



Save Georgia's Hemlocks

4-13-14 Notes for SGH Leadership Team Meeting

The meeting was held 1-5 p.m. at the Education Cabin at Smithgall Woods near Helen. In attendance: Bob Pledger, Dave Teffeteller, Frank Gheesling, Bruch Granger, Donna Shearer, and Billy Johnson. Buz Stone, Susan Chapman, Rose Mott, and Chris Curtin were unable to attend.

BOARD MATTERS

- * The annual Acknowledgment form was signed by members who were not present at the January meeting.
- * A revised Schedule of Events was presented, and the Education and Service Sign-Up form was completed by members who had not done so previously.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES – REVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Bob led the review of our FY 2014 Strategy Plan as updated with input from several team members; several members still need to provide their updates.

Education

- * Hemlock Help Clinics - Conducted 4 classes in Hall, Stephens, Union, and Towns Counties with a total of 45 attendees. Will need to reschedule Clinics for Banks and Gordon Counties.
- * Facilitator Training Workshops - Conducted 3 classes in Hall, Union, and Towns Counties with a total of 26 new Facilitator trained for Georgia and 2 for Tennessee. Also held 2 Lead Facilitator Workshops for 14 participants.
- * Received approval from the Ga Dept of Agriculture and ISA to offer Continuing Education Credits to professional pesticide applicators and arborists who complete our clinic and/or Facilitator Workshop. The first such offering will be for a combination of the general public and professionals in Cherokee County at no charge; however the board decided that going forward, we should conduct the courses separately for the general public and professionals; all will be required to preregister (as is now the case), and professionals will be asked to pay a nominal fee of \$15 for the Clinic only or \$25 for the combined Clinic/Facilitator Workshop at time of registration to cover the cost of their materials, including certificate of attendance.
- * Hemlock Lessons – Conducted 1 lesson for 15 students and 5 teachers; have 3 more scheduled.
- * Fairs & Festivals – Participated in 1 festival with 100 visitors to our info booth; have 11 more scheduled.
- * Presentations – Gave presentations to 3 POAs/community groups with a total of 91 attendees.

Service

- * Saplings – 63 hemlock saplings and 150 seedlings donated, 29 saplings adopted. Additional seedlings/saplings will be donated for High Meadows Earth Day Celebration, Gilmer County Garden Club's Plant Sale, Kids Day in the Park at Smithgall Woods, and Headwaters Master Gardeners' booth at AgriFest.
- * Soil Injectors – Repaired/refurbished 14 Kioritz injectors for parts cost only.
- * Treatment
 - Completed 3 hemlock treatment projects (1 on Lake Rabun and 2 on private property) with 20 volunteers treating 119+ trees.
 - We have 4 projects scheduled with the U. S. Forest Service, with the first one at Lake Winfield Scoot the weekend of April 26.
 - We may undertake a DNR project recommended by Chris in the Cartecay Wildlife Management Area.
 - Dave will contact Don Wells of Mountain Stewards concerning DNR's contribution of treatment material and Mountain Stewards' contribution of volunteer hours regarding treatment of additional parts of the Cartecay.
 - Dave will also contact the Palmieri's and the Cohutta Chapter of Trout Unlimited about partnering to treat hemlocks along Bear Creek Trail and mountain Town Creek.
- * Planting – conducted 2 planting projects with 81 volunteers planting 123 hemlock saplings.
- * Product Availability – Have not added any retailers who carry the treatment products; will continue to pursue.
- * Professional Availability – Found one more professional pesticide applicator in Rabun County. Don't know if she has a soil injector, but invited her to attend Facilitator Training.

- * Facilitators – We need to receive quarterly reports from Lead Facilitators on their group members’ hours and activities. Leads should get in touch with new Facilitators within 2 weeks after training, should invite newbies to participate in a few Facilitator visits with them, and should be in touch with their group members at least quarterly.
- * Facilitator Service and Membership Requirements – New policy requiring all Facilitators to make a commitment of at least 1 major service or educational event per year and at least 4 hours of hemlock help per month implemented for all new Facilitator trained in 2014; will be communicated to current Facilitators as well. The board decided that all Facilitators should also be formal SGH members and keep up their support for our work through annual membership renewals.
- * Donna will arrange for Bob to have access to her Facilitators email list.

Communications and Outreach

- * Print Media – Dave redesigned our educational and marketing materials for cleaner, core straight-forward look; will do same for Facilitator materials. Donna has consolidated the set of handout materials we take to festivals and other events to eliminate redundancy.
- * Newspapers/Magazines – Published 9 articles/public service announcements. Frank suggested that we rev up the urgency re the hemlock crisis through very direct newspapers articles with photos showing trees’ condition.
- * Special Messaging – Bruce will work with Buz and Mary Cobb Stone to restart development of brief information modules for real estate and home inspection professionals to share with clients or include in newsletters.
- * Facebook – Dave is doing bi-weekly postings of articles and news; will also include scheduled education and service events.
- * Quarterly Newsletter – Donna is resuming publication of quarterly Hemlock Happenings, with next issue due by end of month.
- * Visual Media – We will pursue updating/remaking our ½-hour hemlock documentary through ETC-TV. We will restart project to create a short video for introduction, background, or YouTube usage.
- * Signage – Dave and Donna will restart project to develop educational signage for the hemlock area we treated at Foxfire and “SGH at work” signage to use during volunteer treatment or planting projects.
- * Georgia Outdoors – We contributed information for Georgia Outdoors program with host Sharon Collins about invasive species that was filmed partly at Smithgall Woods and will air later in April or in May.

Memberships/Partnerships

- * Billy suggested we should work with colleges and technical schools to engage young people in our volunteer work; also that we should work with high schools to engage juniors and seniors who are seeking credit for volunteer service activities to include on college applications. We can give a certificate of appreciation for proof of participation.
- * Bob will contact Ga Tech; Bruce will contact UGA, North Georgia, Young Harris, and technical colleges; Donna will contact high schools.

Research – Needle Blight Research Project

- * Donna reported that we already have about 16 citizen scientists signed up to participate; the information gathering form has been approved by Dr. Jean Woodward; and the information gathering has already begun. Information reports will initially come to Donna for consolidation.
- * Donna reviewed the board’s questions from January and presented answers from Jean Woodward and herself.
- * The group had a few additional questions concerning sample gathering/submission and UGA’s role in the project. They also requested that, if the UGA participation goes forward, Jean would provide 6-month and end-of-project reports within 30 days after each respective period to indicate activities, accomplishments, and use of funds. Donna will forward matters to Jean for response.
- * We will wait to vote on whether or not to proceed with UGA’s participation until we have those answers; target date for decision is no later than end of April.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

- * Financial Report for FY 2014 to date – Our spending so far has been 93.36% for education and charitable service and 6.64% for membership building, fund raising, and administrative activities.

- * Update on Year-End Appeal – We mailed out a total of 551 appeals in December 2013 – January 2014 and have received 74 donations totaling \$5,430 so far.
- * Budget – Donna presented a proposed budget based on our FY 2014 Strategy Plan for the team’s consideration and requested that they communicate their acceptance or adjustments by the end of the coming week. The discussion also included possibilities for funding UGA’s role in the needle blight research project if the decision is made to go forward.
- * Taxes – The team reviewed and approved our annual IRS tax filing prepared by Rose.

NEXT SGH LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING – SUNDAY, JULY 13, LOCATION TBD