

## **Open Work Session**

**January 5, 2021**

### **Discussion on Invasive Species Management**

Ms. Victoria Spice, Invasive Species Coordinator with the Lower Shore Land Trust, and Dr. Judith Stribling, Chairperson of the Natural Resources Conservation Advisory Committee, came before Council. Ms. Spice said, on behalf of the Lower Shore Land Trust and the Natural Resources Conservation Advisory Committee, she thanks Council for their leadership and the opportunity to give Council a brief update on what they have accomplished so far.

Ms. Spice said, in 2019, the County invested \$25,000 to fund an interim Invasive Species Coordinator to build the partnership for regional invasive species management, and to apply for the Chesapeake Bay Trust Outreach and Restoration Grant. She said they were able to use that \$25,000 as a match and leverage an additional \$72,000 towards this initiative. She said they began work at Pemberton Park and identified another restoration site.

Ms. Spice said, in 2020, the County invested an additional \$19,000 to continue funding the invasive species coordinator to form this partnership, build an app for tracking invasive species, and continue the restoration at Pemberton Park and Leonard's Mill Park.

Ms. Spice said, as Council can see, a tremendous amount of time, money and effort has gone into this initiative, and it is really because of places like Pemberton Historical Park, which is a reminder about how disastrous it can be when they ignore invasive species. Referring to her slide, Ms. Spice said the picture on the left was taken in spring 2019 when they had over 20 acres of wisteria blanketing the forest at Pemberton Park. She said this was after about four to five years of just kind of letting wisteria go. She said, in the winter of 2019, they were able to work with the County Parks Department and mow paths throughout the park, and really unveil the forest so they could analyze the forest's health and see what they were working with. She said, between spring and fall of 2020, they did three herbicide applications to Pemberton, and they identified the next phase of management for this project. She said they will be moving into a tree removal phase over this winter and spring, and some selective cutting.

Ms. Spice said, at Leonard's Mill Park on the other side of town they had 1.5 acres of Japanese knotweed infested along the banks of the creek. She said this invasive species was so dense that there really was no fishing access along the creek, and the creek banks were actually starting to erode and increasing the sediment into the creek itself. Referring to her slide, she said they can see in spring 2020 what it looked like, and then in fall of 2020, and that was just after one treatment. She said they hope to do an additional treatment and eradicate that species at that park.

Mr. Dodd asked how it got there, to which Ms. Spice responded, invasive species are very invasive, so more than likely it was from another seed source down the bank that was transported through the water. She said because of the proximity to Route 50, it also could have been from the roadways. She clarified, there is really no one point location for where it could have come from. She said she did get a call from a person who noticed a Japanese knotweed infestation behind Kohls, so it looks like it has kind of spread back there as well, so just down the creek a little bit.

Ms. Spice said, with the County's support to date, again, they have continued the treatment of over 13 acres at some of the County parks. She said they recognize that invasive species are a major problem in the County alone, and landowners and farmers cannot solve the problem individually, so they banded together over 20 partners to form the Partnership for Regional Invasive Species. She said these are federal, State, and County nonprofit partners to form this prism, and they have also created a steering committee and a workgroup, and identified a new restoration project from leveraging this network. She said at Cypress Park in Pocomoke City they have identified funding for that project to take place this spring. She said they have developed fact sheets and a comprehensive 80-page document on some treatment and management efforts for landowners and land managers to be able to use to manage invasive species. She said they have leveraged support from some municipalities on this effort, such as Pocomoke City and the City of Salisbury. She said they have identified an app for tracking invasive species so they can really understand the extent of the problem they have here on the Lower Shore, and have begun logging those. She said they have training modules and tutorials for County Park employees and three other partner groups for species identification treatment protocols. She said they have developed an outreach campaign to their Lower Shore Land Trust Easement Grantors, members, and volunteers to get the word out about invasive species.

Ms. Spice said, looking forward, they are again going to continue to expand the capability of the prism by adding additional partners. She said they are going to adapt the training modules to reach a broader audience so they can reach more people. She said they are going to continue to identify unique funding sources so they can continue the removal and restoration of invasive species on County public and private land. She said, most importantly, they want to establish a self-sustaining management program for invasive species, so that is really going to be a lot of needs to get that self-sustaining program up and running, and they hope to be able to meet with the County Executive to discuss what that may look like in the next coming weeks.

Mrs. Acle thanked Ms. Spice and Dr. Stribling for being here. She said she and her daughter had the privilege to go on one of the tours that Mr. Walston did at Pemberton Park with the invasive species, and it was just amazing to her, so much so that her daughter made her yard into a native plant.

Mrs. Acle then asked if there are any education partnerships they are doing locally, to which Ms. Spice responded, they do have this outreach component, which is going to be partnering with the Wicomico Environmental Trust and Nanticoke Watershed Alliance to train some of their volunteers on invasive species identification, removal and restoration, and how to replace those invasive species with natives, so that is where they are focusing their outreach efforts. She said the emphasis is more on some of their other environmental organizations and their volunteers and members.

Mrs. Acle suggested that Ms. Spice keep that in mind and somehow reach their youth. She said they do have a Youth Advisory Council now within the County, and she knows this is something that maybe they would be interested in, to which Ms. Spice responded, absolutely. She said she thinks these sites especially have a lot of potential to demonstrate just how disastrous invasive species can be, and how critical they are to get managed, especially for the youth to see.

Mr. Cannon said he was on the same tour with Mrs. Acle, as well as Mr. McCain, and it was a great tour. He said it was very informative, and he is glad to see there has been some progress. He said, when going through this tour, he found personally that he thought it was very overwhelming to see what they had to do, so he is glad to see the successes Ms. Spice demonstrated in the presentation she has given Council.

Mr. Cannon said he was surprised at the numbers as far as the funding is concerned because, to him, it seemed very low. He said he would certainly think there could be, or should be, more funding to address this considering what the long-term problems could be if they do not address it right away and make it happen. He said he would take that into consideration as well.

Mr. McCain thanked Ms. Spice and Dr. Stribling for being here, and said he is the Councilmember who serves on the Natural Resources Advisory Committee, and he has been on that Committee, actually, since they started it in 2008. He said he thinks this is one of the biggest achievements they have been able to do, and it is amazing how Ms. Spice has been able to leverage that with a small amount of money and accomplish what she has. He said the issue with invasive species is just so prevalent throughout the County, and he will use wisteria as an example. He said, when riding around rural roads he just sees multiple places where the infestation is just dramatic. He said he wishes they had the picture from Pemberton of the woodlands back from six or seven years ago when it was a mature woodland, and then all of a sudden once it got infested with the wisteria, it just totally killed all the trees. He said they see pockets of this all over the County, so he thinks the education aspect is important, particularly for private landowners to recognize it and be able to educate them and help them combat these invasive species because it is something they have to live with. He said it is going to be an ongoing battle because it is very prevalent.


Mr. Dodd said he also sees the wisteria all over the County in different residential areas, and it gets him how some of the property owners will cut the grass around it and let it grow. He said, if it was him, he would cut through it.


Dr. Stribling said this was one thing that really struck their Committee early on a number of years ago, and their forestry representative on the Committee was the one who brought this to their attention and said they need to do something now. She said it causes economic harm as well. She said it is damaging to their ecosystems, their natural forests, and it is really damaging to their agricultural and forestry economies as well. She said they will be moving forward with greater funding and get more work done.

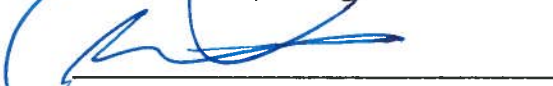
Mr. McCain said he has another great example. He said he has a landowner who is an out of town landowner, and this is just through his business, but just a couple of months ago the landowner asked him to go look at a piece of property that was woodland. He said it is in Tyaskin, and he went to the track of land, but he had to call the landowner and ask him when the last time he was there was. He said the landowner said he had not been there in 15 to 20 years, so he sent the landowner some pictures. He said wisteria had just taken over the whole track and there was no timber, it was just taken over by wisteria.


Mr. Holloway asked if bamboo is considered an invasive species, to which Ms. Spice responded, yes, and it is everywhere. There was no further discussion.

  
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Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

  
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Joe Holloway, Vice-President, District 5

  
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John T. Cannon, At-Large

  
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William R. McCain, At-Large

  
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Ernie Davis, District 1

  
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Nicole Acle, District 2

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Josh Hastings, District 4

  
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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator