

Memorandum

To: Greenbelt City Council

From: Advisory Committee on Trees
Charles Jackman, Robert Trumbule, and Ethel Dutky

Date: October 30, 2007

Subject: Proposed Greenbelt Invasive Species Control Policy

The Advisory Committee on Trees (ACT) was asked by the City Manager to consider the problem of invasive species for the City of Greenbelt and propose a policy to deal with this issue. The “Invasive Species” issue cuts across the interests of other advisory boards and committees for the City of Greenbelt. We have received feedback from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), the Recycling and Environment Advisory Committee (REAC), and the Forest Preserve Task Force (FPTF) and have revised the document accordingly. We submit the attached document as a possible City of Greenbelt Invasive Species Control Policy. A brochure is also provided, which identifies problematic plants in the Greenbelt area.

ACT members have discussed this “Invasive Species” problem at a number of meetings and have visited City woodlands with several types of invasive species. ACT members have also visited Greenbelt Housing Incorporated (GHI) areas, which have been treated with invasive species control measures. Robert Trumbule, a member of ACT since its inception, is a member and co-founder of the Maryland Department of Agriculture Invasive Species Council. He has worked for the state of Maryland Department of Agriculture over the past 20 years. Mr. Trumbule’s work has focused on slowing the spread of invasive species, insects, and pathogens. The ACT members have also considered the books “Life Out of Bounds” by Chris Bright and “Invasion Biology: Critique of a Pseudo Science” by David I. Theodoropoulos for different points of view on this topic.

City of Greenbelt

Invasive Species Control Policy

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Photos and Descriptions of Invasive Plants of Concern..... attached flyer

Factors in Setting Priorities for Areas to Control Invasives

As a general guideline, only large tracts of land (in excess of 5 acres), in which native species are seriously threatened with extinction, should receive treatment. Exceptions to this are:

- smaller tracts of land being reforested by planting native species
- sites where an invasive species appears that was not previously present in the City

The factors listed below should be used in determining what sites should receive treatment when resources are available. It must be realized that once control of invasive species in an area has begun, there must be a commitment to continued control in the area for the indefinite future. This is because *the invasive species present are not the primary environmental problem of the treatment site. Generally, the underlying problem is that the ecosystem is in a disturbed condition.* It is important to determine that control methods will not create further disturbance and perpetuate or worsen the problem.

Factors Which Indicate a High Priority for Treatment

The conditions listed below are examples of instances where control of an invasive species may be needed. They do not mandate action. Action to eradicate should only be undertaken after a thorough examination of the site and its characteristics. Action plans prepared by City staff should be reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Trees (ACT), the Recycling and Environment Advisory Committee (REAC) and the newly formed Forest Preserve Advisory Board (FPAB) prior to implementation, to ensure community support.

Significant native species present are threatened- Uncommon native plants (perfoliate bellwort, lady slippers, etc.) or less common ecosystems (ie. wetlands or oak barrens) should have high priority for control.

Large tracts with limited invasion by non-natives should have a high priority. Attacking the invasive species should occur from the inside, out.

In general, *areas with the fewest invasive species* should have priority over those with the most. This approach allows dollars spent to control invasive species to cover more acres and natives present can regenerate cover to slow re-invasion.

Areas found with *invasive species, not previously seen in the City*, should receive high priority for control.

Areas previously receiving treatment for invasive species. Once an area is treated, it should have very high priority for continued control, even at the expense of other areas not yet under control.

Older forest stands should be of a higher priority for control of invasive species than younger stands.

Areas reforested by the City with native tree species should receive high priority for control of invasive species until trees are well established.

Factors Indicative of a Low Priority for Control of Invasive Species

Attempts to eradicate invasive species from land with the following characteristics have a very low likelihood of success and so have the potential to waste resources that could be used to address more important environmental issues.

Small tracts of land with large amounts of edge habitat. Particularly small tracts between houses (less than 5 acres) with heavy infestations.

Tracts of land where invasive species are the dominant plant type. In particular, young forest stands that were generated by natural seeding, where the dominant species are non-native.

Potential Sites for Control of Invasive Species

The Advisory Committee on Trees and staff will undertake an evaluation of woodland areas to determine what parcels of land should receive the highest priority for protection. They will make their recommendations to Council. Action plans for specific parcels should be reviewed by PRAB and REAC prior to approval by City Council. Some possible sites for removal of invasives are:

North Forest Preserve

This wooded site is between Ridge Road and the USDA farms, between Northway and Research Road. GHI will likely work on the edges of this forest but encroachment is occurring on Canyon Creek with Multiflora Rose and Japanese Honeysuckle. In spots, Japanese Honeysuckle is threatening Perfoliate Bellwort. There are many nice stands of wild flowers in the area, including Pink Lady Slippers and Trailing Arbutus. In the far Northeast corner Japanese stilt grass is invading a lowland flood plain and may threaten stands of native Lily of the Valley and Spring Beauty.

Greenbelt Lake inside the lake path

This area has unique wetland habitats and plants that are threatened by English Ivy, Japanese Honeysuckle, and Multiflora Rose.

Schrom Hills

This is the most significant woodland in east Greenbelt and has low populations of invasive species, except in the disturbed area in the northeast corner.

Walker Cemetery/Indian Springs

Same reasons as Schrom Hills.

Greenbriar Park

Same reasons as Schrom Hills

Old Springhill Lake Golf Course

This area was reforested with native tree species. Control of invasive species should be undertaken if they threaten the young trees survival.

Indian Creek

This is a unique braided stream environment.

Plants to be Considered for Removal Due to Negative Impact

Prior to expending City Funds for control of invasive species, it should be determined that this is the best use of the funds available for environmental projects. Other projects such as storm water control should be part of the equation in determining where funds spent on environmental projects are allocated.

Another consideration is whether a non-native plant is behaving in an invasive fashion. A plant is not necessarily a problem simply because it is a non-native species but must in fact have verifiable evidence of damage to the environment or suppression of native plant species. Plants listed in the attached brochure will only be controlled on sites after staff and public review, based on the criteria set forth in the section titled “**Factors in Setting Priorities for Areas to Control Invasives**”. The Advisory Committee on Trees will review this list periodically and make necessary changes.

The information on the plants in the brochure should be made available to the public through periodic articles in the News Review and distribution of the brochure at City events. Encouraging citizens to avoid use of these plants is the easiest way to have an impact on their spread. Homeowners adjacent to woodlands should be encouraged to eradicate any of these plants in their yards.