

## Healthier Watershed

### Invasive Plant Partnership Improves New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed

#### The Challenge

Seven major river basins drain the more than 1,000 square miles of New Hampshire's coastal watershed into the Atlantic Ocean. The region includes diverse ecosystems—coastal bays, forests, agricultural lands, tidal rivers, salt marshes, freshwater rivers, and lakes and ponds. This coastal watershed area provides essential habitats for more than 130 rare native species.

Invasive species pose a major threat to these delicate and diverse ecosystems. Native plants often cannot compete with invasive plants that displace them after becoming established. Invasive species change habitats and make them undesirable to native wildlife.

These important ecosystems within New Hampshire's coastal watershed provide a myriad of natural resources. As such, they need to be monitored, managed, and protected. Doing so effectively requires the resources of not just one individual, group, organization, or agency, but many land managers working together.

#### The Solution

Nearly a dozen agencies and organizations have collaborated to protect the ecology of the New Hampshire coastal watershed from destructive invasive plants. An agreement was signed on May 20, 2008, to form the New Hampshire Coastal Watershed Invasive Plant Partnership (CWIPP), the first of its kind in New England.

Eleven entities make up the partnership, including the U.S. Forest Service; New Hampshire Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Services, Fish and Game, Resources and Economic Development, and Transportation; Rockingham County Conservation District; Natural Resources Conservation Service; The Nature Conservancy; Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; and the University of New Hampshire.

The group decided to focus its efforts on controlling invasive plants within the watershed through prevention, restoration and control, assessment and monitoring, cooperation and collaboration, and outreach and education.

#### Resulting Benefits

CWIPP partners are working cooperatively to inventory, monitor, control, and prevent the spread of invasive plants across jurisdictional boundaries. This cooperative effort will



*This map shows the New Hampshire coastal watershed area.*

result in better management of invasive plants and improve working relationships between the partnership's members and the public.

Projects are underway with funding from several sources, including a U.S. Forest Service grant. A survey, management, and control project is in progress at a State park that is a prime invasion area. Many land managers and volunteers have joined together to carry out the task. Other efforts are directed at controlling specific species such as perennial pepperweed, which is invading salt marshes, and working with the Department of Transportation to limit the spread of Japanese knotweed along highways.

#### Sharing Success

CWIPP is based on the organizational model used for a cooperative weed management area. This model is popular in the West, but is now gaining momentum in the East. It incorporates a defined geographic area, stakeholder involvement and representation, steering committee governance, commitment to cooperation, and guidance by a management plan. The CWIPP serves as a model for other partnerships in the Northeast. Through an additional Forest Service grant, workshops are being planned to provide further assistance and promote new partnerships in the region.



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