

[From Fall 2005]

Invasive Plant Initiative

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is participating in a region-wide Invasive Plant Species Inventory and Mapping Initiative. Across the United States invasive plant species are increasing in number. 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. The survey will provide a basic inventory of the type, amount, and location of invasive plant species located on refuge lands.

Staff has identified the abundant invasive plant species present on the refuge. They are: common reed (*Phragmites australis*), weeping lovegrass (*Eragrotis curvala*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*), Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*), and common mullien (*Verbascum thapsus*). Interns Allison Pierce, Bill Lutz, and Jared Zimmerman are currently marking and mapping each of the seven plant species found along refuge roads and trails using a hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. GPS units use satellite signals to compute positions on the Earth. The information collected will be used to guide the development of invasive plant species control, monitoring and evaluation initiatives. Recently the refuge used the invasive species maps in an initiative to eradicate the common reed (*Phragmites australis*). Staff plans to continue surveying other refuge areas for invasive species in the following years.

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