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February 4, 2020

Joe:

Thanks for the update on your project at Allen's Meadow.

I think we are on the same page with regard to your approach at managing Allen's Meadow particularly for the invasive plant Artemesia. As you are aware this plant is probably the most significant invasive plant at the Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary. Invasive plants have been introduced over the years by many well - meaning people through various horticultural and agricultural practices and remain the nemesis of many if not all, natural area managers.

For anyone looking in on the stewardship of sites like this there is always a certain amount of confusion as this sort of management is not undertaken by many people, particularly with a focus on redirecting the energy of that site to some semblance of native culture. We see non-native invasive plants as displacing the native flora and subsequently the fauna that depend upon that flora. Our vision is to provide the necessities of life for any wildlife that can be encouraged to visit the site again and provide our communities with an opportunity to enjoy the diversity from a much closer perspective.

Many folks would adopt an herbicide first with Artemesia and I admire your persistence in your approach. I have spent the last 8 years as Chairman of the Stamford Parks & Recreation Commission, and I understand every communities desire to find alternatives to pesticide management, particularly on grounds that have such proximity to playing field and schools.

Your plan calls for the mowing immediately of half of the area followed by covering it with a tarp to exclude light. This will be very effective. Artemesia has a very persistent and aggressive root system which would allow it to come back immediately after cutting and temperatures warm in the Spring. The only response I think you should be prepared for is that black plastic sheeting may give rise to some questions. I suggest you install some form of educational or informational signage to ease the minds of the public. These contacts may prove invaluable as you cultivate a volunteer corps to manage the site in the future.

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Your approach is additionally correct in that the only true way to eradicate an undesirable plant is to replace it with a more desirable native suite of plants. The following Spring is that time to have plants delivered to fill in this bare spot as soon as the soil is ready.

Regular mowing of the adjoining area will help to exhaust the stored energy in the underground roots and make the covering even more effective the following season.

These restoration projects take time and patience. The situation you experience today did not happen overnight. Your diligence and observations should keep any new invasive threats to a minimum,

Please keep me posted on your progress. Any undertaking like this will allow for many volunteer and grant opportunities. It will also generate a wonderful public response when they learn of the increase use by butterflies and migrating birds. Your alignment with the Pollinator Pathway and the Eastern Bluebird Trail should present many educational opportunities.

All the Best

Dave Winston

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Dear Steve,

Further to our on-site discussion of the above, following is a proposed plan for the maintenance and management of Allen's Meadow:

Goal

To actively restore, and maintain, the meadow portion of Allen's Meadow by eradicating non-native and invasive weeds and replacing them with native meadow/pollinator plants, as well as creating an Eastern Bluebird Trail.

Plan

The proposed plan includes an *actively managed eradication* plan of the non-native and very invasive weed called *Artemisia vulgaris* (aka Mugwort) largely located due west (and just north) of the Community Gardens, as well as an annual *maintenance* mow of the entire meadow. In addition, an Eastern Bluebird Trail will be erected.

Benefits

- restores the area to its original native flora
- helps beautify the park used by walkers, bikers, runners, gardeners, WHS Track and Field, The Greens residents, and passive users
- collaboration with Wilton High School Garden Club (via Jim Hunter) and native Eco-region 59 seed propagation initiative (i.e. planting native seed plugs)
- adds to the pollinator pathway footprint (originated here in Wilton in 2017)

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- has the support of the Wilton Land Trust, NRWA, and Pollinator Pathway organizations- most likely Conservation Commission too but I've only just mentioned it to them
- Bluebird boxes will bring back nesting Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows (both previously nested in Allen's Meadow)

Plan Details

The following has been developed taking into account the most effective eradication approach that is also pragmatic, manageable, and a low resource impact to the town.

Annual Maintenance:

To prevent the secondary succession of woody plants/shrubs (which has already begun), as well as to maintain the overall health of the meadow itself, an annual mow is recommended in early Spring (late March/early April).

Active Management:

To eradicate the Mugwort area, a series of timed steps is recommended as follows (red = P&R, black = Allen's Meadow Restoration project team- Joe, Jamie, and others)

- Initial mow- mow entire Mugwort area located due west (i.e. that was previously used for road sweepings) and just north of the Community Gardens, **as soon as possible**
- Back blade to level what's left of the old sand/dirt mounds, grade, and remove debris- **as soon as possible** subject to above
- April 2020- place and anchor a poly tarp over 1/2 of the area (Section 1) and rope off with Habitat Restoration signage
- April-Oct 2020- mow the other 1/2 (Section 2) every 2-3 weeks
- Dec 2020- remove tarp Section 1 and let "breathe" for the Winter
- April 2021- depending on what emerges in Section 1, either repeat with tarp or lightly till soil and apply a broadcast native seed mix in addition to select transplanting of native meadow perennials (the latter can be a collaborated effort with WHS, the Garden Club, Pollinator Pathway, and Community Gardeners)

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- April 2021- same as in April 2020 (i.e. tarp) but for Section 2
- Dec 2021- same as in Dec 2020 (i.e. remove tarp) but for Section 2
- April 2022- same as in April 2021 (i.e. seed/transplant) but for Section 2

I and others involved with this restoration project are more than willing to volunteer our time and labor in helping to make this a success and defray town cost; I have also applied for mini-grants from the CT Ornithological Association as well as CT Audubon and am waiting to hear back.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact me with any questions.

Regards,

Joe