

Conservation Advisory Commission  
Minutes of the March 20, 2014 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Steve Appel, Linda Green, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman, Michael Restuccia, and interns Megan Larson and Stephanie Craig

Excused: Cole Moore, Victor Lamoureux, Shep Bennett, Adam Flint

Minutes of the January and February meetings had been approved by e-mail. The next regular meeting of the CAC is scheduled on April 17, 2014. Curt and Victor will be traveling that week, and it was decided that we should meet a week later, April 24, at the Vestal Public at our usual time.

Curt brought in twigs from trees on the Binghamton University campus showing infestation by the hemlock wooly adelgid, and shared information about the adelgid's biology and the history of its introduction and spread in the eastern US. Although the spread has generally come from the south, infestations have also appeared in the Rochester area and the Catskills. Research publications on the insects' spread support the notion that the unusually cold winter we have just experienced will slow the adelgids' spread. It remains to be seen whether the winter kill will only reduce the density of local populations, which will rebuild relatively quickly, or it will eliminate entire populations, which will require recolonization. It has been found that some infestations in central and western Massachusetts have remained static with little spread or significant mortality for over a decade, which is in contrast to 100% hemlock mortality in more southern areas. Curt will send out files of the source material.

Natural gas drilling is occurring just across the Pennsylvania state line, about a mile from Steve's home. Steve described round-the-clock noise from trucks and heavy machinery, and work lights through the night. The sound of the flaring of gas from the drill site was described as being similar to the roar of a jet engine, and the noise and bright light of the flaring lasted for weeks.

Cindy shared a photo of a large pond being constructed on the west side of PA route 267 near the intersection with Hawleyton Road. The pond is plastic lined and presumably will be used as a staging reservoir for water to be used in fracking operations; however, concerns were expressed about other possible uses, such as waste water storage. Even if the pond is only a reservoir, some information suggests such reservoirs are treated to prevent freezing. The pond is close to Choconut Creek, and any overflow of chemical-containing water from the pond would be damaging to organisms in Choconut Creek.

We will soon resume our conservation assessment of town parks. Those parks that we have not yet collectively visited include Arnold Park, Ross Corners Park, and Castle Gardens Park and adjacent property. Some parks, such as Fuller Hollow Park and African Road Park, will need follow-up visits now that we have more detailed maps.

Mike reported that Victor spoke with teachers at Vestal High and to a biology class about CAC's interest in creating materials for public information about invasive tree pests and their hosts. An arts student has been recruited to help with the design of the materials.

In our next meeting, we will discuss when we might invite Jeremy Waddell of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) to attend a meeting. Jeremy was involved in the creation of ponds in Jones Park within the past few years, and he has offered to meet with the CAC to describe USC activities.