

MINUTES
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
November 9, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Balthrop, David Bingham, Karen Bodner, Molly Hoffer, Mike Koivula, Chris Melotti, Douglass Moser, Ross Penhallegon

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Clements

STAFF PRESENT: Stephonee Freeman, Bill Manewal, Arno Nelson, Orin Schumacher

B/CC PRESENT: Faye Stewart

GUESTS PRESENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT: Jan Nelson

Chris Melotti called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

NA

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Moser moved to approve the Minutes of October 12, 2005, as corrected. Hoffer seconded. All present voted in favor. Motion passed.

III. VMAC MEMBER APPOINTMENTS – FREEMAN

Freeman introduced and welcomed David Balthrop, a local writer, and Ross Penhallegon, an OSU/Lane County Extension Service employee for the past 18 years, to the Committee and Staff.

IV. SOIL BIOLOGY PRESENTATION – MELOTTI

Pat Patterson from the OSU/Lane County Extension Service used a PowerPoint presentation accompanied by a handout. She explained that the soil is a type of placenta that enables living things to feed upon the earth (earthworms).

Organic matter (OM) is the keystone of a live soil, helping soil aggregation, which improves aeration, water penetration, and retention of water and nutrients. OM also buffers chemical changes and detoxifies soils, increases CEC (cation exchange capacity), and is the energy source for soil biology. The live part of soil is temperature driven, and functions best at 50 degrees or above. If the diverse population of microbes in the soils were to fail in their functions, life for higher plants and animals would cease.

The Web of Life represents the OM or residue (something that used to be alive), such as mites, snails, slugs, pot worms, and round worms; the next layer is ants, flat worms. BPGT and BPGG stand for “bug poop grows trees and gardens.” Macro organisms are bigger, such as moles to mites. Micro organisms actually do most of the work and are dominated by bacteria and fungi.

Both organisms are eating, dying, and driving the fertilizer cycle. They are also aerating soil, adding huge amounts of organic matter, and forming mycorrhizal associations, which is the basis of growing things.

All living soils have high populations of fungi and bacteria. Whether the soil is primarily run by fungi or bacteria depends on the plant life present. A forest is fungally dominated. A field or garden is bacterially dominated. Bacteria do most of the work in the soil. They will be present at 10 to the 12th power close to the roots of plants, is the heaviest users of Nitrogen at 5:1. Bacteria will reproduce quickly by moving and make bacterial slime, which is one of the components that help keep soil particles together. Mycorrhizal inoculants are available for sale.

Fungi have miles of mycelial strands in a healthy soil and grow through the soil. Plants and fungi enter into reciprocal agreements with the plants, as do the bacteria. Fungi will extend the usable nutrient and water area for a plant's roots.

Ectomycorrhizae hides roots from diseases from bacteria that would typically attack the roots, and extends the root area for water or gases. Endomycorrhizae is inside the roots and helps there (works as an antibiotic).

Primary decomposers go after something as soon as it hits the ground (decomposer Mite, Orobatiid Turtle Mite). Symphylans are shredders and a major pest when there are too many. Millipedes are one of the most important shredders for decaying organic matter. May be a problem for potted plants by leaving gaps in the soil around roots. Centipedes are great for eating pests with their venomous jaws. Harvester ants are the top of the food chain and are very important.

Up to 60% of the plant's sugars go to the roots and 1/2 of that is put into the soil medium to attract and feed bacteria and fungi. The drawing in of the micro organisms then builds the soil structure, releases nutrients and minimizes diseases. Soil toxins are also then broken down.

Soil dies by the following: compaction (rain, cattle, etc.); over-cropping; imbalance of nutrients (crops take them, trees give them); Biocides.

Soil can be enhanced with beneficial organisms by putting back what was removed. Partially decomposed OM is a major food source. Soil life needs all the nutrient elements. Hydroponic or mineral base media will grow plants, but never a balanced ecosystem. Respect how little we know.

Research shows that the nutritional quality of the plant, the immune systems of the plant eaters and the susceptibility of the plant to diseases may all hinge on the balance in the growing medium.

Bodner asked how VMAC as a committee should approach weeds along the right of way, and Patterson said that the ideal would be to restore the native environment then the natives may return (get rid of invasive plants, and replace them with soil natives).

V. ANNUAL REPORT DISCUSSION WITH BOARD OF HEALTH – SCHUMACHER

Schumacher reported that the 2005 Annual Report was presented to the BCC for discussion only, and will be presented again to the BCC in February after more work has been done on the Control Prescriptives and Products Lists.

Schumacher referred to a handout as further information provided to Committee and Staff that was submitted as "supplemental material" to the BCC by the Health Advisory Committee.

VI. IVM STATUS UPDATE – SCHUMACHER

Schumacher said he's adjusting to the system and County codes. He is currently working on the 2005 Annual Report, specifically the Products Lists and Control Prescriptions. He is attending meetings and conferences, and learning more about the GIS layers and noxious weed information. He is also working on data management, organizational information, and putting together a list of possible speakers for future VMAC presentations.

VII. ROAD MAINTENANCE UPDATE – MANEWAL

Manewal reported that Vegetation crews are wrapping up full-width mowing in the areas of Oakridge, Dexter, and Mosby Creek and Row River (Cottage Grove), then will be done for the year. Brush-mowing continues in the areas of Marcola, Dexter, Oakridge, Jasper, Veneta (north and west), Mapleton, and Hwy 36, and is also scheduled for roads to be surfaced next year. Maintenance pruning in progress in the Beacon Drive area, and dead tree removal in progress in Springfield/Eugene, Cottage Grove, Dexter, and Veneta.

Nelson said that crews have wrapped up the preservation program for summer in mid-September, which included blade patching and driveway work. Crews are working widespread to keep ditches clear of debris in preparation of winter weather. Nelson has completed a report identifying next year's chip seal and overlay program, which includes 75 miles of County roads, and ditch work and driveway preparation are underway.

Manewal said the County purchased four (4) new brush machines (150 hp) with boom attachments that allow a reach of 21 feet out and 15 feet down. Three of the machines will be used locally and one is in Florence. They were able to alter the hydraulics and increase the speed by 50%, which gets the work done faster and safer, and is much more cost efficient.

VIII. WORK PLAN DISCUSSION & UPDATE – COMMITTEE

Melotti suggested that members review the past year's minutes and fill in the Work Plan as needed for discussion at December's meeting.

IX. NEW / OTHER BUSINESS

- Hoffer announced that she will be resigning from her member position in June 2006, six months before her scheduled term expiration.

IX. NEW ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – WED., DECEMBER 14TH

- Test Plot Sites and Capital Improvement Funds
- Work Plan Discussion & Update – Committee
- Review Member Status (Updated Roster) – Committee

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Stephonee Freeman, Recording Secretary