

# Combining Invasive Plant Management with Hands-on Education and Community Service

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## The Power of Strategic Action ●●●

### Prioritization

- by site: intact forest; critical habitat; RTE (rare, threatened, endangered species)
- by invasive species: early detection, spread quickly, herbicide resistant
- by available resources: strike team, schools, volunteers

### Protecting large areas of intact forest and critical habitat

- strategic focus on outlier populations of invasive plants
- management centered around protection, not control/treatment
  - think acres protected instead of acres treated

### Protecting rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) species

- priority given to invasives encroaching on RTEs

### Identifying priority sites, by invasive plants

- early detection, new to an area or Vermont
- invasives not yet 'on the radar'



Rare plant Draba -protected by Strike team



An invasive plant management "Strike Team" actively manages State Forests and State Parks in SW Vermont through strategic prioritization, and hands-on education and community service programs.



2014-2015  
850 volunteers, ~4,000 volunteer hours, protecting 100's of acres of state land



In addition, 1000's of acres of intact forests and wetlands and critical habitat have been protected by the strike team in 13 State Forests and Parks



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## Strike Team

### Skill & flexibility

- 2 FPR staff trained in identification, assessment & monitoring protocol, data recording, plant phenology
- licensed for pesticide application
- experienced with environmental education
- lead volunteer programs
- when not leading volunteer programs
  - work in dispersed or remote locations
  - work in areas near high risk species or habitats
  - adapt treatments to real-time situations: pollinators, weather, phenology, wildlife issues



## The Power of Volunteers ●●●

### Outreach & customization

- programs combine education & restoration work
- meets demand for ready-made community service projects
- programs are customized to each group, making restoration work available to all ages and abilities



Volunteers learn the basics of plant ID

- programs target groups not traditionally reached by past outreach
- large groups tackle dense populations of invasive plants
  - these sites are easily accessible to public
  - produce super visible results highlighting the rewards of managing invasive plants



- without volunteers, some sites would not be managed

## Volunteers

### Sense of ownership

- chose visible, accessible areas on state lands
- chose high infestation areas, big visual reward
  - low risk to non-target species
- experience gives volunteers the knowledge and confidence to make different choices on their own land



Community service projects give volunteers a sense of ownership and pride in their work

## Schools

### Ready-made programs

- cumulative, hands-on outdoor learning
  - moving experience from management towards restoration
- meets demand for annual field trip combined with curriculum linked learning
- finding schools' have interest in 'adopting' a state park
  - benefit: return year after year
- schools' sharing experiences with other schools
  - word of mouth is generating many more program requests



To set up a program or learn more,  
contact us at [ANR.FPRWeedVolunteers@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FPRWeedVolunteers@vermont.gov)