

Minutes for the 2020 Annual Meeting
CT Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation,
Saturday, May 2, 2020

Attendance: Bill Adamsen, Phil Arnold, Richard Bailey, John Baker, David Bingham, Florian Carle, Chas Catania, Stan Chandley, Mark Clifton, Jay Coles, Kendra Collins, Ryan Date, Shirley Dion, Steve Dunskey, Jim Gage, Margaret Gosselin, Jerry Graham, Jane Harris, Michele Jenks, Keith Johnson, Susanna Kerio, James Llamas, Bert Malkus, Anna Jennifer McCann, Jack Ostroff, Ellery Sinclair, Jack Swatt, Mark Vollaro

President Jack Swatt called the annual meeting to order at 10:06 am

On a motion by John Baker, seconded by Dave Bingham, the board unanimously waived the reading of the prior year's annual meeting minutes, and approved the minutes.

Treasurer report

Webster Bank Checking Account	\$8,245
Fidelity Brokerage Account	\$35,081
Torrington Savings Bank	\$307
Total	\$43,633

On a motion by Bill Adamsen, seconded by John Baker, the Budget presented by Treasurer Jim Gage was approved.

Jim Gage is stepping down, we are appreciated of his work. A feature on Jim was published in the chapter newsletter and an upcoming piece will be published in Chestnut Magazine.

President Report

This past year started out with a lot of optimism as we had a very successful harvest of new sources of pure American chestnuts to start our first GCOs. Throughout the winter, plans were being made for a busy schedule of planting, grafting, pollinating, finding more trees, and reaching out to more people letting them know about the American chestnut, the blight that nearly wiped it out and what we are doing to bring it back. Then, just like 115 years ago, a previously unknown organism from Asia came to America wreaking havoc. Instead of chestnut trees dying, this time it was human lives. The COVID pandemic has upended our lives, putting many people out of work, cancelling all our activities and made social distancing the new norm. We've had to adapt our ways, such as having meetings over Zoom, working from home and try to do as much as we can without human contact. As we are hearing reports of fewer new cases and optimism that we may soon start reopening our economy, we will need to come up with a plan to continue our work while minimizing the risks of contracting or spreading this horrible disease.

Last year we had a very successful season of outreach events. The Durham Fair was a big draw as usual and we held several smaller but well attended lectures and walks throughout the year at places such as White Memorial Conservation Center and Sessions Woods WMA. Luckily, the CT Flower and Garden Show was held before the pandemic hit. The success of our outreach was noticed in a moderate gain in membership. At this time last year our membership stood at 124, but

this year we are up to 148 members, which is almost a 20% increase. Time will tell if we will be able to continue this momentum. Currently all events are on hold, but I'm hopeful that we might be able to resume at least outdoor activities sometime this summer. I look forward to the day when we are able to engage in these activities again. Building a strong and active membership will be key to sustaining our efforts to restore the American chestnut.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, last year we had a successful harvest season as we were able to obtain seeds from 10 new mother trees in CT. Two of these were trees that we were able to manually pollinate with the help of Eversource, Lewis Tree Service and Distinctive Tree Service. This past winter we were also able to send scion wood from 8 CT American chestnut sprouts or non-flowering trees to Penn State for grafting. There is no guarantee of success, but hopefully this will give us additional sources to plant in our orchards. We will need to continue to find new sources to collect nuts from, or to graft to be able to conserve the genetic diversity of the species. We already have a few leads since late last year we were notified of several chestnut trees from people finding open burrs on the ground in places like UConn Forest in Willington and many private properties. Once the leaves start to open, we will hopefully be able to collect samples to verify them as American chestnut so we can collect the nuts in the fall. Several leaf submissions were determined to be American chestnuts, but the trees were producing infertile nuts. A few were located close enough to driveways that we will be looking to manually pollinate them this season. If we can locate another 10 new mother trees this year, we will be more than half way to our goal of 35 new sources for the Germplasm Conservation Project.

The successes in outreach and nut harvesting have allowed us to move forward with planting several new orchards this year. Although the pandemic is inhibiting us from holding large scale volunteer planting events we are going to try and spread out the preparation and planting work among several volunteers at different times so we can follow state and TACF guidelines for safe practices. The new Germplasm Conservation Orchards will be on private property in the towns of Haddam Neck, Wallingford and Woodbridge. We will also be starting a new seed orchard, our third, with the Winchester Land Trust at Hurlbut Field property on Grantville Rd. Several volunteers have already offered to help with some of these projects, but if anyone else would like to get a chance to get outside for a change and perform some orchard work, just let us know. We have plenty of other established orchards that might need a hand with maintenance as well. As I mentioned earlier, I have attributed our success in outreach as a key factor in being able to find hosts for our new orchards. We have been in contact with at least 12 other land trusts, conservation organizations or private citizens offering the use of their land to help plant chestnuts, the most recent being the Deer Lake Scout Reservation in Killingworth.

While we are dealing with this pandemic, one thing is clear. Science will be leading the way to improve testing for the virus, to develop medicines and vaccines to combat the illness, and to prepare us for future attacks from Novel viruses. In the fight against the Chestnut Blight, we too will need to turn to science to develop a blight tolerant American chestnut tree capable of returning to the eastern forests. The petition to deregulate the Darling 58 transgenic American chestnut tree was submitted to the USDA/APHIS on January 17th. While we had expected the petition to be posted and the 60-day comment period to have opened by now, we are still waiting. Once that does happen, we will be notifying everyone asking to support the deregulation. APHIS's primary reason for regulation of transgenic plants is to make sure they do not become plant pests. More details of the specific topics needed to support the deregulation will be distributed once the public comment period opens. While many organizations distribute prewritten letters of support for their cause, the most effective letters are the ones people write explaining how that decision will impact them personally. While TACF will be looking for support from many scientists in the field, we will also

be looking for all the chestnut citizen-scientist (like us) to explain how they feel the deregulation of the tree will affect their work in the chestnut restoration process.

Thank you,
Jack Swatt

President
CT Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation.

TASK: Look for new trees - Goal for this year is to look for 10 new sources to reach our Chapter goal of 35 different sources.

TASK: Orchards are looking for help for maintenance. If you want to help with these tasks, please let us know

Update on the Mahogany tree

Collection of samples at sleeping Giant and Lockwood farm will happen this spring to complete the data set for Jared.

Election of officer to the board

The Nominating Committee is pleased to advise that the following members are being nominated for the Class of 2022:

Herbert Malkus
Bill Adamsen
David Bingham
Ginny Patsun
James Gage
Mark Vollaro
Phil Arnold
John Baker
Jack Morris

The following Officers are nominated for 2020:

President - Jack Swatt
Vice President - Vacant
Treasurer - Jack Ostroff
Secretary - Florian Carle
President Emeritus - Star Childs

TASK: Volunteer or nominate someone to take the Vice-president seat. The President can appoint an interim person without approval of the board until the next board meeting.

On a motion by David Bingham, seconded by John Baker, the Nominating Committee report was approved.

There will be a lot of vacancy for the board for 2021

TASK: Contact the nominating committee if you want to become a board member. Requirement is being a member in good standing.

The Nominating Committee will be composed of Bill Adamsen, John Baker, and Jane Harris this year.

On a motion by Jack Baker, seconded by Dave Bingham, the Nominating Committee was approved.

No old business

New Business

- New York Times article of interest about chestnuts

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/30/magazine/american-chestnut.html>

- Chestnut Chats episodes every Friday

<https://www.acf.org/resources/chestnut-chat-series/>

- Covid19 will delay the chestnut tree planting on Fall 2020. TACF will send guidelines to keep volunteers safe.

TASK: Express interest to volunteer to help with the chapter tasks

- Ellery Sinclair invite members to the Housatonic Valley Heritage Walk (a walk through a chestnut orchard - Sunday Sept 20th)

<https://www.acf.org/event/housatonic-valley-heritage-walk-american-chestnuts-lost-found/>

- Teacher wanted to host a fundraiser/event with students about chestnuts in the New Hartford area

- For donations: donate to local chapter for local use, donate to headquarter for general purposes

Jack Morris

On a motion by Bert Malkus, seconded by Jack Ostroff, the annual meeting was adjourned at 10:51 am.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

President Jack Swatt called the meeting to order at 11:30 am

On a motion by Jack Ostroff, seconded by Dave Bingham, the board unanimously waived the reading of the previous board meeting minutes, and approved the minutes.

Newly elected Treasurer Jack Ostroff needs authorization to write checks and manage account.

On a motion by Bill Adamsen, seconded by Bert, the authorization was submitted to a vote. The board approved unanimously.

There might be need for more deer fencing budget for the Wilton LandTrust for a potential orchard

Covid-19 – Waiting for TACF recommendations before planning other events.

CT Chapter Science Plan Report

Kendra needs to add the genotyping data to complete the science plan

Kendra will come to CT to John's and Mark's orchard

No inoculation in CT orchards this year due to travel ban

More sampling to do: baby leaves from regions missing from the study (one person job)

Orchard management

Chestnut breeding plan – Jared proposal

Long time plan – Treat selection (genotyping data (%Chinese/American) + blight tolerant traits) to select the future breeding lines

Seed orchards

Selection in the CAES collection – Spiking the punch by planting a few plot of crossings with more resistance – Boost the average blight resistance of the trees

Planting the new seed orchard

Try to start with 130 seeds this year, being creative to have volunteers plants in pot

We need to phenotype all the trees we have in CT, and Genotyping as we go, selecting the breeds based on the phenotype data and Jared/Kendra input.

Susanna Keriö at CAES has RNA capabilities, dry ice and nitrogen production. She will help with the collection at Lockwood Farm and Sleeping Giant

Report by the Outreach and Education Committee

Durham fair might be cancelled – Booth could be in the discovery center for free this year

TASK: Looking for a person to help organizing the volunteering schedule for the fair

Grafting workshop is cancelled – Might have instructional videos/webinar training

New seedling from grafting would be available soon. See end of document for knife suggestions for grafting

Boy scout reservation looked into planting chestnut tree. Jack Swatt and Mark Clifton will look for the possibilities.

TASK: looking for a volunteer to work on this project

Report by the Communications Committee

The headquarter will send info/materials when the FDA comment period opens

Website was updated and simplified

TASK: Add info about the seed orchard and GCOs

Social -Share info/picture

Share about the chestnut bee

Point is to show how chestnut influence other species

Old Business

Vote and publication of the resolution sparked interest of several chapters which might do the same

Locating American sources for sampling and germplasm conservation.

Invasive species: draft coming up

New business

Jack Morris will coordinate the effort to send people to identify trees with GPS Coordinates.

Jack Swatt suggested to make Florian Carle “Research Coordinator” for the chapter.

Science teacher working with CAES wants to be involved and propose activities for their students.

Ellery Sinclair has a contact who could donate pot made out of dehydrated cow manure. He will check with him if the pots will be deep enough for chestnut purposes. 8x11 would be ideal for deep root pots

On a motion by Bert Malkus, seconded by Jack Ostroff, the board meeting was adjourned at 1:11 pm.

Chestnut Grafting Supplies

Knives

The most important character of a grafting knife is that it be sharp – very sharp. As sharp as a razor blade! Some grafters prefer a straight blade (not curved), though both are available. True grafting knives are beveled on only one edge. They come in “left-handed” and “right-handed” versions. If you are right handed, you will likely prefer a right-handed knife. Stainless steel holds an edge very well and won’t rust, but can be difficult (or impossible) to re-sharpen. A softer steel blade can be re-sharpened easily (by a skilled hand).

Folding knives are great in the field (because you can put them in your pocket if you fold them). Fixed-blades work fine at the bench. Budding knives are similar to grafting knives, but have an extra implement: the bark lifter! Sometimes the bark-lifter is on the back (top) of the knife blade itself, and sometimes it’s a separate tool that folds into the other end of the knife handle.

Here are some favorite brands of chestnut grafters:

Tina (German)

Due Buoi (Italian)

Victorinox (Swiss) – hard to sharpen, best to replace when dull

Additional Grafting Supplies

Grafting tape - parafilm, “tough” perforated parafilm, etc.

Grafting wax

Labels/tags – metal write-on, vinyl

Marker, pen, or pencil (depending on label/tag type)

Bamboo stakes (not for workshop, but will need)

Band-Aids!

Sharpening Tools

Whetstone – generally get the best you can afford

Strop