

MINUTES  
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
March 12, 2003

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Bingham, Karen Bodner, Doug Graves, Jack Harris, Molly Hoffer, Mike Kesling,  
Mike Koivula, Chris Melotti

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Clements

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Perkins, Ollie Snowden, Sonny Chickering, Doug Putschler, Stephonee Colley

Chair Mike Koivula called the meeting to order. Perkins read written comments from Clements and distributed copies to members.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 12, 2003

MOTION: Melotti moved to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2003 as written. Hoffer seconded. All present voted in favor, motion carried.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

III. IVM COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Ruby/Quince tree project – Perkins passed around six photos showing some of the tree-removal work on Ruby/Quince, noting that the project has been completed as far as the Vegetation Crew is concerned. Perkins added there had been good coverage on TV and in the Register-Guard. He explained the next step for the adjacent homeowners will be to go through the permit process to repair/replace the sidewalks and to replant.

Perkins reported this is the last of the three big tree removal projects that were planned. Chickering added that a fourth project involving atlas cedars had been discussed with property owners, but it had not turned into a removal project. Crews will do some large branch removals in response to citizens' requests.

Invasive weed management areas – Perkins reported he had attended a meeting in Florence yesterday. Perkins explained representatives from various agencies are working together to develop a program on noxious weed control using available Federal grant money. A coordinator has been hired and the first part of the program is being kicked off e.g. educational information on noxious weeds out to the public.

Perkins added he is also attending a meeting in Salem tomorrow regarding a vegetation management overlay in an information system (IRIS) which is being put together for counties to use. Perkins will report back next month.

Operations update – Most of the crew is back to "regular" work now that the large tree projects are completed, e.g. winter mowing.

IV. DISCUSS BCC MEETING OUTCOME/ASSIGNMENTS

Perkins noted the two Board discussions regarding IVM (February 19 & 26) are available on video tape, however, the BCC Minutes from Feb. 26 explain the discussion and assignments well. Perkins referred to the agenda packets, noting the public comment handouts from Feb. 19 had been included. He added that during public comment on the 26<sup>th</sup>, rather than individual letters being turned in to the BCC, there was a packet of information from the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP). Perkins added that staff did not reproduce the materials for VMAC because materials are available on-line or directly from NCAP. Perkins added he did supply a document for members' review that deals specifically with NCAP's fact sheets. He encouraged members to read the materials and form their own opinions.

It was noted that one page of the public comment from Feb. 19 seemed to be missing. Perkins will check.

Perkins referred to the Feb. 26 Board Minutes, noting the crux of the discussion seemed to be to have staff looking at a "chemicals as a last resort" policy, however, definitions/parameters for "last resort" were lacking. Snowden explained that staff came away from the Board meeting with two areas to work on. The first was a specific request from the Board, asking that VMAC and HAC each work on coming up with what a last resort policy would look like; with the chairs of the committees keeping in communication with each other. The Board also desired for VMAC to review the IVM Program, goals, and objectives during this coming year. Snowden noted, since Perkins will be retiring this year, it's an opportune time to have a clear understanding of where we are headed with the IVM Program so PW can make sure Perkins' replacement has the skills and abilities to make that happen. It is unclear when the Board expects a report back; Snowden is thinking along the lines of being able to give a progress report by the end of May.

Snowden asked members for input on how we might develop a last resort policy, noting there seems to be three key elements that would need to be included:

- Action thresholds – define what constitutes a problem for each activity, species
- Decision trees – explain the decision process that would lead to the use of herbicides
- Alternatives – include some type of language stating that we would actively continue to watch for new technology/alternatives that could be an alternative to herbicides in the future

Snowden explained his ideas/suggestions on how a matrix might be set up. He noted the problem is how do you define "last resort"; adding that with unlimited people and unlimited money, you would probably never use herbicides, but that's not reality.

Perkins noted "last resort" is basically what is already being done as set out in the current policy. Snowden added that to avoid an argument every time we make an herbicide application, he thinks PW needs to try to tie down the conditions under which we use herbicides and limit the amount of judgment that goes on in the field. Snowden suggested members give their input and ideas tonight; then staff could come back next month with something in writing for them to react to.

Koivula stated his understanding was the Board was asking for joint meetings with VMAC and HAC, and that the Board was asking the committees to develop a document, not to react to information from staff. Snowden noted that option had been discussed, but what the Board had agreed to in the end was parallel action by the two committees, reporting to one another, with coordination between the two chairs.

Melotti asked if there is currently a written decision tree for specific situations. Snowden responded, no, however there is a template/philosophy for how you approach decision making; so what he is suggesting is that staff does write down the specifics e.g. for knotweed, knapweed, poison oak, stump treatment, etc. and bring that back to VMAC next month for review and input. Members agreed, stating they basically need this matrix-type information to give them an understandable framework to work from before they can really discuss a last resort policy.

There was further discussion on the following:

- IRIS (Integrated Road Information System) and if PW might eventually adopt this system
- how herbicide use is tracked internally, and through the State reporting system (PURS)
- how/if GPS readings can be used for reporting herbicide use
- possibility/difficulty of GIS coordinates being converted into map displays
- upcoming weed management area program will include more than roadsides, and will need to involve various agencies e.g. BLM, USFS, etc., and also private landowners
- the IVM Program's Good Neighbor policy only involves County rights-of-way; noxious weeds may continue from adjacent properties; could reduce herbicide use if "neighbors" were working on their side also; any changes would need to go through the BCC because there's no weed board
- possibly supplying BCC with examples of cooperative efforts with other agencies for controlling noxious weeds on the right-of-way and adjacent property

Perkins brought the discussion back on track, explaining that he and Koivula had met with the Health Advisory Committee (HAC) and that the HAC has chosen to work on this by using a subcommittee. Perkins and Snowden asked VMAC for input on how they would like to proceed. It was agreed, since

there had been misunderstandings between the two committees as to what VMAC can and can't do with regards to funding restrictions, that it's more efficient to work separately at this time. After lengthy discussion, consensus was:

- to work separately from HAC, with chairs staying in contact/communication
- to not use a subcommittee, but have the whole committee work on it
- for staff to develop a rough draft matrix and decision tree to use as a 'launching pad' at the April meeting, leaving the action threshold information as the next step
- send HAC the basic 3 elements that VMAC will be working on

Perkins noted he had already supplied HAC with the IVM Policy document and the Standards and Guidelines document. They will also receive copies of the matrix.

[T1S2] Perkins noted WashDOT has good field sheets we can work from later.

Hoffer referred to the memo from Clements, noting he had a lot of good questions, and asked at what point we needed to define "last resort." There was discussion of various definitions/opinions that had been expressed during the Board discussions. Koivula stated he felt that defining "last resort" was important and he asked everyone to think about their idea of what they think a last resort policy should be, for each person to write up a couple of paragraphs and bring it to the April meeting; adding that if members can't agree then they could send all the variations to the BCC. Bodner expressed the opinion that developing the matrix and action thresholds would take care of the last resort issues. Perkins noted his concern is that VMAC will look at it from one structure, and others may approach it from not wanting any chemicals used at any time, so unless it's resolved by using a matrix, it will be an endless argument.

There was discussion on how the six, no-herbicide-use, Washington counties differ from Lane County. Perkins explained some of the responses he's received, however, he is still researching and waiting for requested materials, which he will pass on to VMAC. He added that two counties, Thurston and Snohomish, were the closest comparison to Lane County.

Continued discussion went back to the matrix and last resort policy. A member noted the matrix is a good idea/tool, but he felt it would need an introductory paragraph to explain how the matrix would be applied in a "last resort" policy, because there may be a lot of undefined decisions in the matrix. Perkins added he thinks there still needs to be some decision-making ability and some empowerment for the applicators at the field level. Bodner noted Master Gardeners use "most effective and yet least toxic"; adding the County would also need to consider cost and adjacent landowners. There was discussion regarding the definition of "effective"; that in a road situation, it would also need to take into consideration risks inherent with other activities, e.g. no action, mowing, thrown rocks/wire, etc. Perkins stated least risk overall is chemical, but we wouldn't do that ecologically or politically. Hoffer noted there's also toxicity considerations when dealing with fumes from the machinery, etc.

Bodner stated she finds it curious the Board is targeting an organization with trained applicators when statistics show 74-82% of the public use pesticides and their usage is more dangerous to the environment than what the County might do. Perkins explained that Federal law precludes jurisdictions from passing legislations that would restrict use of a pesticide. Bodner said the Board could also look at educating the public. Snowden noted it's a good point, however, it's easier for the Board to deal with County usage than it is to tackle that large of a problem. Melotti suggested offering educational materials to the Board. Snowden noted one consequence to the County from not properly controlling the roadside vegetation is that the adjacent property owner can then take it into their own hands and the County doesn't have any way to really stop them.

Perkins noted an interesting enigma is the suggestion that we go to a program where people ask for spray, adding that PW wouldn't be able to keep up with the demand from the grass seed growers to control vegetation in the adjacent ditches; so you need some controls in place that give a check and balance both ways.

Approved April 9, 2003

V. 2003 WORK PLAN

Consensus was this current item from the Commissioners would fit under item 6, c) Investigate "last resort" herbicide use policy, including consideration of landowner preference and cost, as directed by the Board. The item would also include two sub-notes: 1) including collaborative efforts/communication with HAC, and 2) Including reports back to BCC.

MOTION: Melotti moved to approve the 2003 Work Plan & Accomplishments, with the above addition. Bodner seconded. All present voted in favor, motion carried.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Committee discussed agenda items for April 9, 2003. Perkins suggested putting the vacancy process discussion on hold for now. Consensus was to skip viewing the West Nile Virus video. Chickering requested that Koivula "cc" Perkins and himself on e-mail communications between Koivula and the HAC.

Consensus was for the April 9, 2003 agenda to cover the following items regarding the BCC assignment:

- Review/discuss IVM matrix from staff
- Bring back/discuss definitions of "last resort"
- Report back from Chair on correspondence/collaborative effort with HAC

Meeting adjourned.

---

Recording Secretary