



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, July 19, 2021 at 7:00 PM 147 Hampshire Street, Main Conference Room MEETING MINUTES

The following meeting minutes were taken by Tracy Dwyer and are respectfully submitted.

Present Commission Members: Jennifer Letourneau (Director), David Lyons (Vice Chair), Erum Sattar, Kathryn Hess, Michelle Lane, Elysse Magnotto-Cleary, Kaki Martin

Absent Commission Members: Purvi Patel (Chair)

Attendees: Tracy Dwyer, DPW; James Wilcox, DPW; Jane Morse; George Knoecklein, Northeast Aquatic Research LLC; Vanessa Curran, DCR; Amy Walker, Charles River Conservancy; Keith Gazaille, Solitude; Dan Scott, Kleinfelder; Emily Norton; Lisa Kumpf, Charles River Conservancy; Jennifer Steel, Newton Conservation Commission

David Lyons opened the meeting.

7:00 – Notice of Intent

DEP File # TBD

Aquatic Plant Management – Charles River
Solitude

David Lyons stated that this proposal is also being heard at the Conservation Commission meetings in Boston, Newton and Watertown as well as Cambridge.

Vanessa Curran from DCR stated that this project is to manage invasive species in the Charles River and Lower Basin. The goals are to maintain an open water habitat, promote the growth native species, safe aquatic access, control invasive species. The invasive species that have been found are Eurasian milfoil, Pondweed, Fanwort, Water Chestnut, Brittle Naiad. The result of a 2019 survey was that Eurasian milfoil is in higher density in the narrower part of the Charles River. They are seeking approval to use of aquatic herbicide to control the invasive species. They would also use hand pulling for Water Chestnut, but there is less of that in the river. Fanwort and milfoil are also present but mechanical hand pulling is not recommended. They did seek alternative methods such as driver hand pulling, which is not recommended due to contaminated sediments and risk to divers, Mechanical harvesting, but this could cause milfoils to spread, and the Benthic barriers but this is very hard to install and manage in flowing areas. Vanessa stated

that they have also been working with the Charles River Conservancy and the Charles River Watershed Association. Currently they are working on terrestrial invasive plant removal and stormwater management along with catch basin cleaning, also putting signage at boat ramps for public outreach.

George Knoecklein of Northeast Aquatic Research LLC stated that the lower Charles River is infested with seven invasive species, but some are still at low levels of infestation. There are two milfoils that are quite dense, he strongly encourages them to do some sort of plant management. He stated that the Eurasian milfoil is dense, and that sonar might work best. His thought is to go in there with ProcellaCOR and treat these for one year. George strongly does not recommend hand pulling. Fanwort is very hard to control and should be watched when treated with sonar or ProcellaCOR to make sure that they are controlling that plant. The curly leaf can be controlled once a survey is done with their locations and hand pulling is recommended for this type of species. George believes that a water quality data should be part of the proposal. Cyanotoxin bacteria can be detected when this testing is done and can be related with invasive species and blooms. George encourages two plant surveys each year and more in-depth survey, GPS surveys are successful. Invasive species can also be affecting water quality and plants can be affected this. Also, Eurasian milfoil are a habitat for fish, and you need to replace the aquatic plant that can take its place for the fish habitat.

Vanessa wanted to speak about how milfoil is a good habitat for largemouth bass. She stated that there is a fish catch advisory from DPH stating largemouth bass are found in the river but are not a good fish to catch because of PCB contamination. Vanessa stated that Mass. DEP put out "Guidance of Aquatic plant Management for Lakes and Pond Related to Wetlands Protection Act" in 2004, "the department states that non-indigenous plants in lakes and ponds are not significant to the protection of wildlife habitat". Vanessa stated that it might help the commission make a decision. She stated that that they were stating in the guidance was not to consider non-indigenous plants habitat and to promote native plants. Vanessa stated that they surveyed 700 acres, its hard to find every little niche.

Keith Gazaille from Solitude stated that the survey that was deployed might not be the most effective but was a standard survey and a survey to give them an idea of what plants were in the river and also to give quantifiable set of plants.

Jennifer Letourneau asked why a survey can't be done before the order of conditions so that you have specific data. Keith stated that the survey was to collect data about where the management areas would be. He stated that the net result was not necessary for the stage that they are at today. Jennifer stated that wouldn't make sense to do a thorough survey now to come back to the commission to give them the acreage that needs to be treated and what herbicide would be used for treatment. Keith said given the size of the area he stated no, the information that was collected was appropriate for the level of management for this project. Jennifer asked Keith to speak about why the ProcellaCOR treatment and not sonar first. Keith stated that there was a desire to implement management as soon as possible once permits were obtained and a summer start date, so ProcellaCOR would work best for earlier growing season and once permits were in place for the lake's region and lower basin they would do a larger scale sonar treatment. Jennifer asked how long to do 700-acre survey that they are planning to do before treatment. Keith stated several days and Jennifer asked about what methodology, he was planning on. Keith responded a point of intercept survey and GPS. Jennifer asked who would be doing the survey, Keith stated that there would be biologists, degree folks, undergrad, master's degrees with experience doing this work in the northeast.

In regard to specificity once permits in place and the timing year one and two ProcCellaCOR then sonar, after that it becomes difficult because we don't know how the targeted species and non-targeted species react to the treatments. We tried to give to commission all of the possible strategies for treatment. Water quality data it was there the understanding that the Division of Marine and Fisheries would require this but it's outside of their time of year restriction. There are other groups that do water quality testing like EPA and CRWA, they would compile what is being done and work in other testing.

Jennifer asked what time of year restriction the Division of Marine and Fisheries gave them. Vanessa stated spring was April - June 30, July and August are free, the fall restriction was September 1-November 15. She stated that the time of year restrictions are without monitoring. She asked them if they go into early September can they do it will with monitoring, she is waiting on an answer.

Jennifer asked about the use of sonar. Keith stated they have had success starting those later in the growing season, certainly August – September time frame is too late, they need 30 to 60 day contact time with target plants.

Jennifer when will hear back from Division of Marine and Fisheries? Vanessa stated that the Boston Conservation Commission meeting is August 4th and the Newton Conservation Commission meeting is August 5th, she is hoping to have a formal letter by Boston's meeting. Jennifer would like their final letter and determination of the commission to make their decision.

David asked if Keith would like to talk about the algae. Keith said EPA and CWRA monitor that and would be in contact with them to get reports.

Keith stated that with the frequency of surveys they are in agreement with that point but maybe not the methodology. They would work on the Water Chestnut and doing hand pulling to control that.

Elyse when are the other meetings taking place at the other Conservation Commission's. Vanessa stated that Watertown's meeting was last Wednesday, they did not have DEP file number and it was continued to the next meeting. The next meeting is September 1st but told them about the time of year restriction, they are going to see about a special meeting. Jennifer Steele from Newton Conservation Commission was on the Zoom meeting to hear from the 3rd party review from George Knoecklein. She stated that Newton's meeting is August 5th. Jennifer Letourneau stated that she and the other members of the commission would like to see the proponents take George's third-party review and use that to revise the BMP. Kathryn would like to ask who requested the 3rd party. Jennifer Letourneau stated that the city asked for it.

Jennifer Steele stated Newton has asked for revisions for the next commission meeting and she said they are all looking for the same revisions.

Erum wanted to say that they would benefit from a revision of the plan. She also asked Vanessa how much of those other programs contribute to lessen the need for this project.

Vanessa said that the public education is the most important to lessen their work on plant management. There are fines for transporting plant material in lakes and ponds on boats and trailers.

Erum there is a need to have this constant work? Vanessa yes there will be on-going work. She said that wildlife can transport these species as well. They are seeking 5-year order of conditions, she said it wouldn't be one year and this would be a long term project. Erum said

maybe we could ask for annual reviews and reports. Jennifer Letourneau said other commissions have been talking about a specific order of conditions and one condition would be annual reporting. Vanessa said that would be acceptable.

George said that the annual monitoring is crucial and demonstrates what treatment plan is going to take place each year.

Erum stated that with this reporting they can take in account what inputs are going to change, what are the impacts on use changes. George agrees that is correct and each year there will be new things that will come about.

Kaki Martin talked about Roger's work that was volunteer work and there was a method to his reporting each year, this might help inform this process. Jennifer stated that Roger Freymeyer was a resident, volunteer, river advocate, kayaker. He did water quality sampling and also would remove water chestnuts by hand pulling in the Fresh Pond Reservation. Jennifer has his electronic reports and can look at the formula. George would like to see reports.

8:04 – Public Comment

Lisa from the Charles River Watershed Association talked about advocating for this project. This infestation has been going on for many years. There is phosphorus in the river but working to reduce the loads along the river like in Cambridge. We don't want herbicides, but this has reached a point where it is necessary. They monitor bacteria and nutrient levels in the river and lower basin. Bacteria is collected monthly at eight locations in the river and nutrients are collected quarterly in four locations in the lower basin. The monitoring during bloom season which is from June to October. They have a volunteer program in the lakes district for hand pulling water chestnuts. They would be willing to bring the program to the lower basin.

George wanted to state that Eurasian Milfoil and Naiad are running ramped in the lower basin.

Elysse will we have enough time to receive the letter from the Division of Marine of Fisheries. Vanessa is anticipating having the letter by August 5th.

Jennifer stated that prior to the next meeting that the letter from Division of Marine and Fisheries would be received, revised plan and a DEP file number.

8:16 – The Commission unanimously agreed to continue this hearing to August 16th

8:19 - Administrative Topics

Meeting Minutes from the June 21, 2021 meeting were approved.

8:30 – Meeting Adjourned