

PLAT Meeting Notes 1-23-09

Meeting took place at the Shearers' home. PLAT members present were Bob Billings, Tim Herrin, Forest Hilyer, Jack Rogers, and Mark Shearer. Basil Bonner was unable to attend. Minutes recorded by Donna Shearer.

GOALS

Increase public outreach – *This effort represents an additional way to spread the HWA message person-to-person, provide boots-on-the-ground service to more people in the community, and save more Hemlocks.*

Increase LC visibility – *We are hoping to publicize this effort at various times throughout the year to increase public awareness of the good we're doing.*

Establish contact with homeowners who call – *Options were discussed for using a Go Phone (est. cost \$315/yr) or adding a line to someone's existing phone account (ext. cost \$360/yr) but were not chosen. In order to have a live person answer the call at no additional cost to LC, the team decided that calls will come into Donna Shearer's cell phone. Since any Hemlock-related calls coming in on this number will be as a result of the postcard mailer or the LC web site, all such calls will be logged and relayed to the LC Facilitator group.*

Seek donations to LC – *When a Facilitator identifies a homeowner who would like LC volunteer services and is willing to make a donation in connection, he will establish an agreement with the homeowner, manage execution of the project, and collect the donation.*

MAILER

Establish final copy and photo – *Final text is below. Photo was contributed by an LC member free of charge.*

Dear Lumpkin County Property Owner,

The Lumpkin Coalition is a local, 100% volunteer organization working to save Hemlock trees from an invasive pest. Hemlocks play a vital role in our forest ecology and water quality, and you may have them on your property. Almost all of these beautiful trees will die in the next few years unless action is taken soon.

We can help!

Practical and effective measures are available to save your trees. As a service to our community, Lumpkin Coalition volunteers can help you determine if you have Hemlock trees and explain your options for managing their health. For do-it-yourselfers, we can provide advice, training, and equipment so you can treat your Hemlocks at the **lowest possible cost!**

To learn more about how we can help, call the **Hemlock Help Line (706) 429-8010**. Also please visit our web site www.lumpkincoalition.org.

So the Hemlocks May Live...

Develop plan to mail

Preparing mailer -- *Jack will prepare the final Word doc including text and photo in 4.25" x 6" format to meet postal regulations.*

Printing mailer -- *Donna has bought the card stock and will get the mailer printed at the Chamber – color photo on front, b/w copy on reverse.*

Planning distribution -- *The team voted to do an initial mailing to property owners along Yahoola Creek, followed by mailing to folks along other waterways. The reason for a phased approach is quality assurance – we will be able to gauge the level of response, ensure that the Facilitators can handle the volume in a timely manner, and tweak the system as required to achieve the best results. The Yahoola was chosen because it is the northern-most major waterway in the county, where the infestation is worse than in the southern parts of the county, and it has an adequate but more manageable number of property owners than the other major waterways.*

Sorting database -- *Tim will sort the property owners database acquired from the county according to waterways and set up a mail merge to print names and addresses directly onto the postcards, eliminating the need for mailing labels.*

Applying postage -- *The team, possibly with participation of other LC members, will apply the postage stamps and deliver to Post Office for the first scheduled mail-out on February 16.*

COSTS FOR MAILER

Database	\$130.00	
Paper	\$40.61	
Copying	est. \$100.00	at Chamber \$.02 b/w + \$.08 color x 1000 sheets
Postage	<u>\$540.00</u>	\$.27 x 2000 postcards
Total	<u>\$810.61</u>	

PROVIDING HOMEOWNERS WITH THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF HELP

Inspection and consultation – *When a Facilitator visits a homeowner, he will listen to the homeowner's concerns and goals, help the homeowner understand the HWA problem and its potential consequences, inspect the property to assess the situation, and discuss treatment options with the homeowner.*

- **How many trees and level of infestation?**
- **Is property rogued (undesirable understory thinned out)?**
- **Explanation of treatment options** – *Do nothing, and infested trees will die. Treat all Hemlocks on property? Treat only those above a certain diameter? Recommended treatment method.*
- **Who treats** – *Homeowner can hire a professional, do it himself, or request LC volunteer services.*

Acquisition of chemicals – *If homeowner wants to do it himself, Mark can purchase the chemicals for him at a substantial savings and be reimbursed directly by the homeowner; need to decide if a donation will be required. Or if homeowner requests LC volunteer services in connection with a donation, Mark will purchase the chemicals and be reimbursed directly by the homeowner.*

Equipment loans and training – *If homeowner wants to do it himself and wants to borrow an LC injector, he must agree to attend a training workshop, make a refundable deposit, and submit accurate records of the treatment to LC.*

Private contractors – *If homeowner requests information about professionals who can treat his trees, the Facilitator can provide a list of qualified companies (both local and from the Atlanta area) that are knowledgeable of and experienced in treating HWA, perform this work in north Georgia, and have provided their average pricing.*

LC volunteer labor – *If homeowner requests LC volunteer services in connection with a donation, and if adequate volunteer labor is available, the Facilitator can negotiate the service agreement. Volunteer services will be offered only for projects that are judged safe and manageable by the Facilitator.*

LUMPKIN COALITION VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Facilitators – *After reaching an agreement with the homeowner for volunteer service, the Facilitator will assemble the team of volunteers needed for the project, lead the team in executing it, collect the donation, and send a follow-up report to Mark.*

Workers – *These individuals may come from the LC membership but may also come from NGCSU, possibly Yahoola Creek Trails Conservancy, or other volunteer groups. We will assemble a list of sources for workers.*

Licensed consultant – *Since all volunteer projects will be conducted under Mark's supervision and license (until others become licensed), he will be on site – initially for the entire project and later, as Facilitators become experienced, for the beginning of each project or longer as needed.*

FACILITATORS

How to divide responsibilities – *When the Secretary receives calls from homeowners, she will contact the Facilitators to sign up for making contact. She will keep a record of these calls and the Facilitators who agree to handle each contact.*

Talk with and/or go to homeowner's property – *The Facilitator's call back to the homeowner should be fairly brief, with the goals of gathering preliminary information and setting up an on-site visit.*

Help homeowners treat trees at lowest possible cost – *The goal is to help as many homeowners as possible to save as many Hemlocks as possible at the lowest possible cost. The **lowest** cost option is for the homeowner to do it himself. The **next lowest** cost option is to hire a local company. The **highest** cost option is for the homeowner to hire a company from the Atlanta area; their average pricing is 2 to 3 times the average for local companies.*

*The **BEST** option is enter into an agreement with LC for volunteer services – the homeowner gets the chemicals at a low price, gets the work done at a professional level with local pricing as the fair market value, gets a tax deduction for any amount over the fair market value, and gives his money where it can be multiplied and used to help more people and trees.*

Know 501(c)3 charitable organization requirements to negotiate with homeowners – *Facilitators will need to understand the applicable IRS rules for quid pro quo donations, be able to explain them to the homeowner, use them to negotiate the service agreement correctly, and provide the homeowner with the required disclosure statement, if appropriate, upon completion of a project. (See next section.)*

Give homeowner a good faith estimate of cost of treating trees, given the homeowner's choice – *If the homeowner chooses to treat his own trees but requests help in estimating the cost, the Facilitator can either give him a rough estimate of the amount of chemical needed and its cost or can explain how he can arrive at this estimate himself. If the homeowner is requesting LC volunteer services, the Facilitator will need to estimate the cost more closely in order to reach an agreement for services and donation.*

Keep accurate records and send to Mark – *Specific records are required by the Department of Agriculture for any work performed by or under a licensed pesticide applicator; these will also be forwarded to the centralized HWA activity database maintained by Jim Sullivan. Donna will use the info to accumulate a record of the Coalition's service to the community and charitable giving.*

501(c)3 CHARITY REQUIREMENTS FOR QUID PRO QUO DONATIONS

Establish fair market value (FMV) of services provided – *Facilitators will use the average pricing of local companies to establish FMV for a LC volunteer project, and should help the homeowner appreciate the "good neighbor" rate this represents compared to Atlanta-based companies or companies from other states that have GA licenses.*

Explain deductibility of donation – *A donation to a charity in connection with receipt of goods and services is called a quid pro quo donation and must be based on the FMV. While we will not require a donation in excess of the FMV, we can let the homeowner know that it would certainly be appreciated, and any portion of the donation that is **over** the FMV will be tax-deductible to the homeowner. As we are not in the tax counseling business, we will also provide the homeowner with one or more IRS web sites that explain these rules.*

Establish LC's good faith intentions for use of money – *Secretary of State's Office requires that before entering into any fundraising effort, the 501(c)3 must clearly state the purposes for which the funds will be used and be accountable for doing so. Therefore, before the PLAT project can be implemented, the Board will need to decide specifically how any funds raised will be used, so it can be included in our solicitation/negotiation efforts.*

Establish on-site clear written agreement on services to be given – *A short form will be used to help the homeowner and Facilitator document the agreement and avoid any potential misunderstandings. When the project is complete and the donation is collected, the Facilitator will provide a thank-you letter.*

- *If the homeowner's donation is **equal to** the FMV, the letter will simply serve as a receipt for payment; this kind of donation is not tax-deductible.*
- *If the homeowner's donation is **more than** the FMV, the letter will serve as a receipt and also state the excess amount that is tax-deductible.*

RECRUITING FACILITATORS

Who – Forest, Bob, Jack, and Tim agreed to be Facilitators. Hopefully there will be more.

How – Forest said he would send out an e-mail to the LC membership seeking additional Facilitators.

FACILITATOR BENEFITS

For volunteer efforts – When LC performs volunteer service for homeowners, Facilitators get to meet good folks (both property owners and volunteers), be effective ambassadors for the Hemlocks and the Coalition, have the satisfaction and recognition of doing good in the community, and bring in additional funds to be used for charitable purposes approved by the Board.

For professional efforts – When Mark is treating Hemlocks for private landowners outside of Lumpkin County, Facilitators (if they would like to) may work with him under his license and be paid.

FACILITATOR TRAINING

The first Facilitator training will be conducted by Mark at the Shearer home on Thursday Jan.29 and Friday Jan. 30 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. both days. It will include both classroom instruction and hands-on training. Helping materials will include a training guide and a leave-behind pamphlet for homeowners. Other materials will be developed as needed.