

[From Fall 2002]

Invasive Plant Initiative

Across the United States, invasive plant species are increasing in number. Beginning this fall, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is participating in a region wide Invasive Plant Species Inventory and Mapping Initiative. Invasive plant species are nonnative plants which overtake native plants that local wildlife depend on for food and cover. This in turn threatens the ability of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to function effectively to conserve native fish and wildlife and their habitats. In an effort to develop an invasive plant management strategy, the Northeast National Wildlife Refuges (Region 5) are identifying, locating, and mapping invasive species on all refuges. The survey will provide a basic inventory of the type, amount, and location of invasive plant species located on refuge lands.

CNWR staff has identified the six most abundant invasive plant species present on the Refuge. They are: Weeping lovegrass (*Eragrotis curvala*), autumn olive (*Eldeagnus umbellate*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), jimsonweed *Datura stramonium*), common reed (*Phrogmites australlis*), and common mullien (*Verbascum thapsus*). Refuge staff and Interns are currently marking and mapping each of the six plant species found along the refuge roads and trails using a GPS unit. The information collected will be used to guide the development of invasive plant species control, monitoring and evaluation. The data resulting from this survey will also be used to develop various refuge management plans such as the Integrated Pest Management Plan. CNWR staff plan to continue surveying other refuge areas for invasive species in the ensuing years.

Amanda L. Avery
Refuge Biologist, CNWR