



Whatcom County Horticultural
Pest and Disease Board
1000 N Forest St
Suite 201
Bellingham, WA 98225

Regular Meeting

Whatcom County Horticultural Pest and Disease Board
Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:00pm

Lynden Library
216 4th Street
Lynden, WA 98264

MINUTES

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order

Roll call and determination of quorum

We have a Quorum

Assignment of Chair

Chris Benedict introduced the question of nominating new Presiding Chair (Mat Maberry was previous chair, has since left the board). Presiding Chair responsibilities were discussed; initiating actions and moving meeting forward.

Allen Brown stated his willingness to take on the role of Presiding Chair

Melissa Bedlington nominated Allen Brown as Presiding Chair

Kay Oakley seconded the nomination

Allen Brown unanimously approved as Presiding Chair

Allen Brown accepted the role of Presiding Chair

Public Comment

There was no public comment

New Member Introductions

Brett Pehl – consultant for CHS, Inc

Andrew Taylor Taylor – Cloud Mountain Farm

[Existing members also introduced themselves]

Old Business

Chris Benedict discussed the delay in meetings during 2019; his sabbatical from January-June 2019 as well as difficulty filling the two empty seats precluded meetings

Chris Benedict discussed improving the board's web presence. Members will be sent link to updated site for review. Updates will be discussed at next meeting. Chris Benedict also mentioned specifically outreach to garden stores relating to cracked seed potato tubers and similar issues:

Allen Brown explained that at November 2018 meeting Dr. Debbie Inglis gave a presentation regarding her discovery of tubers infected with potato vine virus at local farm stores.

Chris Benedict discussed ways to improve outreach from board to community.

Allen Brown asked about using space in the new Farming Pavilion at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds during event season.

Chris Benedict offered to reach out to the **Weed Board** about combined display

Review of Board purpose and RCW

Chris Benedict discussed the stated purpose of the board:

Receive complaints from the public (can be anyone, could be someone on the board) of unmitigated agricultural pest (large apple tree not being managed, potato field left unmanaged/lots of volunteers)

Inspect field/land and enforce mitigation. Employ persons to carry out mitigation (example pay CHS to spray a problem field)

Pro-actively educate the public

Melissa Bedlington asked: What is funding mechanism for mitigation?

Chris Benedict: This is a gray area: property owner/manager is given a bill, but if it's not paid there is no specific funding to pay for it (Melissa Bedlington: last year potato commission paid for something) County Council and executive office have not supplied funds. Yakima County has funds and paid staff (although slightly different situation with tree fruit industry)

Chris Benedict: committee could recommend creation of these funds to county council or county executive, should be soon because we're at the end of the county budget biennium. Example: Weed board has full time staff who both educate public and pro-actively mitigating issues.

Kay Oakley: Skagit Co Pest Board has full time employees that scout and treat

Chris Benedict: that board has existed somewhat longer (~5 years longer), more active possibly due to larger tree fruit industry in Skagit

Kay Oakley: Skagit County Pest Board is scouting based on local industry requests

Chris Benedict: The impetus should come from the board recommendation, but as a county employee he can approach the appropriate people/departments

Allen Brown: Have we had any complaints?

Chris Benedict: One complaint in 2018 that did not go anywhere, complaints 'should' happen at meetings, but there has not been any public participation. [Shows website] This possibly demonstrates the lack of awareness of the board and it's function [directed members to website for more detail/RCW]

Kay Oakley: What's the list of priority pests that the board made:

Chris Benedict: Shows list from WSU website:

Blueberry Scorch Virus, Potato Virus Y, Potato Late Blight, Apple Maggot

Allen Brown: Andrew Taylor brings new perspective (organic veggies) – any specific concerns not addressed here?

Chris Benedict: For the record, Apple Maggot inclusion on list was at the behest of Cloud Mountain

Andrew Taylor: What magnitude of pests are we interested in?

Allen Brown: Potato example (something that could economically impact an operation that's coming from outside the operation) Potato grower could enter a complaint with the pest board to have a neighboring gardener remove potatoes that have late blight. Also negotiation is possible (example Melissa Bedlington has offered landowner potatoes from her operations harvest in exchange for destroying infected plants adjacent to fields) Also blueberry example: if a neighboring field to mine has scorch virus, during pollination season with movement of bees between fields, it could be transmitted to my field and end up wiping out the entire field.

Andrew Taylor: Flea beetle, aphids, cabbage maggot, blight in tomatoes, club root

Club root is largest concern for transmission between growers and public (others are generalized pests that couldn't be localized to one grower)

Bret: Picture of mummyberry is on website but it's not on the list?

There are a couple of un-sprayed fields with mummyberry concern

Allen Brown: it's used as a 'canary' field by growers (which is why they haven't been removed, growers scout it to inform their timing of spray in their own fields)

Chris Benedict: let's add discussion of priority pest list to agenda at next meeting

Chris Benedict (related to mummyberry): WSU/Whatcom Conservation District has added 4 new weather stations in Whatcom that have soil moisture sensors, some in areas that were not covered otherwise. Mummyberry Model developed by Tobin Peever will be updated in the next couple weeks:

Stations are 'Tier 2' stations, additional station at Eastview Blueberry Farm will catch southwestern winds that have been missed by older station

Allen Brown: There are a couple abandoned blueberry fields around county

Melissa Bedlington: Does the BB commission spray it?

Allen Brown: So far it hasn't been an issue, he hasn't found mummyberry in that field

Enterprise road field DOES have it and is actively used by industry as a 'canary' by growers (see above note)

While scouting use is important, mummyberry is a horrendous pest – might need to consider eradicating

Melissa Bedlington: Do we need permission to go onto these properties to spray?

Chris Benedict: The process is: complaint needs to be filed and officially documented, then land owner is notified, if the landowner doesn't reply, then the board can take action

Allen Brown: takes lots of spray over time – probably better solution to destroy field:

Also a problem is that mummyberry isn't visible without a close inspection; digging in the ground you're concerned with

WSU did get permission to do testing on the Enterprise field and found lots of pests

Who is land-owner (someone who isn't always in county, has caretaker)

Allen Brown: Research says it can move up to 20 miles from source

Chris Benedict: Excited to get updated model up

Degree day model based on air and soil temperature and soil moisture. Before the new AgWeatherNet stations came online there wasn't soil moisture info for Whatcom County. Additionally, these soil sensors are installed at 2 inches (vs typical 6 inches) which is perfect for mummyberry

Allen Brown: Scouting happens – they look for when spores are ready to go but plant needs to be ready to receive spores, so scouting is important to not spray too early

Melissa Bedlington: Just one spray or multiple throughout season?

Allen Brown: Multiple sprays across year – it depends on the conditions. If it warms early, spores may release early, then another punch of warm weather spores might be released again. It's only spring, correct?

Chris Benedict: The term is asynchronous. So the population isn't perfectly timed.

Allen Brown: We usually do 3 mummyberry sprays

Andrew Taylor: What do you spray

Allen Brown: Indar is the main product used

Andrew Taylor – is it organic

Brett/Allen Brown: Only option for spray is lime Sulphur, but generally doesn't work, is successful if you physically disrupt the soil before spores are released

Allen Brown: There are lots of organic blueberry farms in eastern WA that are very concerned (there is currently no mummyberry present there)

Chris Benedict: Discussion of changes/updates to pest priority list will be on agenda for next meeting, it's worth lengthy discussion.

Allen Brown: Is there any other new business?

Giant Asian Hornet Presentation : Chris Benedict

Allen Brown: What did WSU release?

Chris Benedict: I believe you're referring to a parasitoid that was unintentionally released from an entomology lab. Current issue is discovering whether it will establish (it's not native).

Presentation is attached – comments below are information not covered on the attached slides

Chris Benedict: Passes around a specimen

Allen Brown: Is there concern about feeding on ripe/over ripe blueberries

Chris Benedict: Possibly? It's unclear, we're still learning

Allen Brown: WFPS meetings would be good way to increase scouting efforts and educate on safety

He is concerned about strawberry harvest it could be used as early sugar source. Workers are low to the ground and vulnerable

Chris Benedict, not in presentation: There have been lots of reports by public, lots of mis-identification

In response to this there will be trapping, WSDA is putting out lots of info

Allen Brown: Concerned that one of the initial sightings was feeding in December and the large presence of bees during berry pollination season

Melissa Bedlington: What is the treatment?

Chris Benedict: We don't know yet, research is ongoing

Allen Brown: During bloom season you wouldn't be able to spray for them in fields due to spray restrictions for bees

Melissa Bedlington: What is the source?

Chris Benedict: It's not known for certain

Kay Oakley: It was likely on an ocean going vessel from port of Vancouver

Chris Benedict: Their venom is used as an aphrodisiac, so there's a possibility an individual attempted to raise them domestically and individuals escaped

Chris Benedict: They're capable of stinging through clothes and beekeeping protective suits

Allen Brown: Are we likely to receive complaints about this?

Chris Benedict: It's not necessarily a pest at this point.

2020 Meeting Schedule Decisions

Chris Benedict: As part of increased outreach to the public we need to set a schedule for this board to meet. That can be as little or as frequently as we want it to be. He suggests 2 to 4 times a year unless otherwise needed. This is how the board has operated in the past. He requested suggestions from board

Melissa Bedlington: Quarterly at least? Summer is worst timing for everyone

Allen Brown: Possibly February, May, September. July and August is hardest. Can we avoid using online polling to choose time and decide times now?

Chris Benedict: That's the intention, we'll choose times now and deal with details like specific location. We could possibly use Henry's office [Ag Central] – or that possibly doesn't meet requirements of public space? There are other options. Let's pick dates and times – is three times a year ok rather than 4? Also let us know about agenda items you'd like to add.

Allen Brown: It will be interesting to see if anyone on the board will have seen [the Asian Giant Hornet] before the next meeting

[General sentiment] Hope not!!

Kay Oakley: It becomes an economic concern is you're worried about workers

Chris Benedict: It's already being addressed by other agencies – if there's already difficulty funding mummyberry control it might not be an appropriate thing to put energy toward.

Melissa Bedlington: It's already being addressed and outreach I happening by bigger boards than this one

[Discussion of specific dates in May and September] General consensus on third Tuesday of February, May and September

May 19, 2020 at 1:00pm

September 15, 2020 at 1:00pm

February 2021 (TBD)

Melissa Bedlington: I'll make a motion to do meetings 3 times a year on the third Tuesday of February, May and September, place to be determined

Allen Brown: I'll second that. All in favor?

Kay Oakley, Brett, Andrew Taylor: Yes

Allen Brown: Do we have any other new business we should cover today?

Kay Oakley: I have a question: Melissa Bedlington and I will go to potato board next week and will ask about the bacterial ring rot field. Should we just tell them there just isn't the funding to pursue that and that the commission should continue with their own spray protocol as they did last year. They paid to have it sprayed twice last year and they are wanting the pest board to assume responsibility for it since it's an economic impact for them but there's no funds to do that. And do we just need to go back and report that to the potato board?

Chris Benedict: I will once again try to ignite a financial fire under some of the folks in the executive office about this. I would urge that [the potato commission] do the same. Because what's the point of this board if it can't function? I love meeting with you all, but...

Melissa Bedlington: If there are also concerns in berries etc where we want someone to go out and take care of a field that's useful

Chris Benedict: It might be useful for all the commissions to write a letter of support. Do you want me to try to make that [financial support from county] happen?

Allen Brown: Do you want support prior to approaching the county? Or do you want to talk to the county and see what they say and then approach commissions?

Chris Benedict will try to be at potato commission to address this and will approach the county. He thinks that the commissions have the power to make that happen and it's simply putting money into a reserve fund, we're not talking about a ton of money. The bill for the sprays that the potato commission paid for was \$700 correct? [Melissa Bedlington confirmed]

Kay Oakley: Otherwise we have no means for mitigation if it comes up. It would be best to have some kind of 'bank' there so action can be taken quickly

Melissa Bedlington: If you have no money you have no power

Chris Benedict: Technically this board still does since it can bill the land owner, but having cash allows us to put it into emergency reactionary phase and we don't have to go through that process with the land owner.

Allen Brown: It can happen a lot quicker, a faster response time when you need it.

Chris Benedict: These type of things you need to react immediately.

Melissa Bedlington: A lot of times when you see a problem it's already too late

Chris Benedict: If I don't make it to the [potato commission] meeting could you two [Kay Oakley and Melissa Bedlington] bring it up [That the county is being approached about funds and a letter of support would be helpful] He will talk to other commissions [raspberries and blueberries].

Melissa Bedlington: The potato ringrot field wasn't even owned by the potato grower, the landowner doesn't care if it gets sprayed or not. [The potato commission] is just being proactive to protect the rest of us who are still growing potatoes.

Chris Benedict: I heard from another pest board that [stipulation for paying for mitigation sprays] should have been in the lease. What landowner is going to know that?

Melissa Bedlington: Many land rental agreements are hand-shake

Chris Benedict: And who could predict that [the potato grower] would go out of business? Does this sounds like a plan?

Kay Oakley: Yeah, because we have to go back and say something.

Melissa Bedlington: It came up at the last meeting and we didn't have a response.

[Discussion of details of how the most recent potato commission meeting went regarding spray of potato ringrot field of concern]

Melissa Bedlington: Motion to adjourn

Brett: I'll second that

Allen Brown: All in favor?

All: Aye!

