



Save Georgia's Hemlocks

4-17-11 Meeting Notes

A quarterly meeting of Save Georgia's Hemlocks Board was held Sunday, April 17, 2011, 2 p.m. at 956 Frog Hollow Road, Dahlonega, GA. In attendance: Donna Shearer, Dave Teffeteller, Bob Pledger, Jimmie Walters, Officers Bonnie Mandel, Donna Moorlag, Ed Dibble, Bruce Granger, Frank and Linda Gheesling, and Kenny Simmons of Frog Hollow.

The meeting began with an informal period of Meet/Greet/Explore for current Board Members and Officers and prospective Board candidates. We enjoyed meeting and interviewing 3 Board candidates – Ed Dibble, Bruce Granger, and Frank Gheesling. There are 4 additional individuals who have expressed their willingness to consider Board service, and we hope to have a time to meet with them too over the next few weeks as we seek to fill our open positions.

Acknowledgments

Current Board Members and Officers signed an Acknowledgment indicating they have reviewed and understand the SGH Bylaws and Policies and agree to comply.

Current Board Members and Officers indicated they have reviewed the SGH tax filing documents for the previous fiscal year and approved submitting the short form (990EZ with Schedule A) that is due to the IRS and Ga. Department of Revenue on 4-18-11. Donna Shearer worked closely with IRS representatives to make sure everything was according to their protocol and confirmed that proper accounting standards are being followed. She also gave examples of situations that nonprofits should be aware of that could possibly trigger an audit but said the IRS indicated that none of those applied to SGH.

Disclosure

In accordance with our Conflict of Interest Policy, current and prospective Board Members and Officers were requested to disclose any possible conflict of interest. All indicated that no conflicts exist.

Amendment to Bylaws

Minor amendments were proposed to the Bylaws concerning the following:

- Clarification for method and timing of selecting/electing new board members and officers; vote by general membership to be held at Annual Meeting and Members Picnic
- Methods for announcing regular and special meetings
- Purposes, timing, record date, and announcement of Annual Meeting and Members Picnic
- Timing and Content of quarterly and annual reports
- Compensation for expenses incurred on behalf of the Organization, in accordance with the Expenditures section of the Bylaws

The amendments were unanimously approved by current board members and will be posted on the web site.

Financial Reports

Bonnie Mandel presented a set of financial reports through 3-31-11 including the following:

- Balance Sheet
- Profit & Loss summary and comparison with previous year
- Report for Lake Rabun Grant usage -- \$434 remains from the original \$1500 grant.

Donna Shearer provided additional detail on the Lake Rabun Association (LRA) Grant, indicating that we have met our commitments regarding the awareness campaign via post cards, placement of paid ads in the Clayton Tribune (with accompanying article), and training of 10 new Facilitators. Outstanding items are a Hemlock Help Clinic (scheduled for 4-23-11) and one or more charitable service projects in Rabun County (possible project with Foxfire has been identified).

Strategies – Report through 3-31-11

Education: Hemlock Help Clinics – The first clinic is scheduled for Saturday, 4-12 in Rabun County. Others will be scheduled for the first half of the year in Gilmer, Fannin, Habersham, and White Counties. Each will be supported by articles in the local newspapers, community calendar announcements, and special invitations to local organizations. Fall clinics will be scheduled for Towns, Lumpkin, Murray, and Union.

Education: Community Programs – We've given presentations to 2 community groups (24 attendees) and have 4 more scheduled. Ed Dibble has obtained a list of developments and POAs in Rabun County we can contact to request presentation opportunities, and we will seek the same type of information for other counties through real estate attorneys, agents, and other avenues.

Education: School Programs – We've taught "Lessons from a Hemlock" to 5 elementary and middle school classes (200 students & 5 teachers), 1 with hemlock sapling planting and 3 with seedling potting.

Education: Neighborhood Hemlock Project Planning Service – The group recommended publicizing our Neighborhood Hemlock Project Planning service through clinics and other presentations rather than making a special market effort for it.

Education: Web Site – We need to convert our web site from FrontPage to DreamWeaver in order to have interactive capabilities such as on-line member sign-up, volunteer sign-up, and on-line auction. Ed Dibble and Dave Teffeteller offered to assist Donna in this.

Education: Awareness Post Cards – 2200 post cards have been sent to Rabun County (funded by a Lake Rabun Association grant) using addresses provided by the Tax Assessors Office; so far 265 have been returned for bad addresses. In the first 2 weeks since the mailing, 6 phone calls have been received as a result; since many addresses are only summer residents, we expect the call volume to occur in early summer. The group voted to send the rest of the post cards as planned to Fannin and Gilmer next, followed by White, Habersham, and Union, with the mailing schedule to coincide with planned clinics in each county. Postage is now \$.29 per card, so the remaining expense will be about \$922.

Education: "Saving Georgia's Hemlocks" Documentary – Each attendee was given a DVD of the program that was aired on Windstream cable in March. Dave Teffeteller agreed to contact other cable providers to request them to broadcast the program; he will also develop an attractive label for the DVD. Ed Dibble also suggested sending a copy of the DVD and our PowerPoint presentation for posting on the Rabun Town Crier.

Financial Development/Management: Financial Function – QuickBooks is working well for us and has been tweaked this year (as a result of preparing our tax filing forms) to provide useful information that both complies with IRS requirements and supports tracking progress on our Strategy Plan.

Financial Development/Management: Reporting – Bonnie has developed a good set of customized reports to keep us up to date on a quarterly basis.

Financial Development/Management: Tax Reporting – The group expressed their preference for providing the IRS with all required information but not spending the time and effort to develop the long form. Most of the information that would be presented to potential grantors, donors, or members via the long form is already included on our web site.

Financial Development/Management: Insurance – The group voted to chip in to cover our D&O insurance (\$559/yr) again this year rather than take it out of our general budget. Special liability coverage for the Hemlock Camp Meeting will be factored into that special budget.

Fund Raising: Direct Solicitation – We are committed to keeping the expense of any campaigns or events to a minimum and to the greatest extent possible ensuring they are mission-related. In December 2010 we sent out about 125 target direct mail letters to potential donors and new members about the hemlock crisis and the need to take immediate action to save them. The cost was \$83. As a result, we gained 25 new members and received \$1550 in memberships and other donations.

Fund Raising: Once Upon a Hemlock – Jimmie reported that the illustrations for the book are nearly complete and should be finished within another 2 weeks. The search for a local publisher is in progress. Suggestions were made concerning on-demand publishing, checking with Foxfire since they have done different publications, and contacting publishers some of the

group members have prior experience with. No budget figures have been assigned to this initiative at present but will be added and presented for approval when they are known.

Fund Raising: Grants – We now have a book of grant opportunities and will seek a few that relate specifically to our mission. Dave Teffeteller also mentioned that other nonprofits which have received grants might be willing to redirect portions to our activities as long as they coincide with the other organizations’ goals and applicable grant requirements.

Fund Raising: Auctions – As mentioned above, another fund raising opportunity could be on-line auctions of mission-related items, services, or events.

Fund Raising: Adoption of Saplings – We don’t charge for our trees but make them available for adoption and accept contributions if they’re offered. So far we’ve received \$470 in donations from individuals and groups that adopted saplings and donated many more to schools and churches for free. We’ve also gained 2 hemlock growing partners, nonprofit organizations that have accepted 690 free seedlings from us and are undertaking hemlock growing projects with the ultimate goal of being able to supply healthy young trees for future planting/replanting; if they sell these trees in the future, they will share 10% back to us.

Program Outreach: Festivals -- We will participate in Earth Day Celebration for kids at High Meadows Schools on 4/20 and Environmental Day in Rabun County on 4/30 and have been invited to give a presentation at the Mountain Flower Arts Festival in Dahlonega on 5/21. If we can get an adequate number of volunteers, we may also participate in the Family 4th of July Festival in Dahlonega on 7/4, Fall Arts Festival in Blue Ridge on 9/17-18, and the Apple Festival in Ellijay on 10/15-16. Frank Gheesling and Donna S will be at High Meadows; Bob Pledger and Donna S will be at Environmental Day; volunteers are needed for other events and will work in shifts.

Program Outreach: Special Audiences – We should look for opportunities to present to regular meetings of groups such as Master Gardeners, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, recreational/environmental groups. The group also approved the idea of reciprocal memberships with other like-minded groups; some have already sent us their membership contributions and others will be requested to reciprocate. We can also cross-link web sites to strengthen the synergy. Donna S will circulate a list of suggested organizations to the group.

Marketing & Communications: Membership – Building membership will be a main focus for the Annual Meeting and Members Picnic and a secondary focus for the Hemlock Camp Meeting. All attendees will be asked to bring at least one new person with them. Dave will develop an invitation for the general audience and a special one targeted to Facilitators.

Service: Charitable Projects – Bob Pledger is checking into the possibility of partnering with Foxfire in Rabun County to treat their hemlocks on a charitable basis; this would be funded through the LRA grant up to \$412. Donna S mentioned she is aware of 4 other opportunities in Habersham, Union, and Gilmer Counties.

Service: Chemical Product Availability – Bob reported on being able to get one retailer in Rabun County to carry the appropriate treatment products, and Donna is talking with another one there. We will continue to work to get more retailers in other counties to carry the Imidacloprid products.

Service: Lead Facilitators for Counties – Bob is working to identify at least one “lead Facilitator” in each county to serve as local ambassador for and face of SGH, be a resource to the county, coordinate local projects, be a mentor to Facilitators and organizations within the county, help identify local needs, serve as information conduit between the county and SGH, and recruit additional Facilitators. Frank Gheesling and Bruce Granger indicated they are interested in sharing this role in Gilmer County and, along with Ed Dibble, have requested to take Facilitator training when it is next offered.

Service: Soil injectors – Bob maintains a list of soil injectors that are available for borrowing. Some are in public places such as County Extension Offices or Forestry Commission Offices; others belong to individuals or neighborhoods that may occasionally be willing to lend them. We have leads on two companies that are manufacturing prototypes of the now-discontinued Kioritz soil injector, but the ready dates are not until this summer or next year. Everyone, please keep eyes and ears open for any equipment that could possibly replace the Kioritz.

Budget

Donna Shearer presented a draft FY2011 budget to cover our Strategy Plan, based on income and expenses for last year and then adjusted to support this year's planned activities. The team was requested to review the budget and let Donna know of any changes or recommendations by the end of the week, 4-22-11; then the budget will be considered adopted.

Planning for Annual Meeting and Members Picnic

Event is set for July 10 at Smithgall Woods. Regular quarterly board meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to noon, and general membership meeting will be from noon to 3 p.m.

Purpose/focus will be primarily membership building, and secondarily education, appreciation, and a good time. Content will include:

- Welcoming and appreciation of members and volunteers
- Confirmation of continuing Board Members and Officers and election of new Board Members and Officers
- Progress report of accomplishments and financial condition
- Update on what's happening with the trees, the bugs, current and potential solutions
- Planning for future activities
- Recertification training for Facilitators (est. 45 minutes)

Food plan includes hamburgers, hot dogs, vegetarian alternative, and non-alcoholic beverages provided by SGH with supplemental covered dishes brought by other attendees.

Budget – A fee of \$55 has been paid to reserve the meeting pavilion, and the remaining budget for the event is \$200 (about \$4 per person with anticipated attendance of 50 people).

Publicity – Dave will handle the publicity and invitations. Donna M will handle the RSVPs. The plan is to set an early response date to allow for adequate planning time.

Planning for Hemlock Camp Meeting

Event is set for Saturday, October 1 at Frog Hollow. Time frame will probably be 10 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m..

Purpose/focus will be primarily education, and secondarily appreciation, membership building, and a good time.

Participants – We will again invite other nonprofits, public agencies, and schools that share an interest in preserving the environment in general and the hemlock in particular.

Activities – Content will include special speakers, booths and “mic time” for participating groups, games and family activities, silent auction, possibly wine tasting by a local vineyard, and possibly a door prize drawing for new members. Venue does not have established trails for hiking or horseback riding. Participating groups will be asked to help with the publicity and also to bring a contingent of their own members.

Speakers – Recommendations for special speaker were made -- Janisse Ray (environmental author) or Justine Thompson is the Executive Director of Greenlaw and attorney; will consider other candidates too.

Entertainment – Invite Joe Adams' children back and one other blue-grass/folk music group.

Vendors – Must be nature-related vendors, by invitation only, juried for content and quality. Probably will request a vendor fee rather than dealing with keeping records for percentage sharing.

Volunteers – We will seek volunteers from local colleges and organizations; also possibly the Beta Club at Bonnie's daughter's school in Roswell. Set up will be early on Oct 1, and take down will be late that afternoon.

Budget – As the primary focus is education and awareness, if we just break even, we're OK. Our draft budget includes \$1300 anticipated expenses and \$1700 anticipated donations. Dave suggested that rather than charging any admission, we make a strong push for membership sign-up at a one-day special rate, and Jimmie suggested making the donation jars more

visible at the venue. Also we will need to plan either some time or money or both to do a modest tree treatment project for the Averills (property owners) in exchange for the privilege of using their property; this is not yet included in the budget.

Publicity – Dave will handle the publicity and invitations. Donna M will handle the RSVPs. The plan is to set an early response date to allow for adequate planning time.

Facilities – Will need to rent one porta-john; hopefully it will be donated. There's already one on site. There is electricity, and we'll probably want to arrange for amplification for the speakers and musicians.

Parking and access – The road can accommodate two-way traffic in most places. Parking will be in the pasture. Can mark it off and have volunteers direct traffic, rather than parking people's cars.

Next Meeting

Annual Meeting and Members Picnic on Sunday, July 10, 2011 Smithgall Woods