

Texas Gulf Region Cooperative Weed Management Area Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 17, 2014, 1:00-4:00 PM

Estuarine Research Center Seminar Room, Mission-Aransas NERR and UT Marine Science Institute, Port Aransas, Texas

Participants Present:

Justin Bush, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

David Hyde, City of Port Aransas

Carolyn Grosse, Interested Citizen

Michael Murphrey, Texas A&M Forest Service

Katie Swanson, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve/ UT Marine Science Institute

Diana Kitiona, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve/ UT Marine Science Institute

Kendal Keyes, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Beau Hardegree, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Red = Action Item

Welcome and Introductions

- Meeting participants each provided their names and affiliations.

Steering Committee Report

- Katie Swanson reviewed notes from the May steering committee conference call, updating the group on progress.
- Beau Hardegree updated the group on items covered during the June steering committee conference call.

State and National Updates

- Justin Bush informed the group that the next meeting of the National Invasive Species Council, Invasive Species Advisory Committee will be meeting in Austin or San Antonio in November. The Wildflower Center and TIPPC will be working to organize field trips.
- The first meeting of the Texas Invasive Species Coordinating Committee since March 2013 was held on June 9 in Austin. Topics included the federal feral hog EIS and outcomes of Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Conference held in Port Aransas in February.
- The Nature Conservancy and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are planning to apply for FY14 funding from the NFWF Pulling Together Initiative to form a CWMA focused on *Arundo donax* in the Texas Hill County. Justin noted that this group was being used as a model statewide.
- Justin noted that effective July 1, boaters must drain all water from their boat and on board receptacles before leaving or approaching a body of fresh water anywhere in Texas. The group discussed zebra mussels and the preventative law.

Grant Project Updates

- Justin updated the group on the Pulling Together Initiative grant activities and outcomes to date.
- Outcomes included numbers of people targeted by outreach, volunteer participants, treated acres, acres restored and number of organizations contributing to the effort.
- The group discussed the definition of “restored”, deciding to create a definition within an upcoming steering committee meeting. **Justin will add this item to the August steering committee call.**
- The group discussed levels of engagement between the steering committee and the City’s grant project. Deciding that the group should focus initially on the grant activities, but to also work to expand work outside of the scope of the initial grant project.
- Beau requested that Justin share the grant proposal with all steering committee members. **Justin will email the proposal to steering committee members.**
- Justin reported 2 upcoming milestones for the grant. An annual financial report will be due October 31 and the interim programmatic report is due November 15th.
- Justin reported that 48% of the required match had been documented. This is a good sign going into the second half of the first year.

Work Event Report, Next Workday Planning

- Justin and Mike reported that the team had controlled approximately 2 acres during the workday. A reporter from the Jetty also was on site to interview the group.
- The participants discussed the CWMA workday on City land near 361. Group members felt that members could be put to better use by performing outreach together, rather than control.
- David Hyde and Mike Murphrey suggested choosing a neighborhood in Port Aransas for the CWMA event and canvassing the area, speaking with homeowners and leaving information about peppertree.
- Mike Murphrey suggested creating informational door hangers. The group discussed this idea and was supportive. **Justin will create a door hanger and share it with the group for approval.**
- Mike Murphrey asked the city about property lines and requested parcel boundary information so the CWMA could create a map. **David Hyde will get Justin this information for map creation.**
- The group discussed various options to provide herbicide to private citizens, including cost share programs and coupons. The group decided to just provide information on products, leaving the purchase and application to each resident.

- Carolyn Grosse suggested mapping Brazilian peppertrees on the City right-of-ways in conjunction with this workday. The group discussed this issue and agreed it was a good use of time. Identified trees could be removed with future grant funding.
- David Hyde suggested holding a community open house after the outreach activity workday. All agreed this was a great idea.

Outreach Updates

- Mike Murphrey and Justin Bush had not yet created a storyboard for a YouTube series about Brazilian peppertree. Potentially, he and Justin will be able to film portions in October. **Mike suggested UTMSI or the NERR assist with storyboard development, Justin will ask Katie.**
- Justin reported that The Nature Conservancy had sent him a template for creating a control factsheet. **Justin will work on completing the factsheet and will have it at the next CWMA meeting.**
- Katie Swanson is developing a sign to be placed in yards that have removed Brazilian peppertree. There was confusion about whether these temporary signs would be legal in the city limits. **Justin will speak with David Parsons about this. Katie will send out the developed sign for suggestions and edits.**

Contractor Treatment Planning

- The group discussed the efficacy of volunteer treatments and the city's constraints on manpower/time/resources. The group discussed options to assist.
- The PTI grant funds will be used to control Brazilian peppertree at Charlie's Pasture Nature Preserve. Additional grant funds received later can be used to assist private landowners or treat city right-of-ways.
- David Hyde suggested using treatment funds to hold a prescribed burn on Charlie's Pasture, followed by herbicide application on the big thickets not burned.
- The group discussed this idea and was in agreement. **Beau Hardegree will assist the city in permitting and planning for a fall or winter burn.**
- The group discussed the fire plan Beau wrote for the area. **Justin will share the link to the plan.**
(www.texasinvasives.org/professionals/cwma/tgrcwma/peppercontrolplan.pdf)
- **David Hyde and the City will work with the Port Aransas Fire Department to identify whether or not they could handle the burn.**
- The Texas A&M Forest Service can potentially assist the city fire department if they were requested by the City of Port Aransas to provide training assistance. **David Hyde and the City will request this assistance if needed.**

Tree Swap

- The group discussed the value of providing a non-native alternative to private homeowners to replace the Brazilian peppertrees that are removed.

- Mike Murphrey suggested that the City grow trees from bare root, using an area by the City dump as a nursery. The group recommended partnering with Keep Port Aransas Beautiful or the Garden Club. **David Hyde will speak with David Parsons about this.**
- Kendal Keyes suggested applying for free trees using the Apache Tree Program. **Kendal will look into this option and provide the group with further details.**

City Right-of-Ways

- The group discussed Brazilian peppertree on City right-of-ways in town, deciding that ROWs should be the next focus for treatment.
- David Hyde suggested that he needed additional resources to take this on and that the City Council should direct them to do this.
- The group discussed this issue, deciding that mapping trees on the right-of-way would be a good starting place to ask for additional funding and resources for control.
- **Mike Murphrey will work with the city to speak to the City Council.**

City Ordinance

- The group discussed the idea of a city ordinance requiring control of Brazilian peppertree on all lands.
- Various options were discussed, deciding that an appropriate place to start would be to approach the City Council to require that Brazilian peppertree be mandated for control on lands within the city limits that were being developed.
- In the long term, the group would support a resolution requiring control on other lands but acknowledged that a tree swap must be involved.

Additional Focus Areas

- David Hyde reminded the group that this issue was larger than the City of Port Aransas and that the group needs to engage the Nueces County and other large organizations.
- Beau Hardegree will contact representatives from TxDOT and ask them to attend the next CWMA meeting.
- **Katie Swanson will work with UT MSI to control the Brazilian peppertree on campus.** David Hyde offered herbicide assistance if Katie makes a request.
- **Justin Bush will contact Scott Cross, asking him to attend the next meeting.**
- **A group representative will attend a school board meeting and discuss the CWMA. This person will ask for Port A ISD to be represented at CWMA meetings.**

Next Meeting

- The group discussed meeting and decided to meet and hold outreach events over October 1-3. **Justin will send notices once the dates and times have been identified.**