

**Blue Ridge PRISM
Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2016
Northside Library - Charlottesville, VA**

(The notes below provide a short summary of the two programs presented by guest speakers plus discussion points on several of the agenda topics on the meeting slides. For further details on agenda topics, please refer to the meeting slides sent electronically on May 8 to all on the mailing list. If you didn't get them or need another copy ask Rod at rwalker@alum.mit.edu.)

The eighth quarterly meeting of the Blue Ridge PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) was held at the Northside Library on Rio Road West in Charlottesville. There were well over 50 attendees with many joining us for the first time.

Rod Walker welcomed everyone. Going around the room, all attendees introduced themselves, noting organizations they represented and/or their interest in non-native invasive plants and the PRISM. Rod started the meeting with the slide presentation. The first few slides showed photos of multiflora rose with the Rose Rosette Disease(RRD) being spread by tiny mites.

Rod noted that our Education and Outreach program has PRISM volunteers speaking and tabling at events around the state resulting in growth in our membership and volunteer participation. Presently, we have 290 people on our mailing list. To further our growth, we will continue to find meeting locations in other counties with the intention of introducing residents from throughout our 10-county area to the PRISM mission and activities.

RCPP Award Updates

We will continue to capture the volunteer hours and costs of our PRISM members and conservation partners accumulated during their efforts to educate landowners on how to remove non-native invasive plants on their properties throughout the 10-counties surrounding the Shenandoah National Park. The volunteer hours and costs will be used to match the award monies to be distributed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program under the supervision of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. After NRCS overhead costs are subtracted, there will be \$640,000 from the original \$894,000 award that will provide financial assistance to landowners for labor and material costs in doing the non-native invasive plant removal on their own lands over a 5-year period. Most contracts will be signed in the first 2 to 3 years and will continue for 3 years. None of the award monies will go to the PRISM and none of the monies can be

used on land owned by a government entity. No monies will be released until the NRCS in Washington, D.C., negotiates the legal terms and overall framework of the contract and then signs the document.

Meanwhile, the PRISM is learning more about who is or is not eligible for the RCPP program, which plants can be treated, what is the reimbursement rate for acres treated, what are the ranking criteria of properties to be treated, and other related details to providing contracts for landowners. The PRISM also is preparing a media/publicity campaign to announce the program and its details to landowners within our 10-county area. We will prepare informational materials for landowners, update our Website to provide RCPP information, and work with NRCS District Conservationists, VA Department of Forestry Area Foresters and PRISM Area Stewards to help disseminate information about the program and contracts.

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Gagnon on “Marketing to Landowners” - Jennifer heads the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program at VA Tech and publishes the Virginia Forest Landowner Update. She noted that “everyone in the room is a forest health professional” who can have one-on-one conversations with landowners to help them understand how they might become stewards of their land in such a way to meet their goals. To that end, Jennifer suggested taking a targeted marketing approach, developing communication resources, reaching out with relevant messages, while keeping a targeted behavior change in mind. She presented interesting information from the National Woodland Owner Survey about acreage, land use, land management, landowner objectives and other data to provide insights into how to best communicate with our diverse array of landowners.

More ideas about “Tools for Engaging Landowners” are at www.engaginglandowners.org and www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos/
<http://sffi.yale.edu/>

Guest Speaker: Leif Riddervold on “Inventory of Invasive Species Across the Land” – Leif and his business partners Brian Morse and Ches Goodall of the Virginia Forestry and Wildlife Group surveyed a 1500-acre property in Albemarle County to map out the locations of non-native invasive plants. They recorded the data by walking 50 miles of transects, recording sightings of invasive plants as they went and then adding dots to maps of varying sizes to indicate which species were identified in a location and how dense they were at each site. The end result was a series of maps - one for each species - with GPS coordinates for each sighting that can be used to track down and treat all the plants that were found. This data also provides a baseline to compare against another survey done years later to assess progress and/or change.

Wavy Leaf Grass Report

Wavy Leaf is back! Ruth Douglas of the Virginia Native Plant Society and Virginia Master Naturalists reported that she and others recently found some dead wavy leaf grass at a location some distance away from where other infestation sightings have been reported in Afton in Albemarle County, along logging trails, deer paths, and hiking trails.

In June, a representative of the Division of Natural Heritage of the Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR) will survey the entire 400-acre property where the invasive was found. Then the Albemarle County Superintendent of Parks will send in a crew to spray the wavy leaf grass during June and July to prevent the plant from becoming an active infestation.

Jim Hurley noted that there is a request at the state level to fund wavy leaf grass control. The recent request did not make it through the finance committee. However, State Senator Emmett Hanger is supporting a governmental administrative amendment to provide funding support for the wavy leaf control that could be budgeted out of either the Departments of Forestry or Agriculture. It's expected that a report will be filed in the next six months or so.

Noxious Weed Law

Delegate Patrick Hope of Arlington has helped in removing the “widely disseminated” language from the Noxious Weed Law that restricts the sale and importation of noxious (highly invasive) weeds in Virginia. That language prevented plants like oriental bittersweet, garlic mustard and autumn olive from being listed as noxious weeds. With this change in the Noxious Weed Law, such aggressive plants will no longer be protected. This change in the law will open the door for the required changes to be made to Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulations.

Search for PRISM Program Coordinator

We have interviewed several candidates for Program Coordinator of the Blue Ridge PRISM. It will be a full-time position providing support for all of our functions, Education and Outreach activities and everything else related to our conservation work. We expect to fill the position soon.

General Agreement

We are in the process of formalizing the PRISM with the signing of a formal document, our General Agreement. Jake Hughes of the Shenandoah National Park (SNP) has already received signatures from the SNP, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Native Plant Society, to name a few. Private landowners

who are active with the PRISM also will be eligible to sign. Signatories will be voting members.

Garlic Mustard Biocontrols

There are interesting experiments being conducted on Garlic Mustard to determine if there may be a biocontrol that could slow down the spread of this invasive plant. Scientists are testing two insects that seem to provide excellent control of garlic mustard. Testing on one of the insects is almost done while the second experiment is 2-3 years behind. When the first experiment is complete, it will require another 5-6 years of approval process before the biocontrol could be released.

Mapping land holdings

The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) has demonstrated how area mapping of lands within our 10-county area could provide the PRISM with helpful information on the location and size of parcels and the names of the landowners. This mapping ability would help Area Stewards identify landowners within a 5-mile radius so that all the “neighbors” could work together to remove non-native invasive plants from their properties and thereby create large areas of weed-controlled land.

Invasive Species Course Offering

Kyle Rhodes of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) and Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL) has proposed offering a course on non-native invasive plants that would be taught in quarterly sessions in various locations throughout our 10-county area. The course would include classroom presentations and discussion and also outdoor demonstrations. Kyle encouraged PRISM members and meeting attendees to submit ideas for course study and activities. There would be a per person charge for the course. A possible webinar version of the course may be free. Numerous people at the meeting indicated interest in Kyle’s proposal. In addition, Bruce Rinker of Bioquest Solutions suggested that we might consider community colleges throughout the area as locations for the classes.

Intern Assistance Available

If any PRISM working group is in need of assistance for a project, contact Rod Walker. We’ve been fortunate to have occasional help from UVA students looking for internship projects.

Logo Creation

We are delighted that Shirlee Grody, a talented and experienced graphic artist and PRISM enthusiast, has offered to work with Susan Roth and other members of our creative team, to create our signature logo. Shirlee shared with a working group a collection of designs that she created to get the conversation started. We're excited to see how this all unfolds.

Area Stewards Program

Brian Morse, who with Jim Hurley leads the PRISM's Area Stewards Program, reported that they had made several new contacts in both Albemarle and Rappahannock counties with landowners who are interested in becoming Area Stewards and who are passionate about sharing information with their neighbors. Please contact Brian or Jim if you know of a landowner(s) who would like to become a part of our organization. The PRISM Area Stewards will play a lead role in the RCPP Program and will oversee the general operations the Area Stewards Program.

Education and Outreach

Ruth Douglas noted that the PRISM is in need of people to help with Education and Outreach in each of our 10 counties. She indicated that we need volunteers at all levels of involvement, especially outside Albemarle County where we already are building a strong team. One attendee suggested that, at the very least, it would be helpful to have one PRISM representative in each of our 10 counties. Another attendee suggested that we look to County Fairs for opportunities to share information about Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs) and Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs).

Website

We are delighted to report that Deane Dozier who has helped the PRISM develop our blueridgeprism.org website will start donating her time to upgrade the site. Thank you, thank you, Deane

Next Meeting

Bring your strange, unfamiliar and possibly non-native invasive "garden" plants for identification to our Invasive Road Show, held wherever our next meeting (July 20) is scheduled.