

Blue Ridge PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management)
Quarterly Meeting Minutes; January 24, 2018
Ivy Creek Natural Area
12:30-3:30

The Blue Ridge PRISM's quarterly meeting commenced around 12:40 p.m. on January 24, 2018. About thirty people were in attendance.

Outlined below are three components of the quarterly meeting:

- Introduction: Ashton Fisher, Program Director, Blue Ridge PRISM
- Blue Ridge PRISM Updates: Rod Walker, Co-Founder, Blue Ridge PRISM
- *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree-of-Heaven) Control: Rachel Brooks, PhD Student and Interfaces of Global Change Fellow at Virginia Tech

Introduction

Ashton Fisher opened the meeting with an overview of the agenda and acknowledgement of the guest speaker, Rachel Brooks, PhD Student and Fellow at Virginia Tech.

Blue Ridge PRISM Updates

Rod Walker gave a presentation outlining the recent and future activities of the PRISM.

The sections below are organized by the titles of the accompanying PowerPoint slides. Please reference the slides located on the PRISM's website for additional information.

Events of the Last Three Months:

Rod opened with a variety of updates: PRISM was recently the recipient of the Garden Club of Virginia's Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation Award. Virginia Department of Forestry recently joined the PRISM steering committee. The PRISM has also been involved in a variety of presentations, tabling events, and has given five invasive plant trainings over the past three months.

DuPont proposal:

- PRISM originally applied for \$900,000, we did not receive the full \$900,000 but we did receive \$250,000. None of the funding goes towards the PRISM's administrative costs, all of the funds will be used to remove wavyleaf on six different sites - five in Shenandoah National Park and one in the Town of Elkton.
- This is a 5-year program (i.e. the same property treated 5 years in a row).
- We are keeping an eye out for other funding opportunities to control wavyleaf.
- We are currently moving through the paperwork process. The next steps are to receive funding and Jake Hughes, Exotic Plant Manager for the Shenandoah National Park, will hire an employee and the PRISM will hire a contractor for the site in the Town of Elkton.

Meeting with the Governor:

- Governor McAuliffe was touring each county in Virginia before he departed office, Bettina Ring nominated the PRISM for Governor McAuliffe's visit to Greene County. Bettina has been promoted to Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.

Upcoming Events

Presentations:

- PRISM has received an increased amount of interest for presentations from conservation groups outside of our ten-county region. If we continue to receive a heightened level of interest, we may discuss the possibility of expanding the PRISM's region.

Quarterly meeting:

- Our upcoming quarterly meeting on April 19, 2018 at Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute will focus on the topic of restoration. We will feature one or two guest speakers on this topic.

PRISM Updates

Noxious Weed Law:

- PRISM and other stakeholders have been working on the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (NWAC). and have agreed to change the "widely disseminated" language in the law.
- The Noxious Weed Law was changed a year ago to eliminate the "widely disseminated" language in the law. The NWAC is now working on the regulations and going through the process of identifying the criteria for categorizing a plant as a noxious weed.
- We are beginning to take plants through the application process. We have 30 to 40 plants left. It takes about 4 hours to go through the process on each plant.
- We are being careful and thoughtful in this important process as there many implications such as restricting the importation, sale, and transportation of plants throughout the state.
- If anyone would like to volunteer to take plants through the application process, this is an opportunity to make a difference. If there is enough interest we will schedule a training.

Drone project:

- Rod is working with a professor to research the feasibility of identifying large invasive plant infestations via drone. This technology would use the spectral signature of a plant and very special cameras and software to identify where large areas of invasives are located. This project is intended to be a pilot project to prove that it can be done.

Ailanthus altissima (Tree-of-Heaven) Control

Rachel Brooks, PhD student at Virginia Tech presented her most recent research update on biocontrol for *Ailanthus altissima* using the fungi *Verticillium dahliae* and *Verticillium nonalfalfae*.

Below are the introductory notes from the presentation. For additional information, please reference the full presentation PowerPoint slides on our website:

<http://blueridgeprism.org/resources/quarterly-meeting/> or contact Rachel Brooks: rkbrooks@vt.edu.

Introduction

Ailanthus is originally from China, it was introduced intentionally in 1784 and has spread to over 40 states. For additional information on *Ailanthus*, please see [Virginia Department of Forestry's Control and Utilization of Tree-of-Heaven booklet](#).

Side Story: The Spotted Lanternfly

- Spotted Lanternfly is a new invasive insect introduced to the United States in 2014. As of this week (January 22, 2018) it has been found in Virginia in the Winchester area.
- It is too early to fully understand the potential damage. We do know that it could affect orchard, timber, and wine production.
- While there is a correlation between Spotted Lanternfly and Ailanthus, it is unclear if it *needs* ailanthus. There is speculation that it needs ailanthus to reproduce but it is too early to know.
- Spotted Lanternfly is native to the same areas as Ailanthus.
- *If you see Spotted Lanterfly, please report it!*

The Blue Ridge PRISM's next quarterly meeting will be held on April 19, 2018 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute near Front Royal. The focus for this meeting will be restoration.