

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOTO CREDIT: XXXXXXXX

PHOTO CAPTION: NAME of ORG, NAME of ORG, and NAME of ORG (*or* Representatives of conservation groups, area towns, and state and federal agencies) celebrate establishment of the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

20 Conservation Partners Establish Sudbury-Assabet-Concord Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

*Leaders and staff of conservation non-profits, federal and state agencies,
and area towns launch new collaboration*

Sudbury, Mass. – On Friday May 1st, a wide range of conservation colleagues from a variety of non-profit, municipal, state, and federal organizations and agencies gathered at the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge headquarters to launch the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), an exciting new effort to manage invasive species in the SuAsCo watershed. Although this collaborative model is more common in the western U.S., this management area, which includes the land of the Sudbury- Assabet and Concord Watershed, comprising all or part of 36 towns in metrowest Boston, is the first project of its kind in Massachusetts.

Invasive species, such as purple loosestrife, oriental bittersweet, and Japanese knotweed, are capable of growing very aggressively and at such high density that they disrupt natural biological systems and degrade habitat for native plants and wildlife. They have been identified as one of the leading threats to native biodiversity in our region, and control of these species is among the highest priorities for many conservation land managers. Through the SuAsCo CISMA, participants will be able to establish new collaborations, draw upon the experience and expertise of their land management colleagues, and leverage resources for more effective invasive species control.

“Invasives represent one of the top threats to habitat quality on our conservation lands,” said Libby Herland, Project Manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Eastern Massachusetts Refuge Complex. “By working together we can be more effective at controlling invasives and protecting important habitat.”

Faced with the fact that invasive species readily spread across ownership boundaries, group members realize that a collective, regional approach is the only effective way to make significant progress in combating their spread. Activities carried out through this collaboration will likely include establishment of an Early Detection/Rapid Response capability, which will enhance efforts to locate and quickly eradicate invasives that are new to the area. Other efforts will include volunteer training

in identification of invasive plants, professional training on the best way to control invasive plants, and joint on-the-ground efforts to remove invasive plants from conservation areas.

Laura Mattei, Stewardship Director for Sudbury Valley Trustees, expressed the importance of working together. “Managing these invasive species takes a lot of time and effort. Much of our land is bordered by town conservation land and the refuges, and we are each attacking the problem in a different way, setting different priorities. If we don’t work together we will never be able to control this problem.”

The twenty-three participants include conservation non-profits, conservation commissions, and state and federal agencies, each of whom owns or manages conservation land in the watershed or advocates for conservation. Federal agencies are represented by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. Towns already involved include Carlisle, Concord, Lincoln, Marlborough, Maynard, Stow, and Sudbury. Non-profit participants include the Concord Land Conservation Trust, Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, Mass Audubon, New England Wild Flower Society, New England Forestry Foundation, Organization for the Assabet River, Southborough Open Land Foundation, the SUASCO Watershed Community Council, SUASCO Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council, Sudbury River Watershed Organization, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and The Walden Woods Project. The Massachusetts Riverways Program has joined as a supporting member.

Formation of the group, which has been supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Sudbury Foundation, and the Concord, Assabet, & Sudbury Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council, resulted from over two years of planning and discussing the benefits of a collaborative approach to managing invasive species.

There is no deadline to join the CISMA, and other groups will be welcome to join in the coming months. Interested organizations can learn more about the effort at www.fws.gov/northeast/greatmeadows/.

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