, 4 Boot Brush Stations installed and the development of the Western New York Land Conservancy's Invasive Species Volunteer Monitoring Program.

## Discussion Topics

- *Hydrilla*
  - *Hydrilla* was found at the North Tonawanda Marina, at the Lumberjack Grill, along the Niagara River, just north of the Tonawanda Creek/Erie Canal. The marina is owned and managed by the City of North Tonawanda.
    - USACE in partnership with DEC, USFWS and the City will be treating the infestation, aiming for next week (8/23-8/26).
    - WNY PRISM will be assisting with outreach, reassigning one of our Boat Stewards to the marina this weekend and next.

- Treatments for the Green and Hickory Lake infestations is ongoing – they are comprised of 10-week treatments of Sonar H4C. The treatments are expected to go through October.
- AIS Workshop
  - WNY PRISM has scheduled an AIS Workshop for September 25, which will be held at The GLC Field Station, in the teaching pavilion.
  - The workshop will focus on Starry Stonewort, with some general aquatic plant identification.
  - WNY PRISM is asking for assistance from the Steering Committee and partners to share information about the workshop with interested parties and the public.
- Starry Stonewort
  - Starry stonewort has been confirmed at several locations in WNY including Wilson Tuscarora State Park (2006), Buckhorn Island State Park (2020) and within Chautauqua Lake (2012).
  - Great Lake Center graduate student Alexander Krest is conducting surveys and monitoring known sites. Data will be provided to iMapInvasives and shared during the AIS Workshop.
- Fall Partner Meeting
  - Discussed the potential for an in-person vs. remote meeting. The last in-person partner meeting was in October 2019.
  - There is a desire for an in-person meeting but recognize that this may not be realistic based on the unknown and evolving COVID-19 situation.
  - The cautious approach would be to plan a program that can be converted to remote should need arise, however successful in-person meetings are structured very differently from successful remote meetings. Decision was not reached.
  - Suggestion for having a discussion and/or guest presenter on running successful volunteer programs with the divergent staffing capabilities of WNY PRISM partners.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

- Fall Partner Meeting
  - Thursday, October 21; 1:00 – 3:30 pm
  - TBD
- Next Steering Committee Meeting
  - Thursday, November 18; 1:00 – 3:00 pm
  - Great Lakes Center Field Station