

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting
Invasive Species Working Group
Minutes – 01/02/2023
Virtual Meeting

Meeting Start: 7:28pm

Committee Members Present: Leslie Cerier, Nate Heard, and Zoe Weizenbaum

Public: None

Public comments

None

Minutes

Nate moved to open the meeting. Leslie seconded. Leslie, Aye; Nate, Aye; Zoe, Aye.

What is an invasive species?

The Working Group considered how we define “native” and what a healthy ecosystem is. Some species that are new to the area may simply be migrating in response to climate change. How should we think about species that are recent arrivals to the area and that outcompete locally older species but that have beneficial uses? Given that locally adapted flora and fauna will change as climate changes, what principles should inform how we attempt to shape that change?

The Shutesbury Hazard Mitigation Plan, "3.13 Invasive Species," includes a table, “Table 3-38: Invasive Plants Occurring in Western Massachusetts,” that catalogues many species. However, there isn’t much detail on the nature of the problem these plants present. Instead of a long list of plant species that are characterized as invasive, it will be important to understand specific threats associated with specific species. By contrast “Table 3-39: Invasive Animal and Fungi Species in Massachusetts” generally provides such detail. For example, the latter table makes clear that the Emerald Ash Borer is an existential threat to the ash tree species in the region.

MVP grants and possible workstreams

The Town of Westford, MA obtained an MVP grant to develop a comprehensive invasive species management plan, which started with a GIS-linked inventory of species in the town. A similar data gathering effort would be valuable for Shutesbury as well, and hopefully inform ecologically appropriate responses (e.g. regenerative design).

The Working Group began to sketch a learning agenda. There are many organizations active in this space from which Shutesbury might benefit.

- Northeast Regional Invasive Species & Climate Change (RISCC) Management Network (pairs researchers and managers to plan action).
- Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG).
- Massachusetts Introduced Pest Outreach Project

There are various laws and plans pertaining to invasives we should know (e.g. Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan). What relevant policies and practices are currently in place in Shutesbury?

Action items

Leslie offered to reach out to the Shutesbury Highway Department to learn what areas are routinely sprayed with herbicides and pesticides and why.

Zoe offered to check in with Miriam DeFant to see if the Conservation Committee has done work in this area and might be a source of useful information.

The group pledged to read “Rethinking the Invasive Species Paradigm” by Jono Neiger (<https://thenaturalfarmer.org/article/rethinking-the-invasive-species-paradigm/>).

Motion to Adjourn: Nate moved to adjourn the meeting. Leslie, Aye; Nate, Aye; Zoe, Aye.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:33pm