

# Minutes: Noxious Weed Advisory Committee

Date: 11/25/2025

## Participants

### Members

Andrew Falk (MN Farmers Union), Ann Messerschmidt (League of MN Cities), , Christina Basch (MnDOT), Cody Dock (MNCAIs), Debalin Sarangi (U of M Agronomy), Elizabeth Zingg (Fond du Lac), Hunter Pederson (MN Farm Bureau), Jane Youngkrantz (MN Assoc. Townships), Jim Calkins (MNLA), Jen Larson (USDA FS), Laura Irish-Hanson (MN Landscape Arb), Lee Frelich (U of M Forest Resources), Liz Beery (TNC), Mark Westpahl (MN Assoc County Land Commissioners), Mary Jo Youngbauer (MN SWCDs), Matt Widen (MN Forest Industries), Raining White (Leech Lake), Rob Venette (UM MITPPC), and Seth Wannemuehler (U of M Horticulture)

### Guests

Nate Quadhamer (MN Invasive Advisory Council and Lake County Soil Water Conservation District) and Kelsey Taylor (Barr Engineering)

### MDA

Emilie Justen, Julie Dellick, Maya Sarkar, Michael Merriman, and Monika Chandler

### Introductions

## Approval of Agenda and Past Meeting Minutes

Mark motioned to approve the agenda and Laura I-H seconded. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Liz made the motion to approve the past meeting minutes and Seth seconded. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

## MDA and Member Updates and Old Business

### Listing Subcommittee updates

A survey will be sent out to members to vote for sixteen species to be evaluated in risk assessments over the next two years. The listing subcommittee is also looking for new members, members will help write the risk assessments. Let Laura VR know if you are interested in joining the subcommittee. Laura I-H expressed interest in joining the subcommittee.

### Management and Policy Subcommittee Updates

- Emilie provided an update that the statute revisions were sent to the commissioner in August and are currently with the revisor's office in review. These revisions will work to clarify language and add in definitions. The legislative and governor approval is still needed for the revisions to be approved and changed. More details on these changes should be presented at a future meeting. There is a call for more people to join the Management and Policy subcommittee. This subcommittee looks at management plans, does grant application reviews, and more. Reach out to Emilie if you are interested in joining.
- The Association of County Agricultural Inspectors was successful in securing funding for a new grant to support positions in the counties. It is not a competitive grant, but counties still had to go through an application process. The money was evenly distributed between 47 qualified applications. Currently MDA is working through setting up grant contracts with two thirds completed and the rest in progress. Each applicant will receive \$10,300. Training is in progress. There was a webinar on the contract process. There will be another on the reimbursement process. Emilie has been participating in anti-fraud trainings for people who administer state grants.
- Emilie continued that noxious weed grants awarded funding for 13 projects last winter. A handful of projects closed out. The rest will either close by year end or be extended into next year. There will be no more noxious weed grants unless it is approved in the next funding cycle.
- Additionally, individual noxious weed species management plans are in development. This is a push from the commissioner's office so the public can have information available to manage these species. There is a giant hogweed plan in development and more will be on the way. Hopefully a template will be completed and approved for these plans in 2026.
- Raining asked if the grant programs are successful and if there is anything NWAC can do to support them. Emilie said it is successful, and she did a report on the impacts of funding. She will share it with the group.
- Raining asked if there are templates for a widespread invasive species plan. Monika said there is a tactical plan available and that the MN Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) has a statewide invasive species plan that can be used as templates. The MISAC plan is available online and applies to both terrestrial and aquatic species.

## **Outreach Update**

The MDA met this past month to discuss the 2026 outreach calendar. A few things in the works are the annual report (out in January), more online mapping, and there will be webpages made for the new additions to the noxious weed list. Finally, new episodes of Smarty Plants will continue to roll out.

## **Palmer Amaranth Update**

The 2025 Palmer season has finished, and 40 sites were visited. Palmer was found growing at five sites spread across five different counties. Four of these positive finds were at sites that had growth last year and plants were localized to the same areas as in the past. These sites were in Houston, Jackson, Polk, and Morrison counties. There was a new county find in Waseca County. The remaining sites were not found to have any Palmer growing and some were in their last year of management and therefore deemed to be eradicated going forward.

## **Seed Program Advisory Committee Update**

The Seed Program Advisory Committee (SPAC) bylaws were voted on and approved last spring. SPAC is hoping to set up their committees at their next meeting which will be held in December. One of these committees will be the technical subcommittee which reviews the noxious weed seed list. When deciding what to add to the seed noxious weed list SPAC will be considering if there are proper seed testing protocols in place, if there are control methods for the plants after germination, and if the seed can be identified visually.

Raining asked if there were any way for NWAC to support SPAC. SPAC might ask for help from NWAC for consulting and help with kicking off the technical subcommittee. Additionally, could have presentations from NWAC group members about noxious weed seed.

There was discussion about brown bagging seed (non-permitted labelers) and that it can undercut certified seed.

Mike provided an update that the MDA seed team is preparing for their annual inspection season which starts in January. They will be hiring a new inspector to the team which will increase their capacity for inspections and sample collections. Seed sites are not registered in Minnesota, so inspectors go off what is known and what they find. If anyone has tips on where seed is being sold, feel free to contact the seed team via their website form. There were no further questions or comments.

## **New Business**

### **Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) Annual Update**

- Nate presented that MISAC has a new jumping worms committee that is working in tandem with Three Rivers Park District to develop a jumping worm in mulch best management practice document to provide information on limiting the spread.
- MISAC provided many letters of support for various funding initiatives this year including for the County Agricultural Inspector funds. We were pleased to see the funding come through.

- The 2024 Upper Midwest Invasive Species Council Conference was held in Duluth and it was a record year for attendance. Planning for the 2026 conference is underway, and it will be held in La Crosse, Wisconsin in October.
- The 2026 invasive species calendar has been released, and the 2027 one is in the works.
- We hosted a field trip at Three Rivers Park District last August. Many great topics such as jumping worms, deer management, forestry, AIS, and emerging threats were discussed.
- Finally, the bylaws are reviewed and updated every three years. They were updated in 2025.
- Raining asked if there is a way to submit suspicious worm photos for identification. Lee answered that you can send photos to Laura Van Riper, but they need to be clear, high quality images as it can be hard to ID worms from images. Images and locations will be added to a database.

## **Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center ([MITPPC](#)) Annual Update**

- Rob shared that MITPPC is a leader in producing a large volume of high quality invasive species research. Rob thanked the advocates and legislature and acknowledged that the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) has kept them going for 11 years.
- Currently have 30 active research projects they are managing with about 10 being related to invasive weed species. There are 50 taxa that researcher can study but the current focus is on five species – buckthorn, Palmer amaranth, phragmites, tansy, and honeysuckles. We’re coming up with some exciting new approaches. Most topics are focused on management of these species, and some are looking at using pathogens to control these weeds as well as drone and satellite imagery usage for early detection. There are 9 new studies we’re hoping to launch in January subject to LCCMR approval.
- There will be an annual call for proposals in January. If you want to be involved in research, feel free to reach out to Rob and he will get you in contact with the right person.
- Additionally, the LCCMR approved a proposal that will be moving through the final legislative process. The center was recommended for a \$5 million grant to continue our important work.
- New opportunities include collaboration with the North American Invasive Species Management Association to disseminate MITPPC research to practitioners in a webinar series. The other opportunity is the university’s new strategic plan called Elevate Extraordinary 2030. The plan states that environmental and plant health are pillars of future work. MITPPC fits nicely with that.
- Three challenges include shrinking budgets and that puts a lot of pressure on LCCMR which is receiving a record number of proposals. Also, there were many retirements at the university and these roles haven’t been replaced, so there is a shrinking pool of research talent. Finally, the federal government shutdown had many employees out of commission for almost 6 weeks. Uncertainty remains and impacts such as delays in the approval process for garlic mustard biocontrol are happening.
- Andrew added that when advocating for MITPPC, the vision was to be a national leader and do research that was not done by the federal government. Rob thanked Andrew for laying the foundation for the center.

## Petitions Submitted 2023-2025

- We received 42 petitions requesting regulation for [creeping bellflower, \*Campanula rapunculoides\*](#).
  - In 2023, two petitions were received.
  - In 2024, 17 petitions were received.
  - In 2025, 23 petitions were received to date.
- We also receive one petition for small leaf bramble (*Rubus parvifolius*), one for dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), one for Siberian squill (*Scilla siberica*) and one for water hemlock, (*Cicuta maculata*).
- Petitions are available on our [SharePoint site](#)

As the committee goes forward choosing species to assess, it is important to consider what the public is putting forward as concern. The number of petitions for creeping bellflower has been the largest push from the public to date. Rob asked if a petition from the public automatically gets it included to the review process. Monika said no but that petitions are shared with the committee for review. Petitions can elevate a species priority. Effort goes into writing and submitting a petition.

Maya and Monika said there were numerous campaigns to raise awareness about creeping bellflower that included signage, a website called Bell No with a petition to sign, Extension and Master Gardeners have done a lot of outreach. Raining noted that this situation could be a case study for engagement.

## Risk Assessment Presentations

### Freedom honeysuckle (*Lonicera 'Freedom'*)

- 'Freedom' honeysuckle was reviewed since it is a popular cultivar and there was speculation that it may not produce viable seed. It has not been observed to escape cultivation. People use it as a living snow fence since it has a dense structure and is a good shelter belt fence for farmers. It is also resistant to witches brooms and the aphids that spread the disease.
- After a 2023 pilot study to test germination methods, seed was collected in 2024 and tested by the MDA Seed Lab. An average of 63.7% of seed was viable.
- Recommendation is to not pursue exemption for 'Freedom' honeysuckle.
- Rob asked if this study was shared with U of M honeysuckle researchers. Monika had shared the report with David Tork and Alan Smith.

### Winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)

- Has been a popular and important landscape plant. It has been listed as a noxious weed since 2022. Currently the plant is not being grown or sold in Minnesota.
- The plant produces seed that is spread by birds. Plant breeders have done a lot of work on to develop low fecundity cultivars since this is an important plant to industry. Fire Ball Seedless™ has low fecundity, not sterile, and produces 0-60 seeds per plant (0%-1.4% of seed observed on control cultivar). ZeroSeed Blaze™ has been found to be truly sterile, with no fruit production in ten years.
- Recommendation is for the species to remain Restricted with exemptions for the two specific low-fecundity cultivars.

## 2025 Risk Assessments Presented at the September Meeting

- Rob asked the group for a reminder of the length of list discussion and if it were possible to have a summary document that lays out where discussions landed. This is of concern since in the narrowleaf bittercress risk assessment length of list is brought up as a reason for its listing designation. Monika said she would be able to put together a summary by category due to the concerns of list length for each category.
- Monika returned to the discussion on hardy kiwi and its potential classification as a specially regulated species. Jim responded that the MNLA board discussed the topic and said since it really isn't a regulation that it shouldn't be listed. Rob asked if the best management practices for hardy kiwi already in place or would they need to be developed. Monika said there are some practices that are already known, especially those to reduce wildlife from taking and distributing seed. She is unsure if they have been written up and how it would work in the vineyard setting. Seth added that there are instructions on Extension websites and there are upcoming webinars on the topic, but nothing formally written up. Laura I-H added they have a webinar scheduled with best management practices and have almost 300 people registered.
  - Christina asked for validation that there would be enforcement for these regulations. Monika said it was correct that there would be no enforcement, so that is why it couldn't be put under any other category. Jim asked if the group could have a label placed on plants for sale like other plants on the list. Monika said Kimberly weighed in on labeling in the September meeting and said labeling would be difficult to enforce as well. Mary Jo weighed in saying that the group might not want to go down the path of labeling since most plants sold could have some kind of label on them.
  - Rob agreed that it doesn't make sense to list the plant if there is no enforcement option.
  - Christina made a motion for the hardy kiwi recommendation to be Do Not List and suggest that the University provides continued education and outreach on best management practices. Jim seconded that motion. There was no opposition. Hardy kiwi will be recommended as Do Not List and will be voted at the December meeting.
- Christina said there were some edits to the narrowleaf bittercress assessment but the changes are unlikely to change the outcome.

## Presentation on Potential Species to Assess in 2026 and 2027

The committee needs to determine which species will have risk assessments written for them in 2026 and 2027. The focus of species for the upcoming assessment is those that have not previously had risk assessments written for them. Yellow archangel will be moving from this year into 2026. Rank one species up for vote are angelica tree, bristly bellflower, creeping bellflower, shiny cotoneaster, yellow-flowered teasel, helleborine orchid, big leaf lupine, tall buttercup, European highbush cranberry, and Sargent viburnum. The spreadsheet of potential species and presentation on are in the Google Drive folder [Meeting Materials](#) for members review. After the meeting, members will vote on which species they would like to see assessed. The floor was opened to NWAC members to suggest any other species of concern. No one brought up any species of concern.

When going through the presentation, the following points were brought up.

- A commission developed a recovery plan for the endangered Karner blue butterfly and they focused on big leaf lupine as a significant threat. Big leaf is displacing native hosts for Karner blue in addition to concerns that larval development may not be completed on big leaf.
- MITPPC's concern about tall buttercup is that the pollen has toxins in them that may be toxic to certain bee species although there is uncertainty about this.
- Researchers have developed a test to distinguish highbush cranberry species and hybrids making regulation more feasible. There is a need to test and sort highbush cranberry production stock to provide certainty to SWCDs that the material they receive is definitely American highbush cranberry.
- Christina added that wormwood has been an issue in construction areas where wormwood is present. It has overtaken native plants, especially in the I94 and I35 corridors. We would like more information on this plant and explore whether regulation could be beneficial.

## Determine Cultivar Exemptions to Assess in 2026 and 2027

- An exemption request was received for the cultivar *Rhamnus frangula* 'Ron Williams' Fine Line®. [Link to request](#)
- Callery pear cultivar 'Chastity pear' (*Pyrus x triploda*) discussed in the potential species presentation.

Exceptions for these cultivars will also vote on through the same poll as the 2026 and 2027 species assessment vote.

Jim noted that the Listing Subcommittee has not defined an acceptable fecundity level. Monika agreed and said that we are trying to find our way through exemption requests. The Midwest Invasive Plant Network formed a cultivar committee to develop exemption evaluation tools. Although these tools are not developed yet, they will be helpful.

## Next Meeting Date and Goals

### Next meeting date

- December 16, 2025
  - Vote on regulatory recommendations.

### Future meeting goals

- Assisted migration - Superior National Forest's plan was recommended by a committee member
- Presentation from a township about weed management
- Presentation about goats and buckthorn control research
- Lee Frelich on the Cover It Up buckthorn initiative
- MITPPC presentation on the online sales of invasive plants
- Invasive species management along right of ways – reach out to MI DOT
- Mark Renz Lab for a stiltgrass presentation
- Future update from Raining about using steam/hot water for invasive plant control.

## Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.