

Minutes
Sherwood Mill Pond Committee
September 28, 2023

Present: Laurajeau Meyer; Brendan Byrne; Cathy Walsh; Stacy Jagerson; Colin Kelly, Conservation Director; Mark Cooper, Aspetuck Health District Director; Andrew Colabella, RTM District 4 Representative; Mike West, Parks Superintendent; Jeff Northrup, Guest; Matt Murray, Guest

- 1. Updates on Sherwood Mill Pond Preserve maintenance with Mike West, Parks Superintendent.**
 - a. Mill Pond Maintenance**
 - b. Phragmites Control**

Mike West, Parks Superintendent, reviewed the maintenance protocols designed by Sherry Jagerson. They are using RJ Kelly Company to manage and go through the scope of work. He reviewed the invasive species in the park including Phragmites, Japanese knotweed, and Alaithus. They have contacted Innovative Mosquito Management (IMM), who specialize in wetland application, and did work at the Aspetuck Land Trust properties around the pond in the past.

Jeff Northrup expressed concern with spraying of any chemicals in the pond. He stated he would make a legal challenge against any proposal of spraying. He reviewed the history of challenges against spraying.

Andrew Colabella reviewed the phragmites spraying and treatments at sites by the Aspetuck Land Trust.

Cathy Walsh stated she is not in favor of any spraying of herbicide.

Mr. Colabella has a list of volunteers he frequently works with and would make it available to the Committee for aid in removing vegetation and invasive species at the park.

Mr. Northrop reiterated that he is not willing to support spraying. He reviewed past meetings where a Monsanto representative presented to this Committee in the past. He referenced that the World Health Organization previously classified "Roundup" as a carcinogen.

Mr. Kelly – reviewed that any application of controlled chemicals herbicide or pesticide follows the CT State DEEP guidelines not the World Health Organization. A company conducting spraying would need to have staff with a Supervisor's License and Operator's License to apply to the CT DEEP for a permit to use any herbicide. They are trained in the proper use and application of these chemicals.

Laurajeau Meyer asked if the Committee could suggest for what is used in the preserve.

Brendan Byrne confirmed with Mr. West if his proposal is the current recommendation to use chemicals.

Mr. West reviewed the characteristics of Phragmites Australis and reasoning for it to be considered an invasive plant. He noted it will choke out the desirable native plantings.

Mr. Byrne asks if this discussion is the next item needed for the protection of the park or are there other options available.

Ms. Meyer asked Mr. Northrup if this addressed his concern.

Mr. Northrup stated that he is asking that there not be any spraying of chemicals within the pond. He also said that there was never any more phragmites population than what currently exists. He spoke about the existing ecosystem of the pond and how it has improved over the recent years with different wildlife populations increasing.

Mr. West noted this is a discussion of protection or management of the area. There are native reeds historically, however what he is discussing is the invasive non-native species.

Mr. Northrup continued to discuss spraying.

Mr. West stated that invasives are taking over the park. He was exploring the ways the proposed maintenance for the park would try to protect that ecosystem. Creating an Invasive Plant Management (IPM) plan would create a method to manage the plants.

Mr. Byrne asked if there is a value to protecting the native plants.

Mr. Kelly reviewed the ecological value of native plants.

Mark Cooper asked what options are available.

Mr. Byrne asked if there is a way of management without chemicals.

Mr. West stated the goal is to preserve what is there. He noted the existing phragmites are minimal now, but it is a losing battle.

Mr. Kelly reviewed growth of Phragmites from rhizomes and how it impacts the ability to control new growth

Mr. Byrne asked about the success of manual removal.

Ms. Walsh stated they have had success at Sherwood Island State Park with manual removal by her volunteer group. It works for them on the state land.

Mr. Byrne asked if the Committee could suggest manual removal.

Stacey Jagerson arrived at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Walsh stated the Town should explore options with non-toxic usage to control the invasives.

Mr. Northrup noted there are only small areas of phragmites we are talking about.

Ms. Walsh made a motion to consider a resolution that the Committee recommends limiting the use of herbicide within the preserve and to explore and utilize volunteer labor to control the phragmites.

Mr. Colabella left the meeting.

Mr. West noted the goal is to preserve the park and its vegetation. The use of a chemical product could be considered appropriate treatment for an IPM plan. He asked the Committee if they felt we have lost anything yet. Is there a threshold they would have to identify to change control methods?

Mr. Kelly – Stated we can set a plan to monitor the vegetation but would be anecdotal monitoring, not scientific based due to limited time and resources. We could set a plan to manage vegetation and train volunteers to cut or pull invasive vegetation.

Ms. Meyer – Reviewed her opinion about other landowners abutting the pond and stated this is a problem, especially for Mr. Northrop's use, if they do not follow the Committees recommendations about limiting herbicides.

Ms. Walsh restated her Motion to explore alternatives to using herbicide.

Motion: Walsh Second: Meyer

Ms. Jagerson asked if the goal is to eliminate or manage.

Mr. West stated the goal is to manage, not eliminate, and use mechanical methods for invasive removal.

Ms. Jagerson added the goal to monitor and measure if the actions are being effective.

Ms. Walsh called for a vote.

Motion: Walsh Second: Meyer
Ayes: Walsh, Meyer, Byrne, Jagerson
Nayes: None Abstentions: None Vote: 4:0:0

Mr. Cooper asked if there was any benefit to removing the plant and adding saltwater to the pond.

Mr. Northrup continued with the history of the pond.

Mr. West stated he would do follow-up research to get answers to questions.

2. Approval of March 23, 2023 minutes

The March 23, 2023 minutes were approved as submitted.

Motion: Walsh Second: Jagerson
Ayes: Walsh, Jagerson, Byrne, Meyer
Nayes: None Abstentions: None Vote: 4:0:0

3. Review of Westport Police Department presentation to the Shellfish Commission

Mr. Kelly reviewed the minutes from the Shellfish Commission meeting on September 6, 2023, at which Cpl. Brendan Fearon made a report about the crabbing activity at the Sherwood Mill Pond. The minutes were available to the public from that meeting; however, the Conservation Department issued a Press Release to further inform the public of the report. Information was shared about the CT DEEP rules related to crabbing activities. The local response by the Police Department was highlighted and they will continue to proactively see that the rules are followed.

Matt Murray thanked Mr. Kelly for the presentation.

Mr. Northrup stated that it feels like fewer people are out on the pond.

4. Trail Finder Map

Mr. Kelly presented a webpage: <https://www.cttrailfinder.com/trails> He informed the Committee of the Sherwood Mill Pond Preserve Trail that was included on the page with mapping and some relevant information.

5. Review of list of abutting neighbors to Sherwood Mill Pond and map.

Mr. Kelly reviewed a list of abutting property owners to the Sherwood Mill Pond and the map of the pond showing the property locations.

Mr. Northrup asked for a copy of the list.

6. Review and discussion of historic water quality data and wildlife reports.

Mr. Kelly noted and highlighted historic water quality data and wildlife reports that were sent to the Committee members.

7. Other Business

None

8. Next Steps.

- a. Plan going forward to update the Committee on maintenance of the Preserve.
- b. Research pesticide/herbicide use on Town properties. The question is there any guide or book to follow other than the Board of Education.

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.