

**WNY PRISM Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, February 18; 1:00 – 3:00pm**  
**Blackboard Collaborate**

**In Attendance:** Andrea Locke (WNY PRISM), Brittany Hernon (WNY PRISM), Nicole Smeenck (WNY PRISM), Emily Thiel (WNY PRISM), Ronald Zietz (BNW), Colleen Keefer (USFWS), Aaron Hemminway (Parks), Mark Bogdan (DOT), Jonathan Townsend (RTPI), Chris Pennuto (WNY PRISM/GLC), Lynn Greer (USACE), Sharon Bachman (CCE – Erie County)

**Steering Committee/Partner Updates**

Ronald Zietz (BNW): BNW is in the planning stages of several projects for 2021, looking for funding and planning events. Invasive species and habitat management projects are focused on restoration and site maintenance and education and outreach efforts will focus on native plant establishment, monitoring and management.

Colleen Keefer (USFWS): The benthic sample identification work started in the fall has been completed with no new invasive species identified. Since boat work was restricted in 2020 and most of the sampling occurred in and around marinas. USFWS is looking at the data and comparing it to previous years, to see if there is a significant difference. With the completion of the benthic work, focus has shifted to larval fish identification, from 2019 samples. Currently, social media outreach efforts are focused on National Invasive Species Awareness Week.

Aaron Hemminway (Parks): Parks should get the invasive species strike teams again this year. The new model, providing 2 people per region, May through November, was started last year. The strike team works on invasive species projects including surveys and removal. There will be no aquatic strike team this year. This was a grant funded project and funding to continue the project was not identified. Parks is working closely with DAM on SLF and TOH surveys as they have identified state parks as priorities for survey. Invasive Species Control Plans have been completed for 5 parks within the Niagara Region and they're looking at focusing on Joseph Davis SP this year.

Mark Bogdan (DOT): Working on annual pavement, ADA and guiderail projects. Every project includes invasive species notes and guidance for contractors/workers on spread prevention and staging area requirement. DOT will be involved in the statewide effort to survey for SFL and TOH.

Jonathan Townsend (RTPI): RTPI has received funding through the Chautauqua Lake Watershed Alliance to continue water chestnut work involving education and a monitoring program, allowing them to continue work in the Chautauqua Lake Outlet. Currently work is focused on HWA surveys and training, in partnership with CWC, JCCC and additional partners in PA. RTPI did not receive funding to work on HWA this year.

Chris Pennuto (WNY PRISM/GLC): Continuing to work with The Park School to help address the red swamp crayfish, first observed and reported last year. The project involves trapping and the students have submitted a request through the CAP for fencing assistance.

Lynn Greer (USACE): Lynn is leaving the Buffalo District, taking a position with the Great Lakes Ohio River Division, with Public Involvement Services to the International Joint Commission. She will be involved with communication between US and Canada partners and Tribal consultations. She is working with the

Buffalo District to ensure a continuation of involvement with WNY PRISM Working Groups and the Steering Committee.

Sharon Bachman (CCE – Erie County): CCE is continuing work with the NY Invasive Species Research Institute on the swallow-wort biocontrol project. The Clarence site was established last year and they are now seeking additional sites in the WNY/Buffalo area, possible through State Parks. They received a DEC Urban Forestry Grant (2019) which is not 100% invasive species focused but does include aspects related to tree care.

### **PRISM News and Updates**

- Steering Committee Representatives
  - We welcome Ronald Zietz, our new representative from Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, taking over for Claudia Rosen.
  - We are also saying goodbye to Lynn Greer, who is attending her final Steering Committee Meeting as our representative from USACE – Buffalo District. Kathleen Buckler will be taking over temporarily and possible in a permanent capacity pending approval from USACE – Buffalo District.
- WNY PRISM Terrestrial Projects Manager, Lucy Nuessle has left WNY PRISM to take a new opportunity. We have asked Brittany Hernon to step into that position and we are very excited that as of February 1, Brittany is our new Terrestrial Invasive Species Program Manager.
  - We remain a little short staffed, as we need to address the hole left in Brittany's previous position as our Early Detection Projects Manager, including a couple grant funded projects. We hope to address this with some additional hiring in the future.
- Released the 2021 Annual Work Plan.
- The 2020 Annual Report Draft is nearing completion.
- Operational Guidelines will be updated with new Steering Committee Representatives identified and will be posted on our website.
- Grants/Funding Updates:
  - The USFS CWMA/GLRI Priority Lands project will finish up on June 30. We have a small number of acres left to treat at two sites but have otherwise completed deliverables.
  - We completed the restoration work associated with the LEWPA funded project to develop restoration seed mixes. We plan to monitor these sites to determine the success of the plantings, which represents a long-term investment.
  - We are entering year 2 of 3 for the Tiff/ Mosquito Junction Restoration Project.
  - We are mid-way through our Japanese stiltgrass and slender false brome (DEC) rapid response grant/project which 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.
  - We submitted a grant proposal through the USFS CWMA/GLRI program to support additional Japanese stiltgrass work and were identified as a partner/sub-awardee on a second proposal submitted by the Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York.
  - We are currently considering an application to the Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefits Program, to support our Tonawanda Rails to Trails Program. This would be a two-year project that would begin next January.

- Fall 2020 Data Project Updates:
  - Sonya Bayba worked as an Invasive Species Survey and Data Analyst last fall, summarizing species composition information and slender false brome percent cover and seed data collected in plots after management to determine treatment success. She also reviewed the slender false brome management data and carried out ANOVA statistical analysis to provide support for our Best Management Practices document and evaluated three years of survey data to summarize invasive species that are frequently present along with slender false brome.
  - Sonya reviewed flowering rush survey data and infestation photos to prioritize a list of sites that could be managed in a day by one or two people using manual removal – 20 of the 44 sites recorded in 2020 fit the criteria.
  - Brianna Saylor also worked as an Invasive Species Survey and Data Analyst last fall, with work focused phenology data. She created a database of 12 common species (common buckthorn, wild parsnip, black and pale swallow-worts, bush honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, lesser celandine, mugwort, multiflora rose, Phragmites, reed canarygrass and spotted knapweed). The summarized data will help determine the timeline of when invasive plants in our area develop foliage, flowers, and fruit or seed, which will be used to provide improved management recommendations.
- Metrics and Data Management
  - WNY PRISM staff will be attending a statewide metrics discussion to identify and better define how we support and communicate our success as a statewide invasive species program.
  - Invasive Species Prioritization – Tier Rankings
    - We have been working to review and update tier rankings as developed by iMapInvasives. The next step of this process will involve partner support in the form of our Working Groups. We are currently looking at 150 species divided among terrestrial and aquatic species.
      - The Terrestrial Working Group meeting will be held virtually on **Monday, March 1, 2021** from 10 AM – 12 PM. Please email Brittany Hernon at [hernonba@buffalostate.edu](mailto:hernonba@buffalostate.edu) if you are interested in participating.
      - The Aquatic Working Group meeting will be held virtually on **Monday, March 8, 2021** from 1 – 3 PM. Please email Nicole Smeenk at [smeenknm@buffalostate.edu](mailto:smeenknm@buffalostate.edu) if you are interested in participating.
  - We have begun to combine several of our individual project records and management data into a single WNY PRISM project database. With 7 years of data, this is huge undertaking, but one we feel will help us with implementing adaptive management while also tracking and communicating our efforts and success.

## Discussion Topics

- Crew Assistance Program
  - We received 18 requests for assistance/proposals through the 2021 CAP. Proposals include management (12), survey (3) and hybrid – combinations of management, survey and restoration (3).

- The schedule is very tight this year, tighter than previous years due to several factors. We have an increase in the number early detection species and sites to address, additional multi-year/committed projects that have carried over from previous years as well as independent, grant funded projects.
  - We've been observing and discussing this trend over the past couple years and recognize that we will need to be much more selective of CAP project moving forward. Sustainability of projects will be looked at more closely and those projects that have partners more highly involved and identified as being able to provide the long-term monitoring and maintenance will be more competitive.
- Committed Survey and Management Projects
  - Information management – data gap (species, geographic) surveys
  - Early detection – 53 early detection sites identified including 15 monitoring sites.
  - Demonstration/monitoring projects – Seneca Bluffs, Porter Avenue/Riverwalk Trail, LEWPA restoration sites.
  - Grants – see above news and updates.
- CAP proposals were reviewed, and priority rankings were accepted by the Steering Committee. Proposals will now be more fully assessed based on WNY PRISM capacity (schedule/project timing requirements, cost, supplies/equipment requirements).
- Next Meeting
  - Spring Partner Meeting is April 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Next Steering Committee Meeting is June 17<sup>th</sup>