

SUASCO COOPERATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA 2011 ACTIVITIES

In its second year, the SUASCO Cisma was able to accomplish several meaningful projects supporting its members in their work to control invasive species in the watershed. In addition to the projects described below, the Cisma held full membership meetings in the spring and in the fall. At these meetings, there were informative presentations about the Asian Long-Horned Beetle, and also about the devastating ecological impacts of rising deer populations on the native flora in forests. Members also took advantage of both of these opportunities to share information about their on-going projects.

We are delighted to announce the receipt of a second grant award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to conduct meadow restoration work at 6 sites around the watershed involving 5 member organizations.

SUASCO Cisma Web Site Launched!

www.cisma-suasco.org

The Education and Outreach Subcommittee of the Cisma launched a Web site designed to facilitate information sharing among members. The Web site has plant species identification and management information, a calendar of events, maps, as well as useful reference documents and educational materials. Information about the Cisma's mission, strategic plan, and governance are also available on the site.



Technical Information Sharing and Practical Tools

In 2011, the Early Detection and Control Subcommittee conducted two roundtable discussions that focused on relevant topics including best practices for using herbicides for invasive control. They also hosted two aquatic plant identification trainings with the state of Massachusetts and promoted participation among member towns highway/public works staff in a training session on preventing the spread of invasive species during road work and other public works activities. Finally, the subcommittee created sign templates for posting in control areas to inform the public about an ongoing control project. These signs can be modified and used by members for their own purposes.

Early Detection Surveys Continue

For a second season under a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the New England Wild Flower Society (NEWFS) conducted 4 training sessions around the watershed to teach volunteers to search for and identify 11 early detection/rapid response species. Students from 2 high schools in the watershed participated. In total, this project has involved 139 volunteers who have put in over 1,600 hours surveying state parks, town and land trust conservation properties. A total of 25 towns accounting for 100 sites were covered. Several early detection species were discovered, including mile-a-minute, rusty willow, Japanese stiltgrass, and Brazillian waterweed. Several control projects were implemented as a result of identifying infestations during these surveys.

Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council (RSC) Continues Supporting CISMA Efforts

Generous support from the RSC allowed the CISMA to build its Web site. This support also made possible the purchase of the Stop Aquatic Hitch Hikers signs that are available to members for posting at boat and canoe launches to educate the public on the importance of cleaning boats and related equipment to prevent the spread of invasive species from one water body to another.

THE GREAT WORK OF CISMA PARTNERS THROUGHOUT THE WATERSHED

Chelmsford Stewards Remove Burning Bush

Thad Soulé, Town of Chelmsford

In October of 2011, the Chelmsford Open Space Stewardship (COSS), an all volunteer group, undertook the first phase of an invasive species removal/management project. This phase included removing burning bush from one side the main trail within the George B. B. Wright Reservation. Dozens of six- to eight-foot tall euonymus shrubs were removed from along 200 feet of the trail. COSS used three large weed wrenches purchased from a trust account created for the management of this particular conservation reservation. The removal took several hours on one Saturday with the help of a small tractor to haul the burning bush out of the reservation. These shrubs were burned in a brush pile for disposal. The edge of the trail was replanted with high bush blueberry shrubs. COSS has two site stewards who will regularly monitor and the trails to prevent reinfestation.



Chelmsford Burning Bush removal project had great results at the George B. B. Wright Reservation. Photos show before (top) and after (bottom) shots of two locations treated in the project.

Buckthorn Control in the Old Calf Pasture in Concord

Delia Kaye, Concord Natural Resources Commission

The Old Calf Pasture is a 20-acre meadow near the confluence of the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers. The major goal of the project was to improve habitat for a large population of Britton's violet (*Viola brittoniana*), which is a threatened species in the State of Massachusetts. The meadow was overgrown with dense infestations of buckthorn where annual mowing had created root masses that were too thick to hand pull. There was also a concern that hand pulling could disturb the root systems of the violets. The buckthorn in the field was manually treated by swiping the stems with an herbicide-soaked rag. With this method, there was no transfer of the herbicide to nearby violets. The buckthorn was treated in the Fall of 2009 and again in the Spring of 2010. By the Spring of 2011, the buckthorn infestation was greatly reduced. There are plans to continue monitoring and treating the field over the next several years.



Water Chestnut is a big problem in the watershed, and physical harvesting of the rooted aquatic plants is one of the best ways to work toward controlling it.

Sue Klem is seen here with a hand pulled load of water chestnut from Beaver Pond in Lincoln.

Photos by Ellen Withrow

Town of Lincoln Held its Third Annual Garlic Mustard Pulling Day

Dave McKinnon, Town of Lincoln

In the spring, the Town of Lincoln held its third annual garlic mustard pull in which residents hand pulled 300 large paper trash bags from their own properties as well as from road sides throughout the town. The event was on the first Saturday in May and residents could pick up the paper bags and information on identifying the plants when they registered to participate. The town collected the bags filled with the removed garlic mustard and composted them under black plastic, which kills the plants and prevents reinfestation. Lincoln staff continued to collect bags of garlic mustard for the next few weeks as some residents continued their efforts.

The town has several other ongoing efforts to control invasives. In Pierce Park, Lincoln-Sudbury High School seniors mechanically removed oriental bittersweet, winged euonymus, garlic mustard and Japanese barberry. Town staff, along with interns from the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, manually removed glossy buckthorn from a half-acre section of Town-owned land near Weston Road. Also ongoing is some meadow restoration work in a section of the Flint's Pond Conservation Area as well as hand pulling of black swallow-wort on several town-owned parcels.

Southborough Early Successional Field Restoration Project

Freddie Gillespie, Southborough Open Land Foundation (SOLF)

The Southborough Open Land Foundation embarked on a project to restore early successional habitat in a 6.4 acre section of a larger property co-owned by the Beals family and the SOLF. One of the goals of the project was to restore grassland bird habitat for woodcocks. The former field was overgrown with buckthorn, autumn olive, and bittersweet. Funding was obtained through a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) grant to clear cut the trees and shrubs and treat the buckthorn and some of the other invasives with herbicide. Volunteers assisting with the project included high school National Honor Society students and the local Boy Scout troop. In the following growing season, a woodcock nest was spotted and quaking aspen seedlings were beginning to regenerate.

Mile-A-Minute Control in Westford

Ron Gemma, Westford Conservation Trust (WCT)

Several Westford residents attended the ED/RR training sessions given by the New England Wild Flower Society under a CISMA program funded by a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant during the summers of 2010 and 2011. After the initial training, mile-a-minute was found in Westford at two 5-acre sites—a former plant nursery where yard clippings were recycled/composted; and on private property. Eagle Scout Aziz Rangwala with guidance from the Westford Conservation Trust developed a control plan to address these infestations. He first trained several volunteer residents to be control team leaders. He taught them how to identify the plant, how to manually remove it, and how it should be properly disposed. He then scheduled bi-weekly events in which each newly trained team leader recruited and trained their own group of volunteers. This robust group of volunteers pulled all the visible plants at both sites. Public outreach on the project included local media and an information table at the local Garden Club annual plant sale. The WCT is committed to support the program for the next four years.

Sudbury Weed Education and Eradication Team (SWEET)

Rebecca Chizzo

SWEET has been mobilizing scores of volunteers over the past 3 years by actively educating Sudbury residents and organizing frequent volunteer workdays. The group has focused on town properties and has collected 484 bags of plant and root material. Ms. Chizzo has used garden club events, school science fairs, high school displays, and the Sudbury Conservation Commission web site as venues to raise awareness of the problem. Volunteers have been of all ages, but in particular, middle school and high school students have been very active. For example, the high school boys volleyball team pulled buckthorn and honeysuckle on conservation land as a community service project. Scout groups have participated in “pulling prize” events. SWEET has been making a significant impact controlling invasives on town land in Sudbury—at 99 sites, they have collected 220 bags of garlic mustard. In 2010, the SUASCO Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council provided grant money to purchase equipment and supplies to assist them in their work.

Mass Audubon Invasive Species Mapping Project

Jeff Collins, Mass Audubon

Mapping invasive species infestations is an important tool, not only for setting priorities for control efforts, but also for tracking progress over time. Funding from the Sudbury Foundation and the Intel Corporation has made it possible for Mass Audubon to purchase mobile mapping units and develop a system for identifying, quantifying, and mapping alien species infestations. This past season, middle and high school students were trained to use Magellan mobile mappers and to identify invasive plant species of interest. The students surveyed the Drumlin Farm Sanctuary in Lincoln and mapped the invasive plant populations they found. Mr. Collins was able to add a photo-assist feature to the mapping units to help the users of the units make positive plant identifications in the field.



Littleton Conservation Commission's first attempt to clean up field edges on agricultural lands. (Top two photos are before treatment.) Major targets are Bittersweet and Multiflora Rose.