



Center for Public Policy and Administration

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Gordon Hall  
418 North Pleasant Street  
Amherst, MA 01002-1735

tel: 413.545.3940  
fax: 413.545.1108  
www.masspolicy.org



University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst

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Contact: Charles Schweik, 413-230-4906

[cschweik@pubpol.umass.edu](mailto:cschweik@pubpol.umass.edu)

**For immediate release**

**New Smartphone App Now Available to Boost Invasive Species Data Collection across  
Massachusetts:  
Could Help Safeguard State Agricultural and Tourism Economies**

AMHERST, Mass. – Everybody likes maple syrup. But invasive insects like the Asian longhorned beetle can quickly kill thriving maple forests, with potentially devastating results for the maple syrup industry. And invasive plants like bittersweet and goutweed can choke out native plants and disrupt local natural habitats. Whether flora or fauna, invasive species are very real threats to our state's rural-based economy and natural landscapes.

Thanks to a new collaboration between the University of Massachusetts' Center for Public Policy and Administration (CPPA) and the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), efforts to combat these potentially devastating species are gaining momentum. That's because now anyone with a smartphone or a digital camera can help scientists collect valuable data about invasive species throughout Massachusetts.

Charles Schweik, associate professor of public policy and environmental conservation at UMass Amherst, and Jennifer Fish, director of DCR's Service Forestry program in Amherst, have received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to enlist the help of "citizen scientists" to map invasive species using smartphone technology.

The new Outsmart Invasive Species Project lets people learn about, identify and report invasive species in their own time, using the Outsmart Invasive Species iPhone or Android applications, which are available for free through iTunes and Google Play. But a smartphone isn't necessary to help collect and report valuable data. Participants who have digital cameras and access to the Internet can submit data by registering through the free Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System at [www.eddmaps.org/outsmart/join.cfm](http://www.eddmaps.org/outsmart/join.cfm). All Massachusetts data submitted through this website, as well as that collected by smartphone users, will be sent to the Outsmart project team and reviewed by biologists.

Fish stressed the importance of having lots of people from across the state help collect this kind of data. "Invasive species can hurt the environment, businesses and communities," she said, pointing out that the 2008 outbreak of the Asian longhorned beetle in Worcester led to the loss of 30,000 trees. Luckily for the state's agricultural and tourism economies, so far the infestation has been contained. Nonetheless, the 2008 outbreak devastated Worcester's urban canopy and the tree-removal efforts proved a costly blow to the city. "With more people equipped with the tools to identify and report invasive species in their hands while out in the field, we hope to prevent destructive outbreaks like these in the future," Fish said.

“There are already organizations throughout the commonwealth actively working to identify and eradicate harmful bugs and plants. What we’re trying to do is compliment their efforts by allowing Massachusetts residents to communicate directly with these groups about what they see,” said Schweik. The Outsmart Project is already working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River Watershed Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, the Westfield Invasive Species Partnership and the Trustees of Reservations.

To learn more about how you or your organization can get involved — even if you don’t have a smartphone — visit the project website at [www.masswoods.net/outsmart](http://www.masswoods.net/outsmart). You can also check out the Outsmart Invasive Species Project on Facebook, contact the project team by e-mail at [outsmart@eco.umass.edu](mailto:outsmart@eco.umass.edu), subscribe to the Twitter feed [@outsmartapp](https://twitter.com/outsmartapp) or watch the Outsmart YouTube commercial at <http://tinyurl.com/bs5szdj>.

CPPA is the hub of interdisciplinary public policy research, teaching and engagement at UMass Amherst. Its faculty and alumni are effective policy leaders, from the local to the global levels, in addressing topics such as family and care policy, environmental issues, emerging technologies, social inequalities and governance.

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