

Virginia Invasive Species Working Group

AGENDA

July 17, 2026

**Patrick Henry Building
East Reading Room
Richmond, Virginia
9:00 am – 11:00 am**

The Honorable David L. Bulova
Chair of the Working Group
Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources

The Honorable Katie K. Frazier
Vice-Chair of the Working Group
Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

Dr. Derek Aday *Director*
Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Dr. Carrie Fearer
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Department of Forest Resources and Environmental
Conservation

Mr. Steven C. Brich *Commissioner*
Department of Transportation

Mr. Ryan Brown *Director*
Department of Wildlife Resources

Mr. Terry Lasher *State Forester*
Department of Forestry

Mr. Joseph Grist *Commissioner*
Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Mr. Charles Green *Commissioner*
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Ms. Nikki Rovner *Director*
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Mr. Mike Rolband *Director*
Department of Environmental Quality

Dr. B. Cameron Webb *Commissioner*
Department of Health

Mr. Brad Copenhaver
Virginia Nursery and Landscaping Association
Agriculture Industry Representative

Jason Ericson
Dominion Energy
Director of Environmental Services

Vacant
United States Forest Service

Vacant
Conservation Community Representative

AGENDA

- I. Welcome & Call to Order** – Secretary Bulova
- II. Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 2025** – Secretary Bulova
- III. Presentation of F26 State Agency Accomplishments Report** – Katlin Dewitt, DOF, and representatives from VDACS, DCR, and DWR
- IV. Reports on 2026 Changes in Invasive Species Laws**
 - a. VDACS - Changes to the Noxious Weed Law** – Commissioner Charles Green
 - b. VDOT – Highway rights-of-way and invasive plants** – TBD
 - c. DCR – Volunteer Herbicide Applicators** – Josh Ellington, DCR State Parks Chief of Resource Management

d. DCR – Powers of Service Districts and Invasive Plant Control – Kevin Heffernan, DCR Natural Heritage Invasive Species Coordinator

- V. Report on the Invasive Plant Retail Signage Law** – VDACS Commissioner Charles Green
- VI. Comments from Members of the Working Group on Needs and Next Steps, or Legislative Initiatives** – Secretary Bulova
- VII. Public Comment** – Secretary Bulova
- VIII. Adjournment** – Secretary Bulova

**Invasive Species Working Group
Wednesday, September 17, 2025
Patrick Henry Building - Richmond, Virginia**

Working Group Members Present

The Honorable Stefanie K. Taillon, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Chair
The Honorable Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Vice Chair
Becky Gwen, Deputy Director, Department of Wildlife Resources
Missy Neff, Senior Advisor for Environmental Outreach, Dominion Energy
Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester, Department of Forestry
Larry Nichols, Division Director, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Jamie Green, Commissioner, Marine Resources Commission
Katie Hellebush, Executive Director, Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association
Dr. Mike Rolband, Director, Department of Environmental Quality
Matthew Wells, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Dr. Eleanor Labgold, State Public Health Entomologist, Department of Health
Mr. Martin Krebs, Environmental Stewardship Program Manager, Department of Transportation
Dr. Jacob Barney, Virginia Tech, Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science
Dr. Derek Aday, Director, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Working Group Members Absent

Nicole Rovner, Associate Director, The Nature Conservancy

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Taillon called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM and called for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM JUNE 2025

WORKGROUP ACTION

Director Wells moved to approve the June 11, 2025, meeting minutes. Director Rolband seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: Aday, Barney, Brich, Green, Gwen, Hellebush, Labgold, Lohr, Neff, Nichols, Rolband, Taillon, Wells, and Zimmer.

REPORT ON THE INVASIVE PLANT RETAIL SIGNAGE LAW

Mr. Nichols provided the workgroup with an update on the progress of the workgroup subcommittee, who have developed a template of the invasive plant species retail signage required by Senate Bill 1166. The subcommittee received feedback from the nursery industry, who provided edits to the language used within the sign. There are four versions of the sign template, all with the same language and the only difference between each is the formatting. The workgroup reviewed the sign template and Mr. Nichols indicated that there are two links or QR codes within the sign with one going to DCR's webpage and the other going to VDACS's webpage.

WORKGROUP ACTION

After review of the sign and information provided by Mr. Nichols, the workgroup agreed by consensus to approve the sign.

REPORT ON THE DCR INVASIVE PLANT WEB RESOURCES

Kevin Heffernan, DCR, presented information on the landing page of the QR code for the invasive plant species retail sign. The landing page includes a fact list on invasive plant species along with resources where the individual visiting the page can gather more information if they decide to look further into the invasive plant species. There are three options provided on the webpage to conduct further research, which includes links to "What NOT to Plant," "What TO Plant," and "Learn More." Further, Mr. Heffernan informed the workgroup that the webpage will be updated in the future to include a story map for thirty-nine of the plants that are deemed invasive by law. Additionally, there will be maps embedded in the webpage, which will show where the invasive plant species are located and how they are spreading. DCR staff will upload this data as it is collected, and it will allow individuals to research how close the invasive species may be to the area they live in or where they conduct business. DCR will continue to work with other agencies to ensure the data provided is accurate and up to date.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Commissioner Green, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, stated there are no updates as they are continuing the work of the catfish removal workgroup.
- Dr. Aday, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, stated there are no updates.
- Ms. Hellebush, Virginia Nursery and Landscaping Association, indicated the association will continue to spread the word about the invasive plant species signage. Additionally, they are working on a webpage with updates about the box tree moth.
- Ms. Neff, Dominion Energy, indicated there are no updates to report at this time and Dominion will continue to work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Mr. Nichols, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, provided background information on the box tree moth, which was previously discovered in West Virginia earlier this year. The box tree moth has been discovered in Frederick, Clark, and Loudon counties after a survey was conducted on boxwood plants in these areas. A contractor has been hired to treat these areas for the invasive species; however, it may be too late to address the issue at this time.
- Director Rolband, Department of Environmental Quality, indicated they do not have an update and they will continue to implement the invasive species listed with the Department of Conservation and Recreation in the permits they issue.
- Mr. Zimmer, Department of Forestry, announced Katlin DeWitt is the Invasive Species Coordinator for the Department of Forestry and she will be in attendance at future workgroup meetings as a technical expert on invasive species.
- Dr. Labgold, Department of Health, introduced herself as the new State Public Health Entomologist and indicated there were no other updates from the Department of Health.
- Ms. Gwen, Department of Wildlife Resources, indicated they have continued the battle against two-horned trapa at public fishing lakes in Northern Virginia. At the end of August, their team removed 2500 pounds of the species from Lake Orange, located in Orange County, VA. Additionally, DWR has been working with the US Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station to use a recently approved aquatic herbicide to effectively eradicate the species. There were two treatments conducted within Lake Brittle in June and August, where vegetation surveys were conducted to determine the effectiveness of these treatments. DWR is

continuing their partnership with USDA Wildlife Services in the surveillance and eradication of feral hogs.

- Dr. Barney, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science, provided an update indicating they will be facilitating a workshop with six state agencies to discuss the state research agenda and connect these agencies to researchers on campus. Additionally, the Invasive Species Collaborative will be cohosting the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA) conference in November 2026, which will be held in Washington, D.C. or possibly in Northern Virginia.
- Director Wells, Department of Conservation and Recreation, informed the workgroup that the Natural Heritage Division is concluding basic treatment in regions funded by the US Forest Service of the Department of Forestry where fourteen different invasive plant species are being eradicated from natural area preserves. Unfortunately, Virginia is now being affected by the wavyleaf grass, as it has been discovered in Crows Nest within Stafford, VA. The department is working on conducting a survey to gather information soon. As for the State Parks Division, the department continues to collaborate with the Department of Forestry as they work to update GIS data gathered regarding invasive species. Ms. DeWitt and Mr. Heffernan briefly described the Virginia Invasive Species Accomplishment Report FY2025, which was provided to the workgroup to display the success multiple agencies have been apart of when addressing invasive species.
- Mr. Krebs, Department of Transportation, provided an update indicating the department is working to address Johnson Grass and emerald ash borer problems. To address the emerald ash borer problems, they are removing trees to prevent them from falling into roadways. The department spent \$3.1 million dollars last year and will spend another \$3 million dollars that has been allocated for this year to deal with the issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:43 PM.



Virginia Invasive Species Accomplishment Report FY26

Presented to the Invasive Species Working Group

July 17, 2026

Cover photo: Drone's eye view of a section of DCR's Northwest River Natural Area Preserve taken during a recent aerial survey to monitor ongoing efforts to manage phragmites, a tall invasive wetland grass. One dense patch of phragmites can be seen just above the creek in the center top. Photo by Kevin Heffernan, Department of Conservation and Recreation.

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Introduction

In fiscal year 2026 (FY26), state general funds were allocated for invasive species management in Virginia in support of the objectives outlined in the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan. Funds were provided to the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for invasive species management. Additionally, Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is taking steps to eradicate or slow the spread of priority species. For the past year, these four agencies have collaborated on projects to mitigate the negative impacts of invasive species in the Commonwealth. This report highlights some of those accomplishments from FY26.

Agency Accomplishments

Virginia Department of Forestry

In FY2026, \$940,000 from the general fund was provided to support the implementation of strategies and to determine metrics to mitigate the impact of invasive species. This work supports the objectives outlined in the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan. Additionally, these funds support two full-time staff within the agency, the invasive species coordinator and one invasive species specialist. DOF’s efforts fall into five broad categories: suppression of priority species, treatment work on demonstration sites, landowner support, outreach and education, and PRISM support. The following is a summary of DOF’s accomplishments in FY26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

Wavyleaf Treatments

Wavyleaf grass is listed as a Tier 2 Noxious Weed in Virginia. This means that suppression is considered feasible, but eradication is considered difficult. DOF considers this species to be a priority due to its ability to thrive in forest understories, outcompete and suppress the growth of native species and its ability to spread with the sticky seeds it produces. Treatment efforts are prioritized on demonstration sites, outlier populations, and pathways of spread (e.g., popular hiking trails). In June 2026, 415 acres of wavyleaf were treated at Sky Meadows State Park, Powhatan State Park, and properties in Galax, VA. DOF provides statewide coordination of the Virginia Wavyleaf Managers Group and is supporting a Virginia Tech effort to develop a tool for modeling wavyleaf spread and optimizing control strategies. Additionally, DOF continues to pass through funding to organizations working to suppress wavyleaf populations in other areas. In FY 26, DOF awarded \$141,440.56 to three organizations; the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Fairfax County Park Foundation and Blue Ridge PRISM for efforts to control wavyleaf. The organizations have two years to spend these funds on these efforts.



Photo: Treated wavyleaf grass at Powhatan State Park

Landowner Assistance

DOF's Forest Health Program continues to offer a Forest Pest Treatment Cost-Share Program which provides financial assistance to landowners for the treatment of their trees to protect against damage from the emerald ash borer (EAB). EAB is one of the most destructive forest insects that has been introduced to Virginia's forests and has decimated most native ash species around the Commonwealth. Chemical treatment is highly effective in controlling this pest but is costly and must be repeated every 2-3 years. In FY26, \$65,000 was allocated to treat ash trees around Virginia.

In FY26, funds were also used for invasive plant practices. Through the DOF Hardwood Initiative, \$80,000 was allocated to help landowners who own more than five acres of forested land suppress invasive species within their forests. Both financial cost share programs will be offered again in FY27.

Additionally, much time is spent by DOF invasive species staff responding to treatment and identification requests from members of the public, partners, and DOF foresters and technicians. Our staff is available and frequently responds to site visit requests to make recommendations in person. These interactions allow for education and engagement with the public about these species, their impacts and discussion on control options that are most appropriate to meet the landowner's needs.

Demonstration Sites

DOF's Invasive Species Program has established five demonstration sites on State Forests. These State Forests are Conway Robinson State Forest in Prince William County, Whitney State Forest in Fauquier County, Crawfords State Forest in New Kent County, Matthews State Forest in Grayson County, and around the DOF Headquarters Building in Charlottesville. These sites were thoroughly surveyed for invasive plants and are now being treated in an effort to create "invasive-free" zones that will showcase proper invasive species management and native plant restoration to the public. In FY26, 566 acres were surveyed for invasive plants at Matthews State Forest. Additionally, 492 acres were treated at Conway Robinson and Whitney State Forests as well as around the DOF Headquarters Building. This work is primarily done by contractors, however DOF staff also treated some locations when appropriate. Treatment efforts on these lands will continue in FY27 with increased acreage treated.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Treatment
<i>Rubus phoenicolasius</i>	Wineberry	Foliar
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy	Foliar
<i>Dioscorea polystachya</i>	Cinnamon vine	Foliar
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	Stiltgrass	Foliar
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	Foliar
<i>Commelina communis</i>	Asiatic Dayflower	Foliar
<i>Lespedeza cuneata</i>	Sericea Lespedeza	Foliar
<i>Persicaria longiseta</i>	Smartweed	Foliar
<i>Persicaria sagittata</i>	Arrow Leaved Tearthumb	Foliar
<i>Securigera varia</i>	Crownvetch	Foliar
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Chickweed	Foliar
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle	Foliar
<i>Vinca minor</i>	Periwinkle	Foliar
<i>Oplismenus undulatifolius</i>	Wavyleaf Grass	Foliar
<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>	Bittersweet	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Wisteria</i> sp	Wisteria	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Ampelopsis glandulosa</i>	Porcelainberry	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Hedera helix</i>	English Ivy	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Lonicera morrowii</i>	Morrow's honeysuckle	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Pueraria montana</i>	Kudzu	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese Honeysuckle	Foliar under 6' tall, Basal over 6'
<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Multiflora Rose	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Tree of Heaven	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Barberry	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Ligustrum sinense</i>	Privet	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Burning Bush	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>	Autumn Olive	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	Mimosa	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	Paulownia/Princess Tree	Foliar Less than ½" DBH, Basal > ½ DBH

Table: Invasive species treated in demonstration areas and method of treatment used



Photo: Treatment work around the DOF Headquarters building

Outreach

Education and outreach with the public is one of the most effective ways we can work to suppress and control invasive species. DOF frequently interacts with Virginia citizens at events, workdays, and through presentations. In doing so, DOF staff uses as many tools as possible to discuss the negative impacts of invasive species, how to identify them, and what can be done to slow and stop their spread. Recognizing that people learn in a variety of ways, DOF has worked to engage with the public through a variety of ways such as short videos, paper handouts, hands-on demonstrations, and tabling at events.

In FY26, four short videos were added to DOF's popular [invasive plant video series](#): Glyphosate (8,700 views), Privet (568 views), Burning Bush (585 views) and Lesser Celandine (143 views). These short videos are fact based, reviewed by colleagues from other agencies, and intended to make invasive species identification and control digestible and interesting to Virginians.

Additionally, DOF led two Callery Pear Exchange Events in FY26 to encourage landowners to replace invasive Callery pear trees with native alternatives. These events allow for promotion of educational materials such as handouts and social media posts about why Callery pear trees are problematic for the ecosystem. It also allows for discussion with landowners about benefits native species can provide and showcases species with beautiful spring flowers, wildlife and pollinator benefits and fall color. Over 400 native trees were given away at Callery Pear Exchanges in Richmond (November 2025) and Fairfax (April 2026).

Social media is a powerful tool to help educate and engage with the public. DOF is fortunate to have a communications team who consults with the invasive species staff and publish relevant content. In FY26, 16 posts related to invasive species identification, management and awareness were posted totaling over 10,000 likes and many comments and shares. Not included in the previously mentioned count, 7 posts were created specifically related to the Callery pear program with over 21,000 likes. The DOF invasive species program will continue to collaborate with the DOF communications team to engage with the public in FY27.



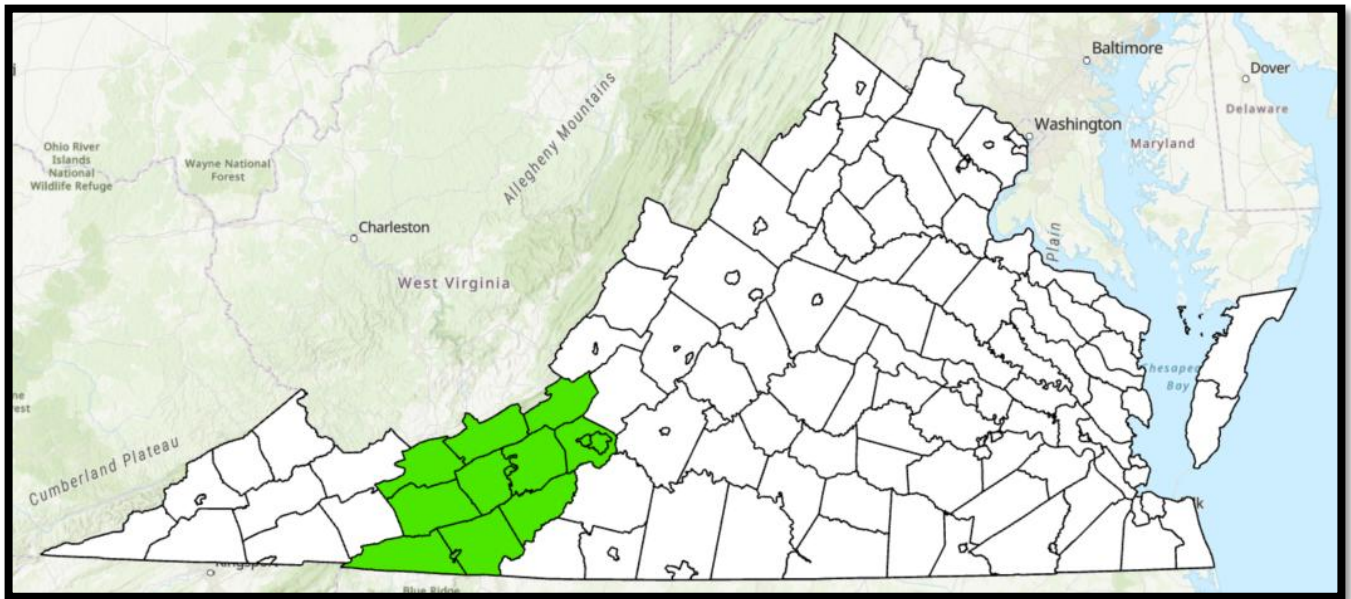
Photo: Loading trees for participants in the Callery Pear Exchange Program

PRISM Support

Suppression and eradication of invasive species around the Commonwealth cannot be done by state agencies alone. Knowing this, DOF supports existing Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) within Virginia and is working to support the creation of additional PRISMs throughout the Commonwealth. These organizations help with on the ground treatment efforts, public workdays, and create their own educational content.

In FY26, DOF awarded \$191,790 to three existing PRISMs groups in Virginia: Fairfax Tree Rescuers, Blue Ridge PRISM, and National Capital PRISM. The projects funded with this money included chemical treatment of invasive species, creation of signs and outreach materials, and mini grants awarded to groups doing removal work in their communities. A similar funding opportunity will be open for FY27 to continue support of these organizations.

Additionally, DOF has started hosting outreach and interest meetings in a 10 county area in western Virginia to support invasive species efforts in this region. The initial steps to forming a new PRISM include finding interested people, determining their goals for the group, and putting together a steering committee to keep efforts organized. In FY26, three initial outreach meetings were hosted in Galax, Christiansburg, and Salem to share this initiative with interested individuals. More meetings are planned for FY27 and outreach events and public workdays are also being scheduled for future dates.



Map: Proposed area for new PRISM in western VA

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Currently VDACS Office of Plant Industry Services (OPIS) has five invasive species management programs running, two of which were added this fiscal year. These are in addition to the spotted lanternfly (SLF) and spongy moth suppression programs. Below is a brief synopsis of each pest and the actions VDACS has taken to manage these invasive species using funding granted by General Assembly to the agency in 2025. The total amount of funding granted for invasive species management was \$760,000. The funds support one full-time position (Invasive Species Specialist), spongy moth supplies, the five programs detailed below and leftover funds for rapid response to new and emerging invasive pests. This report was written on June 5, 2026, and the data represented below reflects that date.

Plants

Two-horned Trapa (Trapa bispinosa)

Two-horned trapa is listed as a Tier 2 Noxious Weed in the state of Virginia. It is an aquatic weed that can rapidly cover the surface of ponds and slow-moving water ways. The plant will form dense mats of vegetation that will overtake native vegetation, can reduce oxygen levels, negatively impact recreation, navigation, and local ecosystems.

VDACS contracts the treatment and monitoring of this program through VA Waters & Wetlands. Treatment is performed from March to September, and monitoring is performed throughout the year. The two main methods for controlling two-horned trapa are through herbicides (pre- and post-emergent) and manual pulling. Some properties in the program have multiple ponds that are being monitored or treated. Once a pond is treated, monitoring continues for approximately five years, where treatment occurs as necessary. In general, ponds are treated less heavily the longer they remain in the program.

Two-horned trapa can be found in several Virginia counties, largely in the central region of the state, from Fairfax County south to Charlotte County.

Program activities:

- FY26 began with 71 ponds in management and has since expanded to 78+ as of 6/5/2026.
- 200+ acres of water managed in total.

- The newest addition to the program was in Albemarle County, surveyed by VDACS staff on 10/19/25.

Treatment descriptions:

- **Monitoring:** Ponds on properties that are monitored for trapa spread and reemergence.
- **Post-Flumioxazin:** Post emergent herbicide; Flumioxazin is commonly used in non-crop areas such as roadsides, industrial sites, and railway embankments. It can also be used to control aquatic weeds, including submerged, emerged, and floating species.
- **Pre-Fluoridone:** Fluoridone is an organic compound that is used as aquatic herbicide often used to control invasive plants. It is used in the United States to control hydrilla and Eurasian watermill among other species. Fluoridone is sold as a solution and as a slow release solid because the herbicide level must be maintained for several weeks.
- **Manual:** Manual removal of trapa from water.

Funding:

- Total Amount of Purchase Order: \$175,000.00
- Expenses: \$104,249.66
- Remaining Funds: \$70,750.34



Photos: Before and after photos from a homeowner's pond in the VDACS Trapa management program.

Cogon Grass (Imperata cylindrica)

Cogon grass is a tier 2 Noxious Weed in the state of Virginia. It is a perennial grass that is a major forest pest in most southern US states. This grass can take over forest floors, creating a monoculture that will outcompete native vegetation. Cogon grass also burns at higher temperatures and can create taller flames which can cause forest fires.

In early 2025, VDACS was informed by Blue Ridge PRISM that cogon grass was growing in two different locations in Albemarle County. Both sites are in parking lots of coffee shops, one in Charlottesville proper and the other 7 miles north in Hollymeade. Treatment agreements were acquired to begin the process of removal. VDACS contracted the herbicide and physical removal of the grass at both sites to Wildlife Resources LLC. Currently, the two Charlottesville sites are the only known presence of cogon grass in Virginia.

Program activities:

- At the peak, there was a total of 340 square feet of plant material between both locations.
- Two rounds of herbicide were conducted and then the manual removal of the grass was carried out in mid-summer. Very little regrowth of the grass was observed in October.

- The purchase order was increased to allow for re-treatment of both sites in 2026.
- An initial retreatment in early 2026 appears to have nearly eradicated the grass, but follow-up will continue through the summer to ensure eradication was successful.

Treatment:

- Herbicide – Glyphosate
- Manual removal and proper disposal of dead plant material, including stems and roots.

Funding:

- Total Amount of Purchase Order: \$8,500.00
- Expenses: \$4,500.00
- Remaining Funds: \$4,000.00

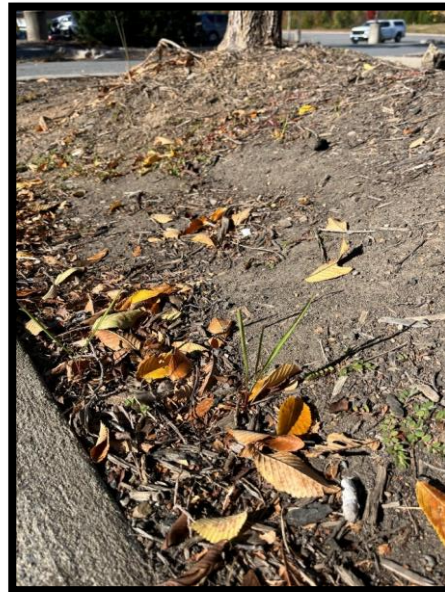


Photo: One of the sites at different angles, showing grass before treatment and little regrowth after successful treatment / removal in October.

Beach Vitex (Vitex rotundifolia)

Beach vitex is another Tier 2 Noxious Weed in the state of Virginia. It is a woody vine-like shrub that covers dunes along the coast of Virginia. Originally introduced for dune stabilization in the Carolinas, it was found to be ineffective, highly invasive and can be disruptive to sea turtles and native fauna habitation.

VDACS staff performed a large survey of southern Virginia Beach in October of 2024. This resulted in the discovery of beach vitex at 50 different properties, including private residences and public parks. In March of 2025 over 2000 mailers were sent to residents in the Sandbridge area of Virginia Beach. Out of the 50 confirmed properties, the office received 34 treatment agreements back. Subsequently, a series of bids for contractor removal were unsuccessful, so VDACS determined to use staff hours and labor to begin the process of removal. The original allocated funds are being used to purchase supplies and lodging for staff to begin manual removals of the woody plant.

Currently, beach vitex can be found in southern Virginia Beach and in several locations along the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Program activities:

- VDACS is collaborating with Virginia Beach County Parks and Recreation on storage of plant material.

- An initial, small team of four staff members performed a trial run of removals on 11/20 & 11/21.
- Over 40 large bags of plant material were removed from four different properties in the Sandbridge area - the approximate total amount of plant material removed was 600+ pounds.
- OPIS also utilized the department's annual meeting at the end of March as an opportunity to perform additional removals – All OPIS staff who attended the meeting assisted in removing over 1,000 pounds of plant material from six additional properties.
- Material was double bagged and moved off-site to a Virginia Beach County property to solarize and await proper disposal.
- Additional surveys along the Eastern Shore were performed, based on citizen reporting on platforms like iNaturalist. Four reported sites were confirmed, and three additional sites were found during the subsequent delimitation surveys.
- These survey efforts were completed with the cooperation of Virginia State Parks staff, Master Naturalists, Department of Conservation and Recreation staff, and Department of Forestry staff.
- Removal was performed at one known location, where owner permission was obtained prior to travel to the sites, and 100+ pounds of plant material was removed and destroyed.
- Additional surveys and removals along the Eastern Shore and in Virginia Beach are anticipated during the summer of calendar year 2026, with the cooperation of University of Virginia and Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Treatment:

- Manual removal of all plant materials possible, including seeds, stems and roots. Double bagged and moved off-site to solarize and ensure death of all viable plant material.

Funding:

- Beach Vitex Management Budget: \$30,000.00
- Expenses: \$18,805.08
- Remaining Funds: \$11,194.92

Insects

Imported Fire Ant (Solenopsis invicta)

Imported Fire Ant (IFA) is a federally regulated pest in the United States. There are two types of IFA in the state of Virginia- Red Imported Fire Ant, or RIFA (Central and Coastal VA) and Hybrid Imported Fire Ant (Southwest VA). This insect is a highly aggressive ant that bites and stings. It poses a threat to human health as the stings can cause allergic reactions, and to agriculture as their mounds disrupt land, reduce crop yield, and the ants can kill small animals.

Currently, IFA is being managed in Virginia by VDACS staff as well as its contractor, Bug Busters. There are two different purchase orders for the IFA program, each with a different cost associated on a per-mound basis. For the Southeast the per-mound cost is \$87.64 and for the Southwest it is \$100.00. VDACS expanded the current quarantine in May of 2025 to include 6 new counties as well as 4 new independent cities.

Imported Fire Ant is currently confirmed to be present in 33 localities, with additional localities currently under review by VDACS and USDA for confirmation. Known, confirmed IFA presence outside of the quarantine includes Albemarle County, Amelia County, Gloucester County, Richmond City, and Scott County.

Program activities:

- Fire ant mounds are treated using granular bait by both VDACS and Bug Busters.
- A combined effort of staff surveying and citizen reports is used to map and treat new mounds.

- Depending on the number of mounds the site is either treated by VDACS staff or sent to the contractor for scheduling and treatment.
- A new survey and treatment map was developed and implemented to improve the communication process between VDACS and contractor staff.

Treatment:

- Advion Ant Bait – Active ingredient is Indoxacarb. Causes paralysis and death in ants.
- Extinguish Plus – Two active ingredients. 1) Hydramethylnon (Adulticide) – Slow acting poison that causes death of ants. 2) S-Methoprene (Insect Growth Regulator) – Sterilizes the queen, stopping new eggs from maturing.

Funding:

Southeast:

- Total Amount of Purchase Order: \$175,000.00
- Expenses: \$38,649.96
- Remaining Funds: \$136,350.04

Southwest:

- Total Amount of Purchase Order: \$35,000
- Expenses: \$28,700.00
- Remaining Funds: \$6,300.00

Estimated number of mounds treated this year:

- RIFA
 - VDACS Staff - 600+
 - Bug Busters – 365+
- Hybrid IFA
 - Bug Busters – 162+

Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*)

Box tree moth (BTM) is a federally regulated pest in the United States. It is a highly invasive species that feeds exclusively on boxwood plants. These shrubs are a highly prized ornamental shrub in the state of Virginia and as such accounts for a large portion of the nursery and plant grower economy.

A blitz survey was conducted by VADCS staff during the week of 7/14-7/17/25 in response to the finding of BTM in West Virginia 20 minutes from the WV / VA border. During this survey, box tree moth was found north of Winchester, VA. Since that discovery, weekly surveys were carried out, through November, by VDACS staff to monitor the spread of the pest throughout the area. Initial findings were sparse but as the season went on the insects were found covering a large portion of the cities of Winchester and Berryville. A single individual was found in Loudon County, north of Hillsboro, but after treatment and follow-up surveys didn't find anything, Loudon was considered eradicated.

Over the course of the active calendar 2025 season, 34 treatment agreements for positive finds on private properties were acquired. An initial PO was acquired for \$20,000, for the treatment of box tree moth in Virginia. More than 12 properties were then treated, from August to early October, to slow the spread of the moth, which would have a damaging effect on the nursery trade.

H.N. Funkhouser was contracted by VDACS to do bi-weekly treatments, alternating products at multiple private properties within Clarke, Frederick and Winchester. Treatments were stopped in early October as the insect was found to be entering its overwintering life stage. During an out-of-season survey, checking on

hibernaculum while the insect is not actively moving, VDACS staff found overwintering caterpillars in Loudon County on 12/9/25.

On December 3, 2025, the Commissioner of Agriculture enacted the box tree moth quarantine which currently covers the counties of Frederick and Clarke, as well as the independent city of Winchester. It was approved and finalized by the Board of Agriculture, effective March 13, 2026.

Throughout calendar year 2026, VDACS has acquired an additional 38 treatment agreements, for a total of 72. These agreements do not represent the number of treated locations, because negative sites are not being treated to save funds. Treatments for box tree moth resumed in April, with 44 total sites having been treated this calendar year, for a total of more than 400 acres. Surveys have also resumed and are ongoing, with a large blitz survey planned for the first week of July. VDACS has also increased the number of traps for the affected areas to more than 50 and has acquired a federal grant to assist in trapping.

Throughout 2025 and 2026, surveying for box tree moth has been done in collaboration with several major partners, including USDA, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Virginia Department of Forestry, and we anticipate other state departments of agriculture to participate in upcoming survey efforts.

Program overview:

- Treatment agreements acquired by surveying and interacting with property owners.
- Data is compiled into an excel spreadsheet and then sent over to the contractor.
- As treatments expand, a shared GIS map is being developed to better share this data.
- Focus has shifted to a stop the spread program due to the biology of the insect.

Treatment:

- Insecticides
 - *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *Kurstaki* (85% active ingredient)
 - Bifenthrin (7.9% active ingredient)
 - Spinosad (1.6% active ingredient)
 - Permethrin (36.8% active ingredient)
 - Lambda cyhalothrin (9.7% active ingredient)

Funding:

- Total for Original Purchase Order: \$20,950.00
- Total for Second Purchase Order: \$100,000.00
- Amount used this fiscal year so far: \$28,020.50
- Remaining funds for second half of 2026 fiscal year: \$92,929.50

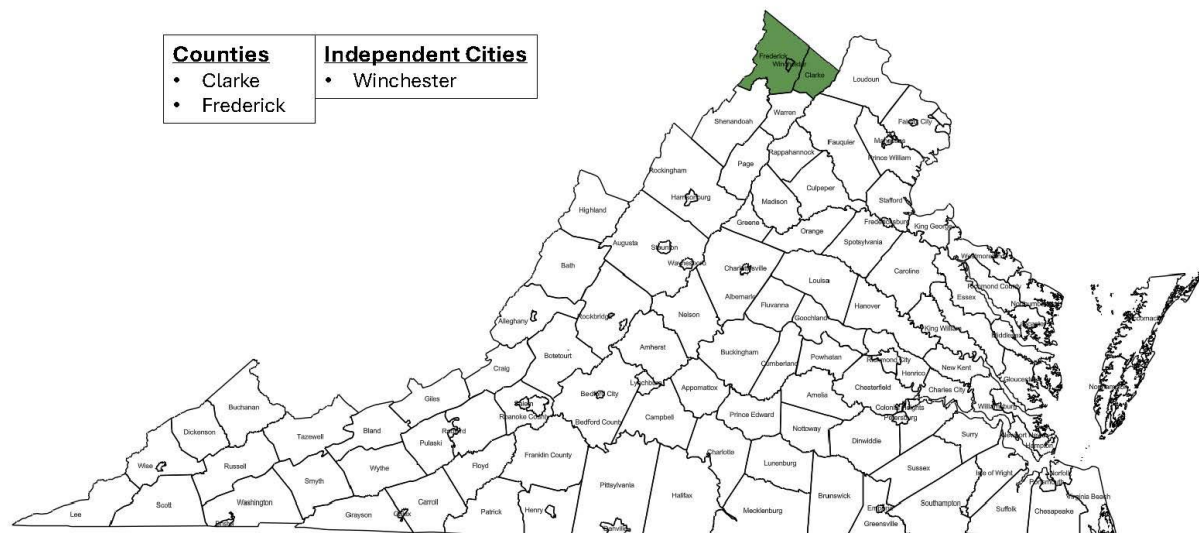
Number of Treatments

- 65+ properties; 600+ acres



Photo: The destructive box tree moth caterpillar and characteristic feeding damage on boxwood shrubs.

Box Tree Moth Quarantine – Effective December 3, 2025



Map: The current quarantine for box tree moth in Virginia.

Report a Pest Tool

- A web-based reporting tool developed by VDACS staff for constituents and stakeholders to report invasive species.
- Over 230 reports were received and responded to this fiscal year.
- Link to the tool can be found on the VDACS OPIS webpage.

Outreach

- Earth Day: Invasive Species & SLF at Vasen Brewery in Richmond.
- Invasive Species Specialist (ISS) presented at Invasive Species Community Day in Blacksburg with VA Tech collaborators.
- ISS presented on IFA & quarantines to loggers in collaboration with DOF in Lee County on 6/10.
- ISS and SLF survey staff - IFA & BTM presentation to Nelson County extension on 7/2.
- ISS and SLF survey staff tabled at farmers' market in Charlottesville on 7/12.
- ISS presented at CVNLA (Central VA Nursery & Landscape Association) on VDACS invasive programs 9/9.
- State Fair: Multiple VDACS staff tabled at state fair this year from 9/26-10/5.
- OPIS presented to VA Boxwood Company on 10/29 on BTM.
- OPIS presented to SHARPS logger training for spongy moth, IFA & SLF on 11/7.

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

In Fiscal Year 2026, \$250,000 from the General Fund was allocated to the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH) to support two full time staff positions. A third staff position is currently funded by federal grants. As such, FY26 was the first full year the DCR-DNH Invasive Species Team (IST) was fully staffed since its creation in FY25. The new team built on previous work and expanded into new projects and partnerships. The table below summarizes many of their accomplishments this past year.

By the Numbers

Natural Heritage Invasive Species Team: July 2025–June 2026

800	People reached through presentations across the state
89	Participants trained at 2 interagency invasive species trainings (44 professionals, 45 public)
60+	Biologists and resource managers trained on new standardized mapping methods
2,600+	Acres of invasive plants documented using the new mapping workflow
4	Partner agencies adopting complementary data-collection approaches
19	Invasive Plant Species StoryMaps published, of 39 required before the January 1, 2027 retail-signage law takes effect
2	New technical guides published for landowners and land managers
230	Public invasive species reports received and reviewed

13	Invasive plant species identified in the Capitol Square survey
2	Research projects launched on invasive plant management

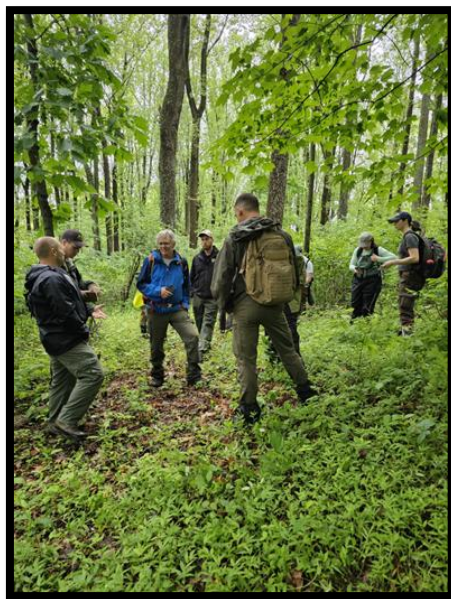
Research Projects

Wavyleaf Grass Response to Prescribed Fire

The Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH) Invasive Species Team (IST) initiated an interagency collaboration to study the efficacy of low intensity prescribed fire as a management technique for invasive wavyleaf grass. In May 2026, 14 team members conducted a preliminary site visit at Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve to explore the extent of the wavyleaf grass present on the preserve, discuss study design, and determine the logistics for a prescribed fire on the site.

The project was conceived by Kevin Heffernan, DCR-DNH Invasive Species Coordinator, and organized by the local Virginia Outdoors Foundation preserve manager, Joe Villari. Present parties represented a range of organizations including Virginia Tech, DOF, local restoration non-profits, neighboring landowners and several additional DCR-DNH staff including Shenandoah Valley Regional Supervisor Tyler Uργο, Natural Areas Specialist Maryjane Epps, the Northern Region Stewardship team, and members of the DCR-DNH IST.

The findings of the planned study will serve to inform land managers across Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic to better manage, slow the spread and reduce the impacts of wavyleaf grass.



Photos: Left: members of the team discuss a potential study site. Right: (From left to right) Mary Jane Epps (DCR), Booker Moritz, Tyler Uργο (DCR) and Deneith Rief (VOF) examine wavyleaf grass and other vegetation.

Invasive Spiraea Management

Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve is enjoyed by approximately 25,000 visitors each year and home to over 30 rare plants, animals, and natural communities. However, the preserve is threatened by a substantial,

thriving population of *Spiraea japonica* or Japanese Spiraea, an invasive shrub with dense, widespread populations within the preserve. *Spiraea japonica* was reported as an escape in Virginia as early as the 1960s, and in the years since has been widely reported throughout the eastern United States. Despite the well documented invasive behavior of this plant, no formal research has been conducted on management methods for the species. The DCR-DNH IST is collaborating with members of the Natural Heritage Stewardship Team to conduct a research study on the efficacy of different treatments on the species. Multiple planning meetings and site visits to map the population have been held, and initial research plots were installed in late June, 2026. The findings of this study will benefit not only DCR staff, but all land managers who are trying to control *Spiraea japonica* populations.



Photo: A dense population of *Spiraea japonica* can be seen lining an old logging road in the dormant season at Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve.

Education and Outreach

New Publications for Landowners and Land Managers

In 2026, the DCR-DNH IST published two new technical documents; [The Land Manager's Guide to Invasive Plant Management](#), and [The Private Landowners Guide to Invasive Plant Management](#). These publications are an update and visual upgrade of a 1998 DCR-DNH publication entitled *Managing Invasive Alien Plants in Natural Areas, Parks, and Small Woodlands*. The new publications meet more modern standards for invasive species management and language use, and significantly increase the information provided about control. Further, we now provide two versions tailored for different audiences. The results are two new, full color documents with extensive visual aids that will walk readers through steps to manage invasive plants. These documents are available for download freely on the DCR-DNH website, and printed versions are available by request.



Photo: The cover and an excerpt from The Private Landowner's Guide to Invasive Plant Management.

New Invasive Plant Web Landing Page, Gallery of StoryMaps

Beginning on January 1, 2027, plant retailers will be required to have point of sale signage near any of 39 plant species listed as invasive in the Code of Virginia. By law, the signs are required to include a URL and QR code that point to the DCR-DNH Invasive Plant Species website. To prepare for this change, the Natural Heritage Invasive Species Team created a new web landing page and new educational materials about these species. The webpage serves as a user-friendly place for consumers to get quick information about why invasive species are harmful and dive deeper into learning about invasive species. The new webpage is live and can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invspinfo>

To date, the team have created StoryMaps (an interactive, web-based tool) to inform the public about the impacts, spread and identifying features for 19 species named in the new law. Plans for further pages addressing the other 20 species are in progress to be prepared before the law goes into effect on January 1, 2027. The species StoryMaps are featured on the aforementioned [invasive plants landing page](#) and will eventually be freely available as printable factsheets. The new educational resources will help bridge the gap for consumers who notice the new signage but are not familiar with invasive species and want to gain a deeper understanding. See the table below for species completed as of this report.

Species Name	Common Name
<i>Akebia quinata</i>	Chocolate Vine
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	Mimosa
<i>Arum italicum</i>	Orange Candleflower
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Barberry
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly Bush
<i>Cenchrus purpurascens</i>	Fountain Grass
<i>Citrus trifoliata</i>	Trifoliolate Orange
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Burning Bush
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Common Ivy

<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow Flag Iris
<i>Mahonia bealei</i>	Leatherleaf Mahonia
<i>Murdannia keisak</i>	Marsh Dayflower
<i>Nandina domestica</i>	Nandina
<i>Oshuna crassipes</i>	Water Hyacinth
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	Royal Paulownia
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	Callery Pear
<i>Spiraea japonica</i>	Japanese Spiraea
<i>Triadica sebifera</i>	Tallow Tree
<i>Tripsidium ravennae</i>	Ravenna Grass

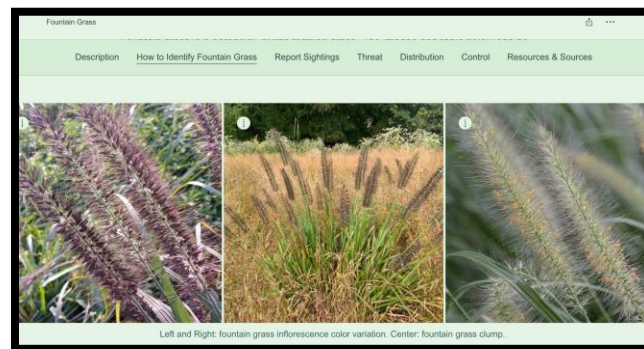


Photo: An example of content included in an educational Storymap.

Presentations

The DCR-DNH IST works to engage and share knowledge about invasive species with various audiences through a variety of outreach opportunities. While the topic has become more widespread with the public over the past few years, there are still many audiences with no knowledge or a limited understanding of invasive species. Over the last year, the team has engaged with approximately 800 people through presentations, workshops, volunteer days, guided hikes, and tabling events. The audiences were varied and included Virginia Tech researchers and students, state agency professionals, Master Naturalist and Master Gardener trainees, and other members of the public. Topics discussed included species identification and control, career paths in the invasive species field, mapping methodology, native plants, and more.

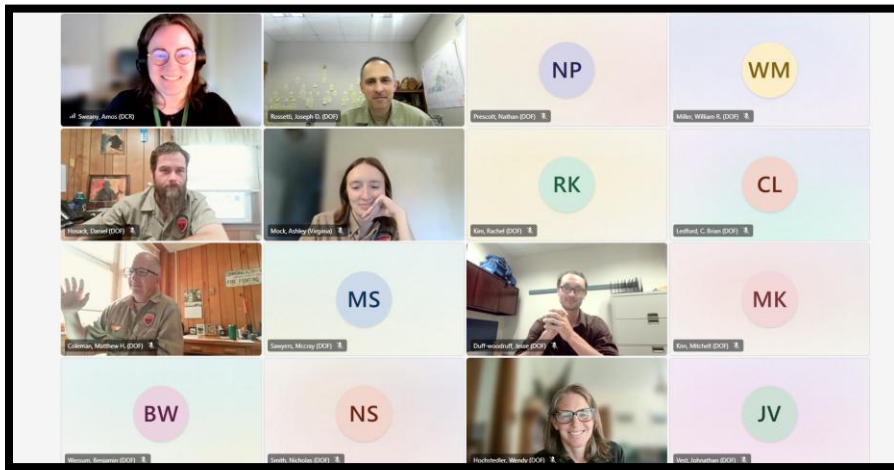


Photo: On June 16, 2026, AG Sweany presented online to Forest Management staff from DOF on identification of less common invasive plant species.



Photo: AG Sweany and Kevin Heffernan present information about the DCR-DNH Invasive Species Team and projects during an open house at the Main Street Centre office in Richmond.

Public Invasive Species Reports

A web-based citizen reporting form hosted and monitored by DCR-DNH IST yielded 230 reports from July 1, 2025 to June 15, 2026. 72 reports (31%) were of spotted lanternfly, submitted under more than thirty different spellings ("Spotted Lantern Fly," "lanternfly," "*Lycorma delicatula*," "Lanter," etc). Despite guidance to not report spotted lanternfly through this form, it was by far the most reported species coming through this channel.

After spotted lanternfly, other frequently reported species were: tree of heaven (14), "northern giant / Asian giant / murder hornet" (13), hammerhead flatworm (10), and water chestnut, common ivy, Asian jumping worm, porcelain berry (6 reports each).

All reports of suspected northern giant hornets were closely reviewed. Northern giant hornet has never established in Virginia, and the specimens photographed in the reports were misidentified European hornets or cicada killers. Various other common invasive species make up most of the reports.

The geography of reporters' residences was overwhelmingly in-state: 216 of 230 reports list Virginia, with Richmond and Alexandria leading (13 each), then Virginia Beach, Roanoke, and Petersburg. Seven reports came from out of state (MA, CA, FL, PA) and seven left the state blank. Some improvements to the reporting form will be made later this year to block spotted lanternfly reports and reports coming from out of state. Analysis of these reports provides a picture of what citizens' experience of invasive species is and guides our development of educational resources to address their concerns. Occasionally, reports inform us of new locations of species not yet widespread throughout the state, particularly for species like two-horned trapa and wavyleaf grass. Staff respond to observers regarding novel and infrequently reported species.

Mapping, Species Assessments, Surveys

Invasive Plant Assessment Protocol Technical Document

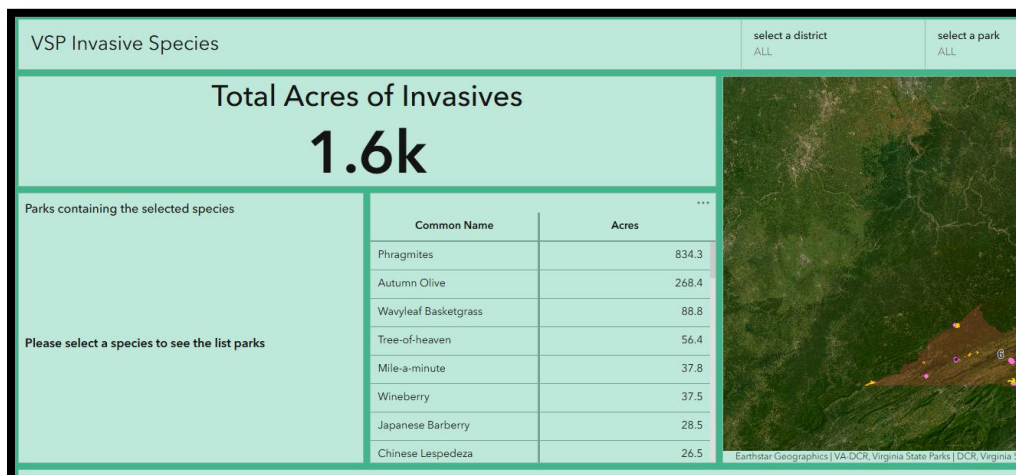
The DCR Invasive Plant Species List is a science based, educational document that lists invasive plant species in Virginia. In the years since its first publication, it has become a useful resource for more and more people, state agencies and other land managers. The DCR-DNH IST is in the process of developing a report that details the history of the list and the process used to assess species for listing, entitled the DCR Assessment Protocol. The report indicates how staff gather and analyze regional, state, and local invasive plant lists, review reports in the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora, aggregate crowd-sourced data from platforms including the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS) and iNaturalist, and review published scientific literature to assess species of interest. The entire protocol is included as an appendix, which will mark the first time the protocol has been publicly released. The report will give stakeholders and interested members of the public a clear understanding of how some species come to be labeled as invasive.

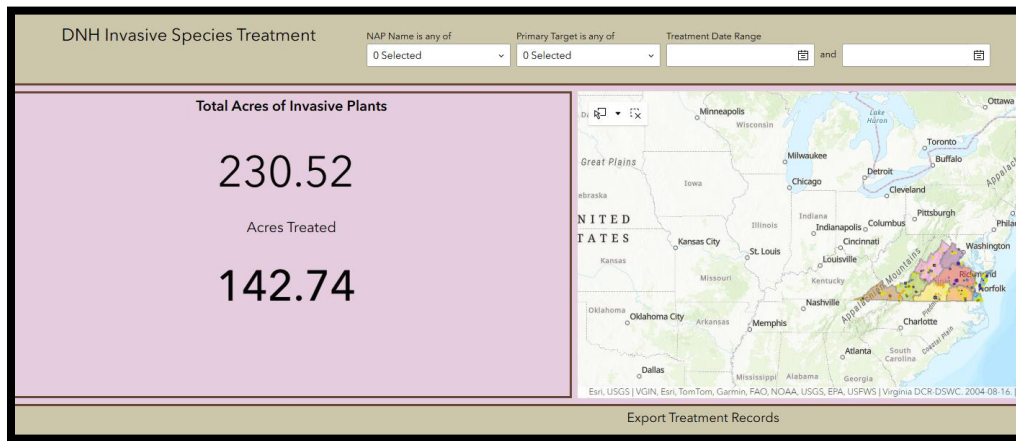
Data Standardization in Invasive Species Mapping at DCR

DCR manages over 140,000 acres of land across Virginia's State Parks and Natural Area Preserves. Over the 100 years since the agency's inception, evolving technology led to different methods of tracking invasive species across the regions of the state, often depending on the capacity and technical skills of staff.

To improve internal data collection quality, we surveyed staff needs, reviewed existing methods and conducted user testing sessions to implement a new, user-friendly approach for use across the agency's managed lands as of February 2026. The workflow enables DCR to report more accurately on metrics like area of invasive plants treated, or area of invasive plants present on DCR lands.

The result uses ESRI tools like Field Maps and relationship classes to track treatment over time. This allows users to record population and treatment data effortlessly in the field and easily access that data in the office on a live dashboard. Based on this customizable model, four other Virginia agencies have begun implementing complementary data collection approaches. Over 60 biologists and resource managers have been trained on this method so far. Their preliminary work has documented over 2,600 acres of invasive plants.





Photos: DCR State Parks and Virginia Natural Heritage dashboards displaying preliminary data collected using new, standardized methods.

Capitol Square Invasive Plant Survey

At the request of the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, the DCR-DNH IST and three Virginia State Parks Natural Resources staff surveyed the grounds of Capitol Square in downtown Richmond. The survey team found thirteen invasive plant species, most of which were species found in the horticulture trade and intentionally planted at the site. The most abundant species were nandina (*Nandina domestica*) and common ivy (*Hedera helix*). Two-hundred and eighty nandina shrubs were found with a cover area of 0.18 acres. Patches of common ivy combine for total cover area of 0.17 acres. See the table (below) for the complete list. As both a busy work hub and a major tourist destination, Capitol Square grounds offer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate replacement of known invasive species with aesthetically pleasing and ecologically beneficial species. Furthermore, as a significant green space in downtown Richmond, Capitol Square can offer feeding and stopover habitat for the region's native bird and insect populations.

Species Common Name	Scientific Name	Occurrence notes
Nandina	<i>Nandina domestica</i>	>280 shrubs
Common ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	~0.17 acres of patches
Wintercreeper	<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>	~0.06 acres of patches
Greater periwinkle	<i>Vinca major</i>	~0.04 acres of patches
Periwinkle	<i>Vinca minor</i>	20 small patches
Porcelain-berry	<i>Ampelopsis glandulosa</i>	>3 plants
Orange candle flower	<i>Arum italicum</i>	3 plants
Round-leaf bittersweet	<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>	3 plants
Gold and silver honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	2 plants
Small-leaf privet	<i>Ligustrum sinense</i>	2 plants
Bush honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera maackii</i>	1 plant
White mulberry	<i>Morus alba</i>	1 plant
Norway maple	<i>Acer plantoides</i>	1 tree

Table: Invasive plant species found growing on the Capitol Square during a survey conducted in 2026, and their distribution and/or count

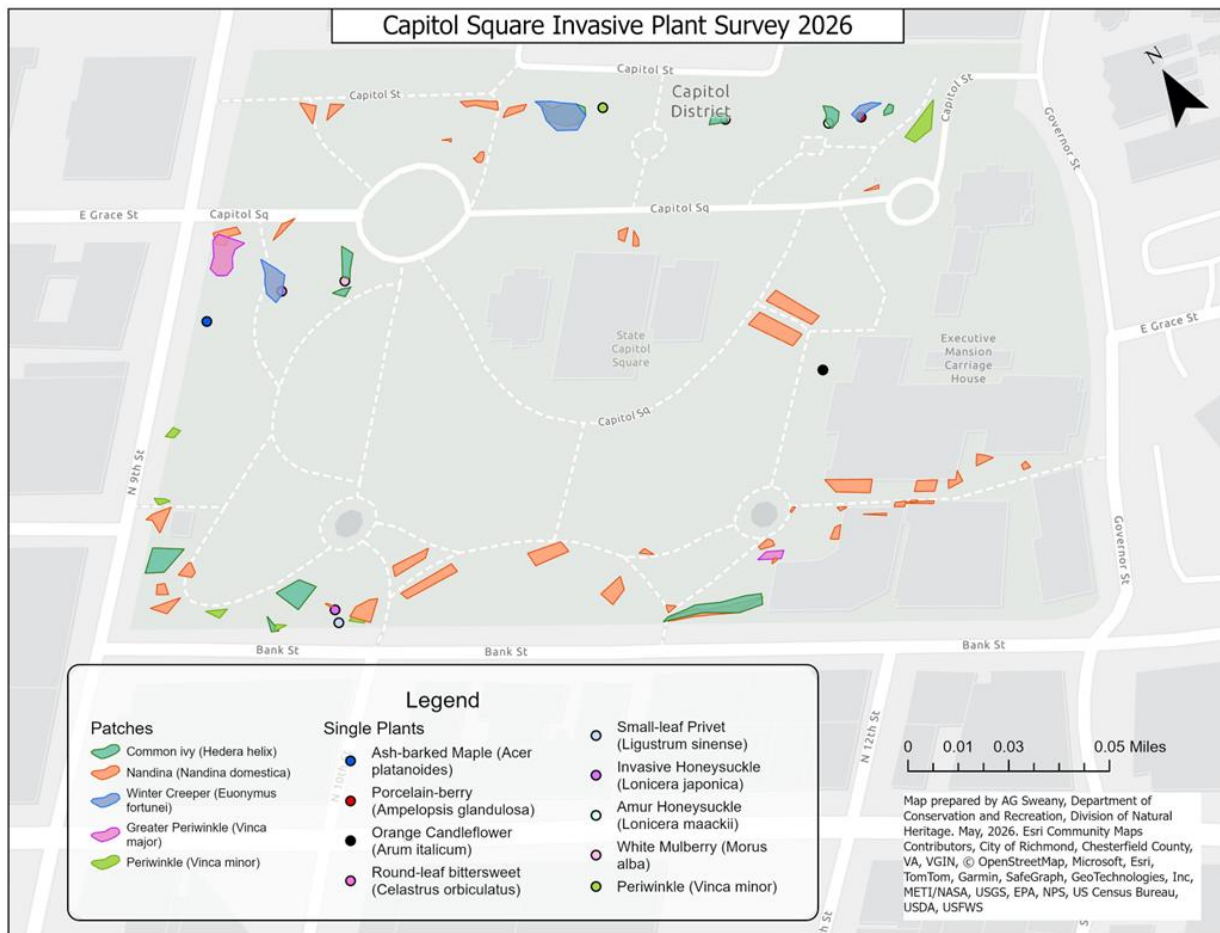


Photo: Map of invasive plant extent on the Capitol Square grounds in Richmond, Virginia.

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Nutria

Multiple programs contribute to nutria work, including Environmental Services, Furbearer Program, Wildlife Division, Outreach Program, Region 1 Wildlife Management Area staff, and District Biologists. Wildlife Conflict Helpline also assists by transferring reports of nutria to the proper staff.

DWR participates in monthly meetings with USDA-Wildlife Services (WS), Conservation Management Institute (CMI), and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff to review current nutria status, range, and trapping efforts conducted in Virginia each month. We also aim to raise public awareness about nutria, how to identify them if seen, the importance of reporting them to us, and the negative impacts they can have on native wetlands. This is done via DWR Outreach posts (Facebook, NextDoor, blogs), direct communications with our agency partners (DCR, DoD), and representation at various outreach events. In early 2026, we updated the DWR webpage information for nutria by creating two pages, one dedicated to information and identification of nutria and another focused on the damage done by nutria and how to report them.

The goal of the nutria work is to limit their spread in Virginia, especially their expansion to the north and west of the Virginia Beach area. Much work has been done to extirpate nutria from Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay region. One goal of our nutria work is to keep them from returning to the Chesapeake Bay. To reach this goal, we need to have staff on the ground conducting surveys and running traplines from early spring to late fall. We also need to engage with the public and other local agencies to have accurate and timely reporting of

any nutria sightings. As the rodents have high reproductive rates, can swim to new areas easily, and can easily hide at times making detection difficult, the risk of expansion is high.

In the past few years, nutria have expanded their range dramatically to the north and west. As of May 2026, nutria have now been found in 52 hydrologic unit codes (HUCs) in Virginia, including most of the southeast portion of the state, sites along the James River, the Chickahominy River, areas west of the Great Dismal Swamp, and a few spots in south-central Virginia along the Nottoway and Roanoke rivers. This range expansion is despite efforts by the USDA-WS that include surveys and trapping. Nutria expansion and associated damage also enable phragmites to spread into new areas as native plants are eaten and removed. Control of nutria will also assist efforts to prevent the spread of invasive phragmites.

Due to lack of staff and funding, our efforts have been limited to meetings to coordinate efforts and outreach. Currently, we cannot contribute to field work efforts including nutria monitoring and removal. Our District Biologists and WMA staff are too understaffed to adequately monitor and remove any nutria. As we do not have a staff member dedicated to invasive species and nutria work, the time and effort our current staff can give towards the nutria program is limited.

Annual funding of \$375,000 for the nutria program would allow us to achieve the following: hire full time staff who can focus on invasive species issues including nutria, enable DWR to better monitor nutria movement with on-the-ground monitoring and trapping efforts in the southeast part of the state (including the Tidewater region and areas along the James River), fund a spatial modeling project that would help guide eradication efforts, and fund any research that will benefit nutria monitoring and eradication efforts (eDNA surveys, camera stations, satellite imagery to detect damage, public awareness).

Much of the nutria work in Virginia, including monitoring, reporting, and trapping, is being conducted by USDA-WS and CMI. The funding for this work is not guaranteed, and the work that USDA staff may be able to do in Virginia may diminish. Therefore, it is imperative for DWR to have the staff and funds necessary to continue this work necessary to halt the spread of nutria.

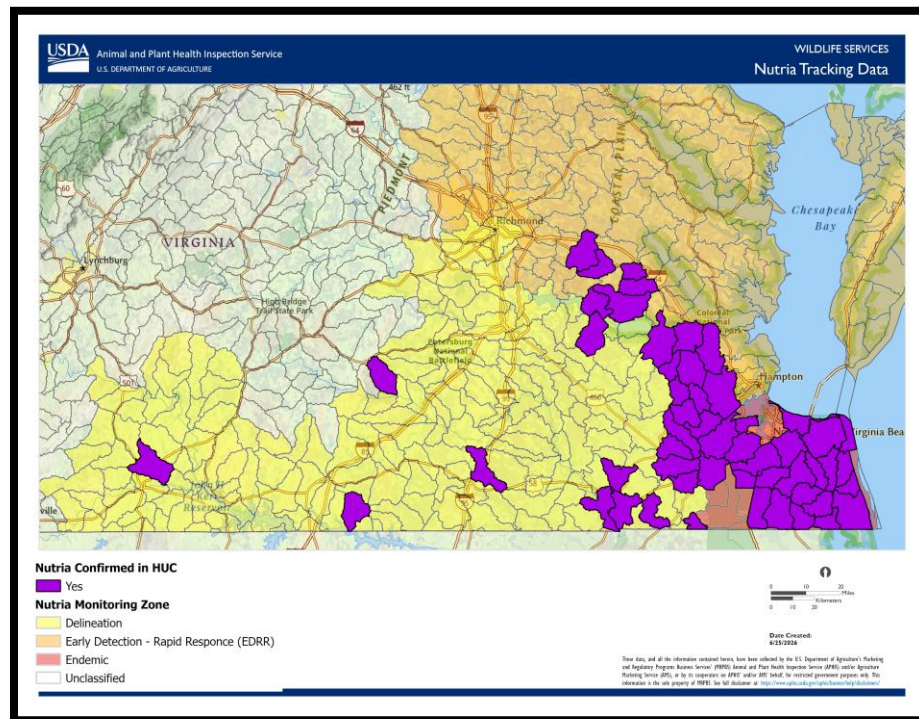


Photo: Map of confirmed nutria populations in Virginia.

Feral Swine

The feral swine work continues and includes outreach, investigation, and removal efforts statewide. Staff are locating and eliminating small populations as they arise and have all but eliminated any persistent/larger populations except on state boundaries.

Alabama Bass

Aquatics staff continue to monitor Alabama bass genetic introgression and population expansion statewide in reservoirs and rivers where they threaten our highly important bass fisheries.

Northern Snakehead

Aquatics staff continue long-term monitoring of northern snakehead populations, including expansion vectors, population demographics in newly established areas, and early life characteristics and habitat requirements. DWR staff recently published a scientific paper on northern snakehead.

Blue Catfish

Additional staff and equipment would benefit DWR's ongoing telemetry work to understand the spatial distribution and movement dynamics of blue catfish, an invasive species of great interest in the Chesapeake Bay.

Water Chestnut (Trapa, Two-horned Trapa)

Aquatics has ceased most water chestnut efforts due to lack of funds. There is great need to identify existing populations and waterbodies at highest risk of invasion by water chestnut and monitor those sites, which are mostly located on private lands.



Photo: Trapa choking out a body of water in Virginia.

Hydrilla

Region 2 Aquatics staff have been working with the Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission (TLAC) and Smith Mountain Lake Association (SMLA) to help develop a management plan for hydrilla on Smith Mountain Lake. This will include low-density stockings of triploid grass carp.

Other Invasive Species

Invasive species that DWR is currently working on or may need to address include:

- Flathead Catfish
- Zebra Mussel
- Quagga Mussels
- Rusty Crayfish
- Virile/Northern Crayfish
- Marmokrebs/Marbled Crayfish
- Invasive Mystery Snail
- Invasive Carp
- Didymo

Program Specific Efforts

Lands and Access: Lands and Access (L&A) spend considerable amounts of their operating budget and staff time to control invasive species on select Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Invasives are increasingly a problem for both habitats and access (encroachment into roadways). Eradication of these species with current staff and resources is overall not feasible. Staff aim to be ready to respond rapidly and exhaustively to eradicate an invasion in its infancy on a WMA if it is not already abundant and considered a high risk for aggressive displacement of native flora. To prepare, staff try to keep up with the latest information on what species to be on the lookout for, but it can be hard to find the time to stay on top of the latest literature and guidance for an area of the state, if such guidance exists. Note that staff efforts are cross divisional and can include L&A, Wildlife, and Aquatics staff.

- Region 1: continues to manage invasive plant species on select WMAs. Phragmites is the most targeted species.
- Region 2: Region 2's James River WMA habitat restoration project conducted a third herbicide treatment with a planned prescribed burn later this year. The project area was expanded by mulching approximately 25 additional acres. The same management plan will be followed as with the original 50 acres.



Photo: James River WMA site after being mulched for invasive species.

- Region 3 : Species in Region 3 being addressed include autumn olive, sericea lespedeza, fescue, barberry, multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, kudzu, Japanese knotweed (have addressed through Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program [VPAHIP] and now forestry program), and Spanish needles at Buller Hatchery.

Staff mulched invasives in clearings to deter autumn olive and multiflora rose growth. This included 5 acres at the Clifford R. Kirk Wildlife Conservation Site (WCS) and 35 acres at Crooked Creek WMA. Aerial herbicide treatment of autumn olive and sericea lespedeza occurred on 30 acres on VPAHIP-managed private lands and 2 acres on the Coalfields Public Access Lands for Sportsmen (PALS) area. Hack-and-squirt treatment of autumn olive, tree of heaven and royal paulownia occurred on 30 acres of Big Survey WMA.

Reduction in staff and funding has made treating invasive species a low priority. There is great need to treat invasive species on the WMAs and there may be increased need in areas that were damaged from Hurricane Helene.

- Region 4: Species being treated include garlic mustard, wavyleaf grass, spotted lanternfly, spongy moth, autumn olive, fescue, multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, and tree of heaven. Staff and partners are using forestry mulchers, bush hogs to set back growth, and herbicides to chemically treat areas after regrowth (UTV sprayer, tractor sprayer, drone, hack and squirt, basal bark treatments).

L&A relies heavily on partners and external funds to continue maintenance (Appalachian Habitat Association, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program, National Wild Turkey Federation, DOF). Region 4 needs additional staff and funds for equipment/chemical if treating inhouse or additional funds for contractors if outsourcing.

Nongame

In years past, DWR has considered implementing monitoring for zebra mussels, but most of our natural waterways are below the hardness levels to support them, so we have not implemented a formal monitoring program. The state malacologist is involved in rapid response situations, such as the zebra mussel contaminated moss balls, so it is difficult to gage what work, if any, is done with invasives from one year to the next. There was a possible, recent report of zebra mussels in the Chesapeake Bay, but it was determined to be the native dark false mussel given the location and salinity. For rusty crayfish and mystery snails, Nongame is not actively monitoring but on the lookout for them in usual work.

Outreach

Outreach staff coordinate across DWR divisions to address invasive species from a public outreach, strategic planning, and staff reference standpoint.

Interagency Cooperation

Interagency Invasive Plant Trainings

On September 29th, 2025 the DCR-DNH and DOF Invasive Species Teams successfully hosted an Interagency Invasive Species Training at the DOF Headquarters in Charlottesville. A total of 44 participants from DCR, DOF, the DWR, and the VDACS attended the event. The agenda featured several informative sessions, including a presentation on invasive species impacts and language use by DOF Invasive Species Specialist Sal Flower, a presentation on the Virginia Invasive Plant Species List by DCR Invasive Species Specialist AG Sweany, and two presentations by DCR Invasive Species Specialist Lindsay Caplan covering commonly used herbicides, mixing protocols, and management techniques. Lindsay and Sal also collaborated on a field demonstration for those

same topics. Following the presentations, participants engaged in plant identification walks, led by AG, Lindsay, Sal, and DCR Invasive Species Coordinator Kevin Heffernan. The training received positive feedback, and additional sessions are being planned to continue this successful interagency collaboration.

After the success of the Interagency Invasive Species Trainings for state employees, the teams worked to also make the training appropriate for members of the public. On June 13th 2026, the Invasive Species Teams from both DCR-DNH and the DOF collaborated to hold the first interagency invasive species training for members of the public called “Get into the Weeds: Invasive Plants 101” as part of a series of events to celebrate the Virginia Natural Heritage Program’s 40th anniversary. Additional support was provided by the DCR Mountain Region Stewardship Team. The training took place in Roanoke, VA and engaged 45 residents from various counties in Southwest Virginia. Participants spent the morning in a classroom for various presentations including two talks by DCR Invasive Species Specialists AG Sweany and Lindsay Caplan that covered invasive plant identification, management options, and legislation surrounding invasive plants. DOF Invasive Species Specialists Sal Flower and Graydon Monroe spoke on invasive species classifications, language, and a new Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management or PRISM forming in Southwest Virginia. In the afternoon, speakers participated in a Q&A session with participants before heading outside for plant identification walks and a hands-on training with management tools. Feedback from the audience was overwhelmingly positive, with participants noting that the speakers were engaging and covered an interesting and important variety of topics and expressed an appreciation for the training opportunity.



Photo: A training attendee shows off a leatherleaf mahonia shrub they removed using a weed wrench.

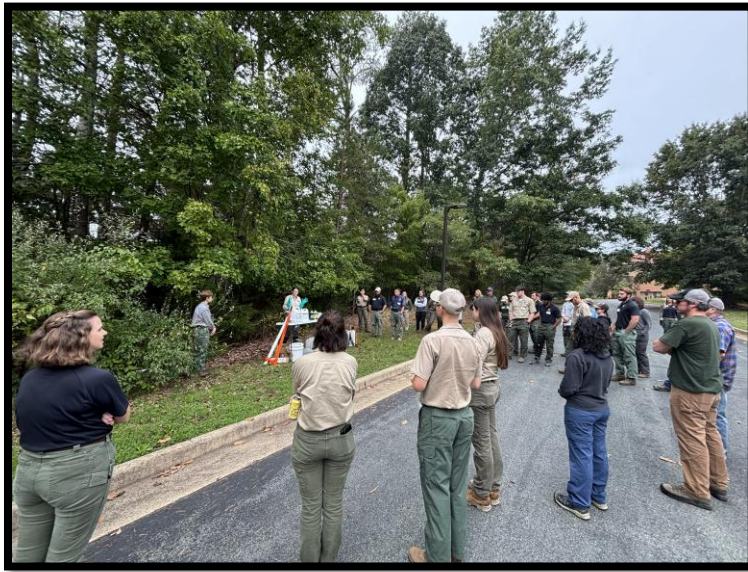


Photo: Training attendees learn about safe herbicide mixing practices, application methods and tools from Lindsay Caplan (DCR Natural Heritage.)



Photo: DOF and DCR staff who planned, taught, and assisted at the Interagency Plant Training in June.

Interagency Invasive Species Coordination Meetings

DOF's Invasive Species Coordinator continues to lead bimonthly meetings with VDACS, DCR, and DWR to discuss invasive species projects and opportunities for collaboration. These meetings are a productive way for all agencies to discuss initiatives, highlight successes and struggles with invasive plant management, coordinate collaborative survey and treatment efforts, and ensure that the Invasive Species Management Plan is being implemented. These meetings are always productive and informative and will continue in FY27.

Interagency Panel at Invasive Species Collaborative Symposium

The four agencies were invited to attend and speak on a panel at the annual Invasive Species Collaborative Symposium held in February in Blacksburg. The panel was asked questions on partnerships, which invasive species keeps them up at night, engagement with the public, and finished with an audience Q&A session. It

was a well-received event and highlighted the many successes and challenges each agency faces regarding invasive species management within Virginia.



Photo: Agency panelists speaking at the ISC Symposium.

Joint Survey and Treatment Efforts

Working together allows for collaboration, education, and programmatic success in invasive species management. Whenever possible, the four agencies work together on survey and treatment efforts for various invasive species in Virginia. In FY26, DOF and VDACS worked together on beach vitex surveys in Virginia Beach and the Eastern Shore and conducting vegetation surveys on the Pamunkey Reservation. Plans for FY27 involve surveying a few DWR Wildlife Management Areas for wavyleaf grass and having DCR staff come out to assist with vegetation surveys on Tribal lands.



Photo: VDACS and DOF staff taking a break from beach vitex surveys in Cape Charles

Suppression of Priority Species

Multi-agency coordination determines which invasive species are a priority in Virginia. [DCR's invasive plant list](#) and [Virginia's Noxious Weed List](#) help guide these decisions. All state agency invasive species staff discuss and select priority invasive species based on set criteria including potential ecological and economic damage, geographic distribution, and the feasibility of suppression and/or eradication.

Agency Invasive Species Contacts			
DOF	VDACS	DCR	DWR
Invasive Species Coordinator- Katlin DeWitt	Invasive Species Coordinator – Dylan Lockwood	Invasive Species Coordinator – Kevin Heffernan	Environmental Services Program Manager- Hannah Schul
Invasive Species Specialist- Sal Flower	Invasive Species Specialist- John Bransford	Invasive Species Specialist- AG Sweany	
Invasive Species Specialist- Graydon Monroe		Invasive Species Specialist- Lindsay Caplan	

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