

Joe's Pond Association - EWM Meeting Minutes - 1/14/2025

Attendees: Barry Cahoon, Joe Hebert, Scott Burns, Joanne Stewart, Jamie Stewart, Jim Bernotas, Pat Rubalcaba, Sue Bouchard.

Barry Cahoon opened the zoom meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Updates: Rob Stewart has agreed to take on the mapping necessary for the project. Jim Bernotas will take on the equipment and materials necessary for the project in addition to survey.

Joe Hebert thanked Barry for taking on the role of the Director of Water Quality for the JPA and for his efforts to date on the milfoil issue. Barry said that now that the committee has been formed he is feeling more confident the association will prevail. More people need to be involved but the committee felt that as spring comes closer more people will get involved.

Barry said the plan for this meeting was to go through his January 7, 2025 email to us and asked if there were any questions or other ideas. None were indicated.

Education: Joanne Stewart and Sue Bouchard will develop specific brochures to hand out to the JPA members outlining how to identify Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) and what the protocols will be if found. Discussion occurred about handing these out to all members. It was felt that the information could be on one sheet (laminated) using both sides. Discussion went on about where to be printed (Leahy Press) or maybe the new print shop in West Danville. They could be distributed with the 2025 Directory coming out in May and available at the Spring meeting. One on one contact with each member is important. Sections of the pond need to be set up with recruits per section (camp roads) with the ability to geolocate and manage the identification. Camp owners will mark a suspected EWM area and trained people will confirm the identity for the harvesters.

Further discussion occurred about giving JPA members training on how to identify EWM. The State has a 'VT invasive patroller program' but this was felt to require too much commitment from members and that a more focused training on EWM identification would better meet JPA needs. The consensus of the committee was to focus on JPA needs and use all resources required. Kelli Merrill has offered to conduct an EWM ID training and Barry to follow up with Kelly.

Jim Bernotas gave his experience on how hard it is to harvest the EWM. Education is very important and it is critical to not stir up the mud bottom which prohibits visibility if stirred up. Anyone interested in harvesting will need training.

EWM Plan: Henretta Splain is in charge of the EWM plan which is required for the State. The draft plan of 11/24/2024 is:

Plan Objective

Milfoil Response Priorities

- a) Form Milfoil Committee
- b) Implement management practices to reduce or eradicate existing infestation(s)
- c) Conduct intensive lake-wide littoral zone surveys to identify any additional infestations, monitor management practices
- d) Engage and educate JPA membership so that all are enabled to identify EWM, conduct surveys and support however possible the work of the JPA in milfoil management
- e) Develop and maintain a digital mapping database to track all pertinent milfoil management information spatially and temporally
- f) Sustain and support an effective greeter program at the boat access
- g) Apply for any grant funding available for support of plan priorities
- h) Apply for regulatory approvals as needed for management activities
- i) Acquire equipment and any other infrastructure determined necessary to support plan priorities
- j) Communicate frequently with the JPA membership on milfoil related topics through email, the JPA website, Joe's Pond Blog, JPA meetings and other available media and opportunities
- k) Collaborate with VT ANR and the towns of Cabot and Daville as necessary

Grants: Pat Rubalcaba has agreed to do the grants required. Pam and Joe Hebert have started the process since they have the experience in getting the grants for the greeter program. They are training Pat. Joe stated that the greeter program historically asks the towns of Danville and Cabot for \$750 per year each and this is being bumped up to \$5000. Kim Jensen advised to ask for more since the management portion and more pages, and more surveys, need the grants to be enhanced. Also necessary is to record 'in-kind' hours by volunteers. The time spent by this committee needs to be recorded too.

Regulatory: Scott Burns has agreed to assist in making sure the plan and committee will meet all regulatory requirements. Our current emergency permit for a Rapid Response Control Activity was issued on 9/23/24 and is good for 3 years from the date of issuance. It authorizes non-chemical EWM control activities including hand pulling, benthic barriers and diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH) subject to the conditions of the VT Aquatic Nuisance Control General Permit (ANCGP). There are several requirements pertinent to conducting a DASH project for which the JPA has initiated contacts potentially to arrange for a project in the spring. It may be helpful if Scott can help ensure we are fulfilling our numerous regulatory obligations under the ANCGP, such as shore line landowner notification. Scott stated that this information is helpful. He is familiar with getting to know the regulators personally to get flexibility with the regulatory community. Will meet with them.

Mapping: Rob Stewart is researching software options that will best fit JPA needs. Maps will include data layers. Spatially and temporally tracking all things milfoil at Joe's Pond.

Surveys: Contract surveys (Arrowhead) is the responsibility of the JPA Board. Barry also told Jim Bernotas he has a big job with the survey coordination and the equipment and material management and that he should not hesitate to ask for help. The plan of the survey is to divide the shoreline into sections, designate a section coordinator who will be responsible to recruit surveyors from the membership, provide them with marker buoys and report EWM discoveries to the committee.

General Discussion: Barry stated that no buoys for the benthic barriers were placed after the barriers were put down. Also, our permits require that no more than 4 cm of sediment can be allowed to accumulate on the barriers. If more sediment is found than they need to be pulled up. Benthic barriers have issues. ASAP in the spring the buoys need to be installed to mark existing milfoil locations to help avoid boats passing through and causing fragmentation. More discussion about the buoys; size, color, need to educate the public and where to store. Scott asked if the buoys will be tracked on the map. DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting) has constraints. So far there is only one company found that can do this. Jim Bernotas talked about his experience in hand pulling EWM. Buoyancy is a problem and the water becomes cloudy very quickly. On Jim's last dive (with niece) he mostly found individual stalks of EWM (this is good) and one dense patch which was hard to pull. Jim wishes to see this suction harvester and what tools will be used.

More discussion occurred about Benthic barriers; how long are they effective, are they just allowed between spring and fall, if left too long then all plant life is destroyed allowing a bare patch for EWM to seed itself. Scott said we can always check the barrier, pull it to see if it is effective and have a dialogue with the regulators (Olin Reed of ANR).

Jim described that we have volunteer divers; some with equipment and some with no equipment. To harvest EWM when just snorkeling is too difficult unless plants are within 24 inches of surface. There are platforms available that have compressors and <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/10/050> air hoses for snorkelers to dive deeper without having to surface. Jim stated that normal diving gear is cumbersome and will reach out to the individual volunteers and get an inventory of what they have. Joe Hebert says to not hesitate to ask for money from the JPA in this regard. Other equipment necessary are buoys, mesh bags, etc.

The next committee meeting will be February 11 at 3:00 pm. It will be a zoom meeting and an agenda will be attached to the email link for the zoom meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:14 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Jamie Stewart