

Minutes
Ramsey County Cooperative Weed Management Area
***Phragmites* Field Trip and Quarterly Meeting**
Thursday, November 19, 2015; 1:00 pm – 2:30 p.m.

Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Off-Leash Dog Park
5750 Otter Lake Road; MN 55110

- I. Call to order and introductions, 1:10 pm.** In attendance: Carole Gernes, RCCWMA; Ashly Bennett, Ramsey Conservation District; Shannon Montante and Emily Dunlap, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation; Simba Blood, Thea Evans and Carrie Tayler, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District; John Lampe, Green Shoots; David Rittenhouse, Urban Roots; and RCCWMA volunteers Harlan Baxter, David Nelson, Leanne Phinney, John Schmahl and Erica TenBroek.

II. Field trip schedule, background and activities

- A. Carole asked Dr. Harlan Baxter to give a bit of history about his discovery of the non-native common reed grass, *Phragmites australis* subspecies *australis*, that he discovered and reported on the west shoreline of Otter Lake. Harlan is a former resident of New Jersey, a state which has been dealing with this species much longer than we have in the Midwest. Carole explained that the first North American reports are from shipyards in New Jersey and that this species likely came in with soil used as ballast material. Harlan suspected the patch was non-native; his daughter, who works in hazardous waste and was familiar with identification, confirmed his id. Harlan reported it to the MNDNR and RCCWMA. Carole confirmed and added the report to EDDMapS and contacted MNDNR as well.
- B. Our original plan was to walk ½ mile north on Otter Lake Road to observe scattered patches of native *Phragmites* on the way to the non-native patch. Because of the forecast (28°F, windy and flurries), Dr. Baxter kindly offered for the group to walk to the first native patch, return to the parking lot and car pool to his nearby home. The group walked to the patch of native *Phragmites australis* subspecies *americanus*, noted the coloration, adherence of leaves, sparse density, inflorescence size, height and presence of other plant species. It also did not appear to grow well in the areas with dense hybrid cattail, and was only seen between the cattails and the roadside.
- C. The group carpooled to Harlan's home to warm up, met his wonderful wife and had some much appreciated treats. The group then looked over handouts, went over identification tips, and compared dry native vs. non-native samples. We looked at the National Park Service identification PowerPoint. The most reliable identification characteristic to distinguish between the two subspecies is the width of the dried ligule, the brown membrane found at the base of the leaf where it attaches to the stem. There are hairs attached to the ligule, but their length is not included in this measurement. The native subspecies measurement is wider, from 1.0 to 1.7 mm wide. You need to magnify with a hand lens or use a dissecting microscope and use a micrometer. The second most reliable characteristic is the length of the flower parts; the layers of modified leaves (lower glumes, upper glumes and lemmas). There is some overlap between the two subspecies for this characteristic. We discussed looking at a combination of other traits such as stem color, shiny vs dull stems and fungal spots.

- D. Carole told the group about an upcoming internal MNDNR meeting to discuss invasive Phragmites reporting. There are reports of invasive Phragmites in the DNR database, but they do not contain helpful information such as who reported, etc. and they do not think they can assume that they are all identified correctly. MNDNR also has a backlog of thousands of reports that need to be verified before they can be added to the EDDMapS database. It is a slow process. Carole said she would try to stay up to date with the MNDNR's Phragmites information. An open discussion of other target species followed and is described below.
- E. Afterward we walked to the nearby lakeshore to see the patch of invasive *Phragmites australis* subspecies *australis*. Many of these plants still retained some green and yellow coloration in contrast to the native plants' homogeneous brown. The height, inflorescence size and coloration, stem density and lack of other plants within the stand were all in stark contrast to the previous patch. The non-native Phragmites seems to be able to out-compete hybrid cattails, which were in the surrounding area, but not within the infestation. Harlan noted that the patch was thinner this fall. We surmised that it could be due to our large rainfalls and higher resulting lake levels.
- F. Carole pointed out American bittersweet vines with a few fruits attached in nearby trees and shrubs before we adjourned.

III. Open discussion

- A. The group was asked if there were any addition findings or species that they would like to discuss. Narrowleaf bittercress, *Cardamine impatiens*, and greater celandine, *Chelidonium majus*, were reported more in 2015. Both have seeds that appear to be spread by high waters. Erica TenBroek, described how quickly the Tamarack Nature Center's narrow-leaf bittercress has spread since she found the first plant in August of 2014. Harlan described his multiple trips to pull rosettes from the area. Seeds germinate throughout the year instead of all at once, making it difficult to control manually. He thought mowers were aiding the spread. Carole suggested that it might be spread by deer like garlic mustard as well. Carole said she'd ask for no-mowing signs in that area.
- B. Ms. Tenbroek described finding a volunteer greater celandine in a pot with a plant she purchased from a nursery this year. We talked about its similarity to Celandine wood poppy, *Stylophorum diphyllum*, a rare native plant found further east in Michigan. We discussed the possibility that nurseries were mistakenly identifying /mislabeling it as Celandine poppy.
- C. Carole asked Shannon Montante whether she thought we could schedule a bittercress and greater Celandine blitz/removal at Crosby Farm, where they both have been reported. Shannon said yes, but there is a lot of wood nettle in that area so it would be difficult and have to be done before the nettle gets too tall.

V. Set next meeting date and location:

- A. Carole will set up another Doodle poll for our next meeting; likely in mid-November or early December

VI. Meeting adjourned at approximately, 2:45 pm

VII. Carole will email a Doodle Poll link to set up our next meeting, likely in Mid-February, 2016.