Final Draft
Cape Elizabeth Conservation Committee
Greenbelt Invasives Species Management Policy
(9-8-2022)

Introduction

The Town of Cape Elizabeth Conservation Committee is the steward of the greenbelt, including an expanding, 18+ miles of greenbelt trails, and town open space (excluding Fort Williams Park and athletic fields). Alterations, including vegetation removal, on town open space requires *prior* Conservation Committee approval (Chapter 18, Conservation). This policy has been prepared to guide volunteers who want to perform invasives species management on town open space.

Policy Goal

The Invasives Species Management goal shall be to reduce the impact of invasive species on town open space in a manner that preserves the naturally vegetated character of the open space and does not expand "groomed" areas. This policy acknowledges that "there are more invasive species than could ever be controlled"[1] and that resources will be allocated based greenbelt system priorities.

Priorities

Invasive species management projects shall be evaluated based on the following priorities.

1. Trail preservation. The invasives species management project will NOT include discontinuance of town trails or elimination of public access to town open space. Temporary closure during the physical work period may be allowed with the permission of the Conservation Committee.

2. Natural Character. The invasives species management project will not create or expand "groomed areas" in natural open space. Upon removal of invasives species materials, the ground shall be left in a natural, unlandscaped condition. Addition of native plants may be allowed, and may be mulched only within the first year of planting.

3. Tree preservation. Invasives species removal that is intended to preserve existing trees is strongly encouraged.

4. Early intervention. Invasives species removal in areas where invasives are just beginning to take hold and where there is a higher likelihood of significant improvement is encouraged.

Removal methods

The Conservation Committee will consider use of the following methods and best practices to control invasive species:

•Manual. This is the preferred method, and to be effective, must be frequently repeated during a growing season to exhaust a plant's root reserves. It can be used in combination with other techniques.

•Chemical. This method involves the use of herbicides. The exclusive use of herbicides alone is not likely to be an effective long-term solution for controlling invasives. Difficulties include controlling only target plants at the correct time during their life cycle, and the potential health risks to workers and the environment. The committee prefers that herbicides be applied by trained and licensed personnel, and reserves the right to restrict herbicide use to those personnel. In combination with physical methods of reducing the above-ground portion of a plant, herbicides may limit resprouting or effectively control plants when used in combination with other techniques. Typically herbicides are used in small quantities for a stump application immediately after an invasive is cut back, or they are used to control resprouts some time after the cutting. The environmental damage from invasive plants is considered to be greater than the risk associated with the use of non-persistent herbicides.[1] The Conservation Committee has approved use of an herbicide to treat stumps less than 2 inches in diameter after manual removal. Herbicides may not be used in a widespread application or in wetlands, with limited exceptions.

•Biological. This method introduces species-specific predators from the plant's native habitat. The Conservation Committee has used this method by introducing galerucella beetles to control purple loosestrife with some success. This method should only be used under the supervision of professional agencies supported with scientific research that has evaluated potential risks.

•Cultural. This method involves removal of support elements for invasive species, but will not include removal of public access on town open space.

•Disposal. Any invasive species management proposal must include a plan for disposal of invasive materials in a manner that will not otherwise promote spread of invasive species.

Request to remove invasive species

A request to perform invasive species management on town open space shall be submitted to the Conservation Committee at least one week before the scheduled meeting. (Contact the town planner for more information). The request shall include the following information:

1. Contact information. The request shall include the name, address, and contact information for the person making the request.

2. Labor. The contact person shall indicate if the request will be a voluntary effort for invasives species management or if the Conservation Committee will be asked to perform the work. Volunteer efforts should include an estimate of how much work will be done, the size of the area impacted, and who will do the work. Requests for the Conservation Committee to do the work should note that the committee will evaluate the request in the context of all greenbelt trail priorities.

3. Method. The request shall describe the method(s) to be used, a map of the area of removal, an estimated timeline to perform the work, disposal methods of invasive species materials, and plan to treat the ground post-removal in a manner that will preserve it in a natural, ungroomed character. Submission of a monitoring post-removal report is optional. Town staff shall be notified when work is complete so that a site visit can be made. If replanting is included in the proposal, plants shall be selected from the Maine native plant list.

4. Meeting. The contact person should try to attend the Conservation Committee meeting when the request will be considered. The Conservation Committee may fund invasive species management projects, subject to greenbelt priorities and available resources.

[1] "Invasive Species Management Program," Conservation Tools.org, Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, 2009, 2015.