

## **Governor's Invasive Species Council Quarterly Meeting**

Tuesday, March 10, 2020  
PFBC Susquehanna Conference Room

In attendance: Chris Urban, Joe Demko, Mary Beth Ruh, Donald Eggen, Andrew Rohrbaugh, Jeffrey Wagner, Amy Jewitt, Piper Sherburne, Fred Strathmeyer, Lisa Murphy, Daniel Zimmerman, James Grazio, Felicia Lamphere, Kristopher Abell, Mike Hutchinson, Ruth Welliver, Maddie Stannisch, Tom Cermak, Kevin Hess, Gregg Robertson, Stephen Rudman, Trilby Libhart, Nicole DeCardlis, Kaylan Hubbard, Heather Smiles, Brenda Shambaugh, Jessica Newbern, Sarah Corcoran, Johnny Zook, Nishit Patel, Emilee Euker, Nick Decker, Brant Portner, Jon Geyer, Kevin Hess, Bree Neilson, Scott Shepler.

Phone: Brian Pilarcik, Kate Harms, April Moore, Jody Groshek, and others not recorded.

### **Introductions, Minutes, and Announcements**

#### **[Presentation on NAISMA Weed Free Forage and Gravel Certification program by NAISMA representative Dave Burch \(Appendix 1\).](#)**

Johnny Zook: There is a demand from farmers for certified WFF. Johnny has received requests from farmers to certify their forage, hay, and straw. In the absence of a certification program, the added value and market has been lost by PA farmers. For example, PA farmers lost out when pipeline projects were done as those contracts often required weed free product be used, which forced them to find suppliers out of state. Farmers will benefit from having this program as more projects and contracts require certified weed free products.

Fred: We need to think about how to make WFF certification available to farmers so they don't miss out on this opportunity. The state and the Council need to look at how to implement WFFG program that is mutually beneficial to all involved and not overly regulated.

#### **[Justin Perry, Josh Theil, and Dave Adams, NY DEC. Invasive Species Coordination Section and Forest Health Section. Virtual presentation on the organization and operation of NY's invasive species management program \(Appendix 2\).](#)**

Fred: How does the Council feel about how we should move forward, what will the structure of a PRISM Program look like in PA?

Piper: Wants the Council to discuss a potential framework to use Conservation Districts to implement a PRISM program in PA. What role can Conservation Districts play? The survey completed by the conservation districts showed that they are already doing a large amount of work on invasive species.

Don: Amend the invasive species plan to outline a plan to establish a PRISM program in PA - mention the funding that is needed and other recommendations and outline an approach to accomplish these recommendations.

Jeff: Our approach moving forward should be: Get funding first, then solicit partners to serve as hosts for regional PRISMS who submit proposals via RFP, then incorporate other groups and partners.

Fred: DEP and PDA know something more needs to be done to address invasive species. We need specific dollars available for invasive species. Figuring out funding is key. We are poised to continue making progress on securing funding for invasive species with the recent establishment of the Rapid Response Fund. It is our responsibility to figure out where the funding might come from and specifically what and how it will be used. We need to make sure that agency secretaries are aware of the plan, are in agreement with the plan, and have the same conversation points ready to engage the governor with. The Farm Bill is the platform to launch from to begin the conversation. We need to figure out what direction...We need to identify and build champions on the legislative side to move this plan forward. This doesn't have to be politically charged; it is a program that will benefit the environment and the community. We need other agency legislative liaisons to be part of this conversation and perhaps be part of Council meetings.

Fred: PSATS may be able to create a survey for townships to give us more input for direction on invasive species that will help to guide our conversations with legislators, and to facilitate further conversation with other officials and community leaders. Dan Zimmerman can help with this.

**[Presentation by Maddie Stannisch on invasive species work done by APIPMA and McKean County Conservation District \(Appendix 3\).](#)**

Fred: There are already Conservation Districts working on invasive species; we can work with them and facilitate their efforts by providing funding.

**[Presentation by Evan Corondi on invasive species work being done by Berks County Conservation District \(Appendix 4\).](#)**

**[Presentation by Piper Sherburne on recent survey distributed to Conservation Districts about their current efforts and interests dealing with invasive species \(Appendix 5\).](#)**

Piper: Requesting permission from the Council for the coordinator, Kristopher Abell, to attend regional Conservation District meetings to present the PRISM program concept. Conservation Districts are a great bridge for working with private citizens and gaining access to private property for invasive species efforts. Many conservation districts are already working on invasive species and will continue to, but there is much more value working with the increased structure and organization that a PRISM program would provide.

Brenda Shambaugh: PACD has existing structure and contracts in place with partner agencies to coordinate CD projects. This existing structure could be a benefit to planning the proposed PRISM program.

Don: DCNR has authority to conduct enforcement on private land for forest pest surveys. Our goal is to implement the Council's Invasive Species Management Plan everywhere, and to do so, you need to engage at the local level. 70% of PA's forest is on private land. Getting the additional information from Piper's Conservation District survey expands our knowledge of what the problems are and where they are, and helps to find the key areas that we need to focus on. Survey data is essential to invasive species management efforts. Conservation Districts have a vital role to play because they are already geared up

to work with private citizens and develop citizen science programs. We want to utilize things that are already in place to implement the Invasive Species Management Plan and to develop a PRISM program in PA. Surveys of private lands are essential for invasive species management.

Fred: Council approves Kristopher Abell's participation in upcoming regional PACD meetings. We need to get a handle on what invasive species exist in our state by drawing on what projects currently exist in state agencies and organizations on this council. We need to identify hotspots of priority invasive species in the state to take to legislators to engage their interest and to Agency Secretaries to discuss in their meetings with the Governor to identify budgetary needs moving forward. **This needs to be an action item for the Council.**

Jeff: We need to have a strategy session with agency legislative liaisons to determine how best to engage the legislature to fund a PRISM program.

Stephen Rudman: It is important to use GIS software to show where invasive species are in a given legislator's district, how they are affecting it, and how this has changed over time.

Gregg: The legislative workgroup is struggling a bit to identify specific locations in the state that are dealing with high priority invasive species problems.

Amy: iMapInvasives has a large amount of invasive species tracking data by location over time. We can utilize this tool to engage legislators. We just need to decide which invasive species to focus on.

Gregg: We can put together a PRISM structure before we have funding. It will be easier to approach legislators to ask for funding if a structure is already in place. We can start to identify those groups that are working on invasive species now, and then it will be easier to make the case that funding is needed to expand and enhance the work they are doing. If we can identify those groups that are willing to take the lead in a larger coordination effort in their region, they can begin to pull together the structure of their regional PRISM. Representatives from those lead groups could be part of this Council and can share information with us about what's really going on in the field. Then we take care of the funding issue. We need to see legislators in their district and look at the invasive species there.

Amy: We already have some active CISMA's, and those leaders are already taking part in our meetings. We have a structure already in place; what we need now is funding to expand and develop. We need to come up with a budget so we know what we are asking legislators for.

Tom Cermak, Lake Erie CWMA: We are doing a lot now but are really limited by lack of funding.

Andrew Rohrbaugh has started to ballpark some numbers for personnel and materials. We also need to have ideas to propose where this revenue will come from.

Jeff: Are there small grants that could be created for seed money to start PRISMs? Growing Greener funds?

Brian: A Growing Greener grant was awarded for Hydrilla work by defining it as a biological contaminant at Harvey's Lake.

Stephen: For the current fiscal year, money is already appropriated. Next fiscal year, the line items are already defined but they are still negotiating about how that money can be spent, so small changes about how funds can be directed are still possible. The 2022 fiscal year is our target for new budget line

items. We need to provide a specific breakdown of what the money will be used for, especially if we are asking for new money.

Fred: Legislators need to know what current CWMA's are doing and how much money they need to do specific things. We need to have ready: the problem, the solution, and the specific amount of money needed to fix it. We need to establish a proactive approach for invasive species management. We can talk to legislators now and possibly get small amounts of money for grants to begin a PRISM structure. We can grow from there. Members of this Council need to be in their legislator's office now making the case for what is going on in their district, making them aware of the problem and explaining the PRISM program solution.

Jeff: If there was a line item to fund PRISM's, would funds be funneled through a state agency?

Stephen: Yes, most likely DEP, PDA, or DCNR.

Brenda: There is currently a line item in the DEP and PDA budget called "Transfer to Conservation District Fund". These funds go to the State Conservation Commission which then distributes them to conservation districts.

Kris: Proposes as an action item that the PRISM workgroup come up with a survey that identifies the particular invasive species issues in different parts of the state, and create a list of conservation and invasive species groups to distribute the survey to.

Chris Urban: We need a step by step plan that takes us through the three things Fred mentioned: problem, solution, funds needed. We're talking about all the pieces of it, but we need a full plan.

Don: We already have a plan. Now we need to establish the structure and plan the infrastructure of a PRISM program. We need to write up this plan and put it in the Invasive Species Management Plan. I can come up with the budget.

Fred: You have to show the value of spending money on invasive species and a PRISM program to legislators.

Amy: Can we hire someone to put into numbers the costs that invasive species incur? We need someone to help us get this information to present to legislators. Can we hire someone to come up with dollar amounts that invasive species are costing us?

Fred: Yes, but this Council has no money. Between all the agencies on this Council, we should be able to find a way to pay for an economic impacts analysis. Also, we could potentially reach out to Center for Rural PA to fund such a study.

Kris: Can we utilize some of the Rapid Response fund as seed money for a PRISM program or economic impacts analysis?

Fred: We don't know how those funds are earmarked, or allocated. We will have to find out. Is the ultimate goal for PA to have a PRISM program? We need to leave here today having decided that.

Greg: Yes.

Don: Motion that the goal for this Council is to develop a PRISM program for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Greg: Second

Motion passes unanimously.

Greg: move to adjourn