

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Pesticide Management Advisory Committee - Waiver Sub Committee Hearing
Review Cushings Island Conservation Corporation Waiver Request

Minutes July 29, 2019

Waiver Committee Members Present: Avery Kamila, Troy Moon

Staff Present: Ashley Krulik

Additional PMAC Members Present: Priscilla Skerry, Jesse O'Brien

Cushings Island Conservation Corporation Representatives: John Spencer, President of Cushings Island Conservation Corporation, and Livy Moore, Chair of Cushing Island Landscape Committee

Meeting was called to order at 11:01 AM by Troy Moon.

Troy Moon: Goal is to hear waiver request presentation from applicants. Waiver committee will ask clarification questions. A written response will be issued to applicants after the hearing.

John Spencer presented waiver application.

- Storms in 2010 knocked down trees, giving invasives the opportunity to grow
- In 2016 developed 10 year plan to combat invasive species
- Biggest issues are Asiatic Bittersweet, Shrubby Honeysuckle, Japanese Barberry, and Black Swallowwort
- Primarily trying to eliminate by mowing
- Goal is to restore diversity
 - Planting native species
 - Spreading grass seed
 - Spreading wildflower seeds
 - Planting up to 150 plants per season - understory trees and shrubs
- Will continue to maintain with annual mowing and weed-wacking (which is time intensive)
- Asking for permission to use a systemic herbicide in areas where invasives are returning after clearing
- Working to paint stems but it requires a lot of labor
- Tried two non-synthetic herbicides Avenger and Adios and have not had success
- Into 4th year and have treated 20 acres of 150 acres
- Plan is online and detailed areas of success and non success are shown
- Ticks also prove to be challenging in eradication.
- Only want to eradicate to a level that can be maintained

Ms. Moore added:

- Challenges are budget and available labor

- Need to be cautious around native plants when eliminating invasives

Mr. Moon questioned:

- Primarily eradicating barberry so far? Mr. Spencer - barberry and honeysuckle. Showed Mr. Moon and Ms. Kamila areas of issues on map.
- How is the conservation mix working? - Ms. More - conservation mix is doing well but bittersweet is outperforming it. Mr. Spencer - Swallowart is overcoming conservation mix.

Ms. Kamila questioned:

- Rock outcropping? Mr. Spencer - yes, very steep and rocky.
- What was the property like prior to storms? Mr. Spencer - wood lot and originally a field. Ms. Moore - soil is very thin, hindering native species and allowing invasives to thrive.
- What organic techniques have you used this year? Mr. Spencer - nothing this year. Last year used Avenger on barberry. 90% of what we are doing in mechanical clearing.
- When did you last do mechanical clearing? Mr. Spencer - yesterday. We have an ongoing mowing program. Purchased equipment and mow regularly throughout growing season. Ideally don't want the land to look like a lawn. Ms. Moore - just cleared parade grounds using mechanical clearing and hand pulling. Flag winterberry and bayberry to not be mowed. Some areas can't be accessed by a mower and need to be hand weeded. Hard to make the call between mowing vs. preserving native species.
- The area that has honeysuckle overgrown with bittersweet, why don't you allow the bittersweet to kill the honeysuckle? Ms. Moore - they are progressing so quickly that we feel that we need to control it now. Trying to not disturb the soil.
- Have you talked to any organizations about how to treat? Mr. Spencer - Maine State Forest Service, Mass Audubon, Maine Audubon, Oceanside Conservation Trust, we're open to new ideas. Use Native Plant Restoration Inc. methodology which uses organic methods and synthetic chemicals.
- What is the treatment history? Mr. Spencer - used Adios on northern side. Two years ago used one pint of Roundup on bittersweet along edge of blowdown area. Spent \$2,000 to cutdown honeysuckle and afraid it will grow back without synthetic treatment.
- Application doesn't include threshold report - can you speak to density more? Mr. Spencer - 90-95% barberry on hillside, flat area has been cleared. Last August City came out and cleared a hard to reach area. Would like to treat that area to avoid invasives from coming back. Where there are pockets of invasives it's 80-90% density. There are many areas that haven't been addressed and are being saved for later. Would like to find budget to use Brown Brontosaurus flailer machine.
- What is the ground like? Mr. Spencer - Leaf litter, no mulching (except what is left behind from mower).
- Why not continue to mow it? Mr. Spencer, they aren't disappearing. Mr. Moon - it would take a very long time to kill a large barberry through mowing, plus mowing doesn't protect native plants. Ms. More - it is very labor intensive to stay ahead of the invasives.

- Neither of you are licensed pesticide applicators, can you give us the names of the people who will be buying and implementing pesticides? Mr. Spencer - it will probably be myself and Livy.
- What procedures do you use when using pesticides? Mr. Spencer - mix it per the instructions and wear gloves.
- How do you dispose of empty containers? Mr. Spencer - I throw them away, there is no toxic pick-up of pesticide containers on the island.
- Speak about liability insurance for future pesticide claims? Mr. Spencer - we have liability insurance and would need to review the policy. Ms. Moore - will look into Association liability coverage.
- Would advise looking into liability policy specific to Roundup.
- Any additional information on land use history - bittersweet likely planted by the military and/or Portland Garden Club for the military. Mr. Spencer - there is a detailed analysis of the land types in the 2012 plan. Wetland area that was dug out by army. Hardwood section that runs from northern side. 40 acre evergreen woodlot. Old pasture - apple trees, some maples, sparsely wooded.
- Was there a management plan prior to 2010 storms? Mr. Spencer - after the storm, City helped clear land, the Conservation group purchased equipment, saw effectiveness and created plan. Prior to 2010 the land was overgrown. Most of the back of the island was military owned.
- Where are these 6 areas in terms of ecological succession? Mr. Spencer - swamp hasn't changed. Hardwood area has mature maples, birch, oak but the understory is at risk. Ms. Moore - most areas have been touched by humans and opened it up to spread. Mr. Spencer - forest is in decline, storm injured it, did not qualify for FEMA relief. Blowdowns are still there. More trees have come down due to storms because nothing is protecting them.
- Berries from invasives are eaten by birds which helps the spread. How will applying Roundup this year prevent new plants from sprouting next year that are spread by seeds? Mr. Spencer - application asks for permission to apply for 7 years.
- Cut stem proposal, why apply in fall? - Mr. Spencer - more effective in the fall when plant is drawing stuff into its root system.
- Why not continue to just mow? Mr. Spencer - want to kill them now and too labor intensive. Ms. Moore - mechanical means are not selective enough to protect natives. Hope is that ongoing physical labor will lessen with use of synthetic pesticide.
- How would you post signage? Mr. Spencer - wasn't planning to post signage. Ms. Kamila - posting of signage is required. Ms. Moore - I wasn't aware of that but we can do that. We can also notify residents via listserv. Mr. Moon - there is a very small population and limited access points. Ms. Moore - can post signage at adjacent trail entrances.
- Frequency requested is annual for 7 years, PMAC cannot grant waiver for ongoing application dates. Mr. Spencer - can't give specific application dates at this time.
- Spoke with Maine State Invasive Specialist - nothing is a silver bullet. Can you explain your rationale for using a high risk, banned herbicide? Mr. Spencer - don't expect to

eliminate, just reduce. Do not think mowing is effective enough. Do not see any other alternative.

- Distributed resources - Rewild Maine (offers manpower to combat invasives), Michael Nadeau (organics and invasive specialist)

Public Comment

Dr. Skerry - EPA has not been doing their job testing pesticides. Microbiomes have important roles. Pesticides kill microbiomes in soil and plants and we have little knowledge about the full effects that the pesticides cause.