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Delaware Department of Agriculture 2020 Noxious Weed Committee Meeting Meeting Minutes

Opening: Meeting was called to order on February 4, 2020 at 10:00 am by Todd Davis. Meeting was held at the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

Attendees:

Michael Scuse, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture
Jessica Inhof, Plant Industries Administrator, DDA
Todd Davis, Noxious Weeds, DDA
Garret Valencik, Noxious Weeds, DDA
Mark VanGessel, Extension Specialist, U of D
Fred West III, Sussex County
Bryan Melvin, Kent County
Jay Lester, New Castle County
Bill Jones, Regional Manager, Fish and Wildlife, DNREC
Kyle Hoyd, Urban Forestry Coordinator, DDA

Introductions: Mr. Davis welcomed the committee members and had a round table introduction. Mr. Davis then introduced Bill Jones and Kyle Hoyd who would be discussing phragmites control programs.

Phragmites Discussion: There was discussion about a recent inquiry made by a Delaware Senator over phragmites control. Mr. Jones and Mr. Hoyd provided their insight on phragmites control programs they participate in. DNREC has a phragmites control program run by Mr. Jones who has been with the program for over 30 years. Glyphosate is the best treatment option and requires repeated applications in order to reach the extensive root system. Mowing and burning is a short-term control measure. Some areas have been treated for 30 years and still it cannot be eradicated. This cost share program uses a helicopter for aerial spraying for areas of a 5-acre minimum. Management is very difficult due to cost and time. Funding has been reduced to half the original amount from when the program started in the 1980's. Fish and Wildlife manages 60,000 acres and the aerial spray costs is approximately \$45 an acre which covers helicopter and chemical cost but not staffing cost. They have a \$72,000 budget, split between 3 programs. There is a native strain of phragmites, but most of Delaware's phragmites are the invasive strain. Mr. Jones strongly advised no changes to be made regarding how phragmites is regulated. Since phragmites is not able to be eradicated, it is not eligible for the noxious weed list. Jay Lester remarked how the 1000 Acre Farm in Middletown has been greatly improved over the years due to phragmites control, and he has seen an increase in ducks.

Mr. Hoyd heads a Hazard Mitigation program through DDA's Forestry Department that treats phragmites in areas where it poses a fire hazard. The program works with the DNREC program in order to get close to buildings and residences. Forestry's budget is approximately \$20,000 a year. Cost per acre is around \$380 and finding willing landowners to participate is an issue. This program works with communities on 3-year programs that educate on phragmites control. Proper control is a very systematic process that requires constant applications and upkeep over years. In 2019, the United States Fish and Wildlife burned and mowed around 700-800 acres of phragmites, mostly in the Prime Hook and Bombay Hook areas. Mr. Hoyd maintains a list of 5 private contractors that do phragmites control, as it is difficult to find contractors who are efficient and take enough care to limit collateral damage. Phragmites control costs money and adequate funding is not always available. DelDOT does some phragmites spraying, but mostly for visibility along roadways. Kent and Sussex Conservation Districts have had cost share programs in the past.

Weed Management Update: Extension Specialist Mark VanGessel provided an update on noxious weeds from the 2019 growing season. The most problematic of the noxious weeds remains palmer amaranth. Some farmers in Sussex County have been able to manage palmer much better than in previous years, while some have not. There have been some small pockets of waterhemp found in Felton, and a few plants in a field along Rt. 9 in northern Kent County. There was a question about how prevalent Texas panicum was throughout the state. Mr. VanGassel stated there are a few areas in Millsboro and Laurel that have heavy infestations. Mr. VanGessel has updated all 6 of the noxious weed fact sheets that the cooperative extension provides to us for the public. Bryan Melvin questioned what we are seeing as far dicamba and Enlist issues. Mr. Davis responded there has only been minor cupping of beans due to drift, but no major issues. Mr. VanGessel stated some research he has been working on that involves windrowing heavily infested palmer fields to see if the seeds could be easier to control. He went over cover crop termination dates and planting into green cover crops.

County Updates: Fred West questioned extending the dates for planting cover crops, to still qualify for the cover crop program. Mr. Melvin commented that Maryland has extended their program. Secretary Scuse stated DDA is working on Delaware's cover crop program, and this is the type of information he needs to know.

Secretary's Remarks: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to test and study glyphosate to ensure it is a safe product. Jay Lester asked about the new paraquat label. With the new label, comes a new closed loop dispensing system that requires only certified applicators who do paraquat training can use the product. Secretary Scuse replied that he has been in talks with the EPA regarding the logic of this new label.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am by Mr. Davis.