

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

STAFF REPORT

DATE: December 15, 2020
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Abby Armstrong, B.A. (Env.) Environmental Compliance Coordinator
SUBJECT: 2020 Wild Parsnip Program

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT Committee of the Whole accept the Environmental Compliance Coordinator's 2020 Wild Parsnip Program report for information purposes.

BACKGROUND:

Invasive weeds have propagated within Mississippi Mills in areas of uncultivated land, roadside ditches, parkland, and nature trails. This report focuses solely on areas along roadside ditches owned by Mississippi Mills. Under the Weed Control Act R.S.O. 1990, all persons in possession of land must destroy all noxious weeds. At the April 16, 2020 Special Council meeting, Council directed staff to move forward with the 2020 Wild Parsnip Program (Council Res. #136-20). Council further directed staff to bring forward a report following the fall observations of the 2020 Wild Parsnip Program (Council Res. #137-20).

As in previous years, the 2020 Wild Parsnip Program included the use of mechanical means, as well as boom spraying for medium to heavy infestations of wild parsnip and spot spraying for areas of light to very light infestation. For mechanical control methods, the Municipality has a roadside grass cutting program that commences in June, cutting a width of approximately two (2) metres of immediate roadside, after which municipal staff and a contractor cut areas on a scheduled basis for the remainder of the season. The Municipality uses the same infestation rating descriptions and corresponding method of application as the County of Lanark.

Over the past few years, the extent of the infestation on municipal road allowances is widespread with areas of public concern noted within all three Wards. As the road authority under the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, the Municipality is responsible for all weed control on its roads pursuant to the Weed Control Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. W.5.

DISCUSSION:

The 2020 Wild Parsnip Program included continuously monitoring and assessing of areas by municipal staff. The initial spring assessment took place May 15-22, 2020, with a second assessment June 15-21, 2020 that assessed the levels of infestation prior to the spray program and to ensure compliance with landowners/occupants who completed agreements. The spot and boom spraying started August 17, 2020 and was completed August 26, 2020. The post-spray late summer assessment took place from August 31, 2020 to September 2, 2020. Based on the spring assessment conducted May 15-22, 2020, there were no changes to the treatment of individual road segments as identified in the April 16, 2020 report to Council.

The following infestation levels outlined in the below table were noted during the 2020 season.

TABLE 1

2020 DASHBOARD GPS INSPECTIONS (542.114 KM)	PRE-SPRAY - MAY 2020 KM	PRE-SPRAY - JUNE 2020 KM	POST-SPRAY - SEPTEMBER 2020 KM
INFESTATION LEVEL			
NONE	181.202	92.596	204.502
VERY LIGHT/LIGHT	282.606	379.780	299.732
MEDIUM	66.570	58.002	37.88
HEAVY	11.736	11.736	0

The challenging nature of this plant continues to make it a troubling weed to manage. The spray took place slightly later this year, however it is noted that spraying may occur upwards into late fall (October) and is reported to be as effective. The post-spray period illustrates the effectiveness of the overall 2020 Wild Parsnip Program in combatting infested areas.

From observations, the number of kilometres of municipal roads sprayed in 2020 declined by 19 percent from 2019 from 518 kilometres to 420 kilometres. Based on September 2020 observations, 337 kilometres are projected to be included in the 2021 Wild Parsnip Program, a decrease of 35 percent from 2019.

Landowners/Occupants were once again given the option of opting out or adopting a road. The Roads & Public Works Department staff personally delivered 127 opt out letters to residents on June 26, 2020 per Council direction to allow for additional time (Council Resolution 237-20). The Municipality received 43 opt outs after delivery of the June 26, 2020 extension letter. There was a difference of 68 participants in opting out from 2019 (195) to 2020 (127), while the number of Adopt-A-Roads remained the same. Four (4) roads were adopted in 2020 – Bennies Corners, Camelon Road, Clayton Lake

Road, and Gleeson Road, while 127 landowners/occupants chose to opt out, and although satisfied with the level of effort brought forward of many opt outs and Adopt-A-Road participants, 24 reminders were required to ensure their continued efforts.

Staff worked with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks on the advertising and notification mandated under the spray program. At a minimum, advertisements in the local newspaper and signage at the spray location(s) was included. Advertisements included the ability of individuals to contact the Municipality for further information on the program, including opting out.

The 2020 Wild Parsnip Program required amending due to the impact of the pandemic, however staff continued to ensure all health and safety and regulatory requirements were followed during these uncertain times. Due to the extensive control required of noxious weeds, continued assessment and monitoring of the plant is important.

As there are numerous invasive species throughout the Municipality, staff continue to work with the Province and the County to move forward on best management practices. Based on the findings from the September 2020 assessment, projections for the 2021 Program are such that 37.88 kilometres will have medium infestation and 299.732 kilometres will have very light/light infestation levels, however as with the 2020 program, due to the possibility of unobserved basal rosettes and/or plant growth, after further review of the infestation levels during the spring assessments, adjustments to the 2021 Wild Parsnip Management Program may occur.

OPTIONS:

Report is for information only.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Roads and Public Works budget has \$60,000.00 in its Operating Budget for wild parsnip to ensure coverage of the program along with the needs of regular roadside operations and maintenance, including grass mowing, weed spraying product, labour, equipment, and mechanical and boom/spot spraying.

2020 Wild Parsnip Program Costs

Method	Total
Boom and Spot Contract (420 km) HST incl.	\$27,086.95
Mowing, Supplies (all roads) HST incl. (as of Oct. 31/2020)	\$14,188.90
Total	\$41,275.85

Projected 2021 Wild Parsnip Program

Method	Total
Boom and Spot Contract (337 km) HST incl.	\$22,836.07
Mowing, Supplies (all roads) HST incl. (as of Oct. 31/2020)	\$14,614.57
Total	\$37,000.64

Note:

1. Costs estimated based on a 3% increase to account for inflation.
2. Due to the pandemic, additional staff and resources were not contracted to aid with the 2020 Wild Parsnip Program.

SUMMARY:

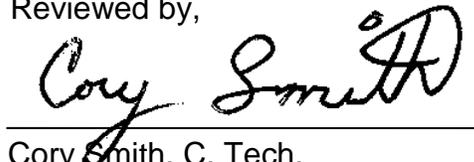
In 2020, Council approved the continuation of the removal of wild parsnip by mechanical and herbicide means with direction to staff to monitor the effectiveness of the program. The Roads and Public Works Department monitored throughout the 2020 season and has determined that the herbicidal (boom and spot) spraying program was effective in controlling the growth of the plants; however, the overall efficacy of the program at large requires evaluation over multiple years of mechanical and herbicidal treatments due to the dormancy of the plant. Based on the findings from the late summer 2020 program observations, projections for the 2021 Program are such that 37.88 kilometres will have medium infestation and 299.732 kilometres will have very light/light infestation levels. The areas will be reassessed in the spring of 2021. While combatting noxious weeds such as wild parsnip, the vision is to reduce reliance on brushing, mowing, and spraying, while moving toward restoration.

Respectfully submitted,



Abby Armstrong, B.A. (Env.)
Environmental Compliance Coordinator

Reviewed by,



Cory Smith, C. Tech.
Acting Director of Roads & Public Works

Approved by,



Ken Kelly
Chief Administrative Officer