

2-10-09 Meeting Notes

Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 6:00 p.m. at Yahoola Creek Grill. Recorded by Donna Shearer, Secretary.

In Attendance: Forest Hilyer, Murray Lamb, Kristen Jordan, Mark and Donna Shearer, Jack and Patty Rogers, Larry Winslett, Basil and Kelly Bonner, Ginger Clark, and Susan Ballue

This meeting was a continuation of the January 13 meeting and primarily covered board/legal/501(c)3 items.

Update on HWA Symposium -- Forest Hilyer, Murray Lamb, Bob Billings, Larry Winslett, and Mark and Donna Shearer attended the regional HWA Symposium sponsored by the Georgia Forestry Commission at North Georgia College on February 4. Speakers included:

Welcome to NGCSU	Dr. David Potter, NGCSU President
Welcome to the HWA Symposium	James Johnson, GFC
Overview of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid	Rusty Rhea, USFS
Overview of HWA in Georgia	Scott Griffin, GFC
N. Georgia College Predator Lab	Sarah Osicka, NGCSU
Young Harris College Predator Lab	Dr. Paul Arnold, YHC
UGA Predator Lab	Dr. Gretchen Pettis, UGA
UGA HWA Research	Dr. Mark Dalusky, UGA
Chemical Control Risks to Waterways	Dr. Jim Hanula, USFS
USDA Forest Service Efforts in GA	Jim Wentworth, USFS
Georgia State Park Efforts	Angie Johnson, GA DNR

Key messages were:

- ✳ The hemlock crisis in Georgia is becoming dire. Many trees have died and many more will die because of the enormous scope of the problem and the limited resources (funding and manpower) to deal with it.
- ✳ Intensive cooperative efforts are being made by the predator labs, GFC, USFS, and DNR to increase production and distribution of predator beetles and develop additional biological controls, and some successes are occurring. Biological controls are extremely important and necessary but should be viewed as a long-term aspect of the solution.
- ✳ A great deal of research has been done on the effectiveness and safety of chemical controls such as Imidacloprid. Reports indicate that proper use of such chemicals poses no significant risk and that they are extremely reliable for preserving hemlocks until viable long-term solutions are in place. Chemicals are being used successfully in many of the designated Hemlock Conservation Areas but are not feasible for treating entire forests.

Action Items -- When the question was posed about how citizens can help, suggestions included:

- ✳ Private landowners taking care of their own hemlocks
- ✳ Volunteers helping on public lands where and in the manner permitted
- ✳ Continuing efforts to raise awareness and promote action
- ✳ Continuing contributions to support HWA research.

Presentations -- Please visit the [Save the Hemlocks](#) page.



Update on the Private Landowners Assistance Team (PLAT) -- This program is set to launch on Monday, Feb. 16. Please visit the [Hemlock Help](#) page for an overview of the program.

- ✳ **Training** -- Seven members have received training from Mark Shearer to be Facilitators: Forest Hilyer, Bob Billings, Jack Rogers, Tim Herrin, Kristen Jordan, Tim Lasecki, and Mark Warren. These individuals will be the primary point of contact with property owners. With the expected increased visibility of the HWA problem this spring, it is likely we will need even more Facilitators, so if anyone would like to become a Facilitator or any Facilitators would like a refresher, additional training sessions can be scheduled. Please contact Mark Shearer at markshearer@windstream.net.
- ✳ **Mailers** -- Postcard mailers about the program are ready for distribution to property owners along the county waterways, a favorite habitat for hemlocks. The initial mailing will be to the approximately 500 property owners on the Chestatee and Yahoola corridors on Feb. 16. Another 1,500 mailers will be sent to folks along the Etowah River and all named streams within the next 2-3 weeks. A copy of the mailer can be found on the [Hemlock Help](#) page.
- ✳ **Hemlock Help Line** -- Property owners are invited to call **706-429-8010** (LC Secretary) for information. Each call will be relayed to a Facilitator, who will make contact with the individual and offer assistance.
- ✳ **Press Release** -- A press release reminding the public of the HWA problem and explaining the assistance program is ready for distribution to [The Dahlonga Nugget](#) and four other newspapers in north Georgia and should appear in the Feb. 25 editions. A copy of the press release can be found on the [Hemlock Help](#) page.
- ✳ **Soil Injectors** -- Two new soil injectors have been ordered for LC volunteers to use in treating hemlocks and homeowners to borrow if they want to treat their own trees. These should be received during the week of Feb. 16.
- ✳ **Public HWA Clinic** -- One or more workshops will be held this spring to provide the public with information about the HWA problems, the options for treatment, and hands-on instruction for anyone wanting to learn how to do soil injection. Do-it-yourselfers who want to borrow a soil injector from LC will be required to attend a workshop. The first one will be held mid-March, with subsequent workshops to follow in April and May (depending on demand).



Update on YCTC and MillionMile Greenway -- On Feb. 5, Forest Hilyer represented LC in a stakeholders meeting hosted by Yahoola Creek Trails Conservancy, who have already done so much to put wonderful walking trails in place and have now won a grant from the MillionMile Greenway to help expand the trail network to the rest of the county and hopefully beyond one day.

MMG (www.millionmilegreenway.org) has developed some amazing programs to weigh different aspects to be considered for this type of trail network in an overlay format that will really help us get a visionary head start on likely possibilities for this long-term project. Ideas were presented like: multi-use trails to serve utilitarian purposes of safe alternative options for local travel, trails that connect some destinations of historical and/or natural interest, exercise trails, multi-day trails that could benefit bed and breakfasts or state parks, and trails that connect town to the Appalachian Trail or other Forest Service trails and dirt road areas. A network of trails for bikes, walkers/runners, horses, casual users, tourists, sight-seers, locals, health enthusiasts, and folks who are tired of using their car for everything (if they have a car).

This could be a huge boon for the county for tourist attraction as well as local use. This project needs all the support and input it can get from interested folks and stakeholders of all types. Judy Toppins of YCTC and LC is the contact on this project and is seeking community-wide input (see below). Lumpkin Coalition members so far have shown excitement about involvement in this effort as a coalition and will need to discuss and vote on how best to help it move forward.

Action items:

- ✳ Click here to read [Judy's note](#) explaining more about the project.
- ✳ Click here to complete the [Multi-Use Trail Visual Preference Survey](#). Your input would be greatly appreciated and useful in these visionary stages of the project. Deadline is **Friday, Feb. 27**.
- ✳ Contact Judy at contactus@yahoolacreektrails.org for more information on this opportunity.



Update on Water Monitoring -- Tom Lamb (who was not present at this meeting) has indicated his interest in re-energizing LC's water monitoring project this spring. Using the database of property owners along county waterways, we would like to find folks who are interested in monitoring water quality and reporting it through a network system in an effort to take responsibility for making sure these headwaters that run through our county remain clean and healthy.

LC, in partnership with [Upper Chattahoochee RiverKeeper](#) and [Georgia Adopt-a-Stream](#), could provide the necessary training and equipment. This project will work in coordination with the PLAT initiative. Anyone interested in helping should contact Tom at tlamb3@windstream.net.



Board Items -- The following items related to improving LC's effectiveness and efficiency as we grow into a mature organization were discussed and voted on by the LC Board. Votes from Tom Lamb and Darcie Holcomb, who could not be present, were included by proxy.

- ✦ **Standards of Excellence** -- The Board voted unanimously to adopt Georgia's published **Standards of Excellence for NonProfits**. Doing so will lead to increased internal awareness of best practices and continuous improvement, which will be important as we approach our 5-year anniversary and work toward functioning as a mature organization.
- ✦ **Revision of Hemlock Project Goals** -- The Board voted unanimously to update our publicly stated goals for the Hemlock project as follows:
 - (1) raise public awareness of the Hemlock problem and promote action,
 - (2) provide ongoing support to the predator beetle-rearing labs in Georgia, and
 - (3) assist private landowners and public agencies in managing the health of their Hemlock trees
- ✦ **Use of Funds Generated by PLAT Program** -- The Board voted to declare LC's intended use of any funds generated by the PLAT program as indicated below. This statement complies with 501(c)3 requirements of the Secretary of State's Office and will provide greater clarity to Facilitators and property owners regarding our charitable use of funds.

"All funds raised through the Private Landowners Assistance Team project will be used to help Lumpkin Coalition continue to raise public awareness of the Hemlock problem and promote action, provide ongoing support to the beetle-rearing labs in Georgia, assist private landowners in managing the health of their Hemlock trees, and facilitate other projects that benefit North Georgia, Lumpkin County, its residents and visitors."
- ✦ **Charitable Effectiveness** -- The Board reviewed a report on our charitable spending and fundraising expenses as defined by the IRS and widely used charity evaluators such as Charity Navigator. It voted unanimously to develop a plan for improving the proportions of charitable spending and expenses to bring us to an acceptable ratio of 65:35, with an ultimate goal of reaching a best practices ratio of 75:25 or better.
- ✦ **Planning for HemlockFest 2009** -- A proposal was discussed to implement a HemlockFest steering committee for improving the festival's effectiveness for raising funds and awareness, the efficiency and smoothness of operation, and the overall enjoyment for all participants. Instead, the Board voted unanimously that it will take responsibility to oversee all major aspects of the festival, share the load, and provide better focus on specific functions. Specific tasks would be (1) review the suggestions from previous fests, (2) identify key responsibilities for three to five major focus areas, and (3) document key job descriptions, and (4) set/manage a timetable for accomplishing as many task as possible well ahead of festival. Kelly Bonner volunteered to consolidate all the HemlockFest suggestions collected to date for review and discussion at our next general meeting in March.

HemlockFest 2009 will be held November 6-8, and planning is set to begin with the March 3 meeting!