

Blue Ridge PRISM

2019 Annual Activity Report



The Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) is a project of the Shenandoah National Park Trust, a 501 (C)(3).

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Top row, left to right: Autumn Olive, Japanese Honeysuckle, Japanese Stiltgrass, Kudzu

Middle row, left to right: Multiflora Rose, Mile-A-Minute, Porcelainberry, Tree-of-Heaven

Bottom row, left to right: Chinese Privet, Garlic Mustard, Wavyleaf Grass, Oriental Bittersweet



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE YEAR 2019 marked the PRISM's fifth birthday as Virginia's first Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). With each passing year, we continue to expand our outreach to the public and expand our influence in Richmond.

The PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) is unique among other PRISMs and CWMA's in that we target our projects and education & outreach activities toward all landowners in our geography rather than just focus on the lands of the entities that formed the PRISM. There are several hundred other CWMA's in the U.S. Their members are predominately land managers associated with counties, state and federal agencies, and The Nature Conservancy. In Virginia, where the land ownerships are highly fragmented, large numbers of private landowners are in need of information and encouragement when it comes to controlling invasive plants and noxious weeds. The PRISM serves all landowners in its 10-county, almost 3 million acre territory.

The PRISM continues to implement the goal stated in its mission statement.

"OUR MISSION IS TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF INVASIVE SPECIES IN OUR TARGETED GEOGRAPHY"

The PRISM's key tactics in 2019 for achieving that goal fell into three categories: Landowner Programs, Statewide Programs, and PRISM Operations.

Landowner Programs included:

- ❖ **Education and Outreach:** The PRISM offered programs to landowners and the general public to increase awareness of the damage caused by nonnative invasive plants including half-day workshops on the identification and control of common invasive plants.
 - *In 2019, we conducted 19 seasonal invasive plant workshops and classes, gave 22 presentations, tabled at 23 events, and held four quarterly meetings with featured speakers.*
 - *In conjunction with those events we distributed thousands of factsheets, published four quarterly newsletters, and kept our audiences informed through regular social media and website updates.*
 - *In 2019, the PRISM added more than 300 names to its mailing list, which now includes 1,356 interested members.*

- ❖ **Landowner Financial Assistance:** To date, the PRISM has secured over \$1 million in grants and awards to help landowners defray some of the cost of controlling their invasive plants.
 - *In 2019, invasives control work continued for the third year for 92 PRISM-facilitated RCPP-grant recipients. Control work continued for a third year on a kudzu site funded by a PRISM-facilitated grant from a land conservation organization. The second year of five-years of treatment was completed on PRISM's DuPont Settlement Grant for wavyleaf treatment.*
- ❖ **Early Detection and Rapid Response:** The PRISM has actively sought to reduce the spread of uncommon invasive plants and new arrivals to our state.
 - *In 2019 the PRISM focused on wavyleaf grass, kudzu, and incised fumewort.*

Statewide Programs included:

- ❖ **Preventing the Sale and Planting of Invasive Plants:** Several PRISM leaders have continued to participate in Virginia's Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee and lead the way in getting additional plants added to the official Noxious Weeds List.
 - *The following six plants are in the process of being approved and should be added to the official list in 2020: oriental bittersweet, porcelainberry, Ailanthus, mile-a-minute, hydrilla and incised fumewort.*
- ❖ **Collaborating with state agencies:** The PRISM is working with numerous state agencies including the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) and the Department of Wildlife Resources on various programs to remove invasive plants and to prevent the sale and planting of invasive plants in Virginia.
 - *In 2019, PRISM leadership participated in numerous meetings and discussions with VDOT with the objective of changing their planting lists to use native plants instead of mostly nonnatives, including some invasives.*

PRISM Operations: Activities discussed in this section include fundraising as well as staffing and organization.

LANDOWNER PROGRAMS: EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Overview

The Blue Ridge PRISM reaches and expands our membership and audience through our quarterly meetings, tabling events, speaking engagements, educational events, published outreach materials, newsletters, social media and our website.

Quarterly Meetings

PRISM holds quarterly meetings that are free and open to the public. Our 2019 meeting foci included: a research update on biological controls for *Ailanthus altissima*, a forest health update, a seminar on landowner success stories, and an herbicide expert panel. Our quarterly meetings have become an excellent opportunity to focus on topics that appeal to our audience and complement our seasonal workshops. This year, PRISM held four quarterly meetings with a total attendance of 117 people.



October quarterly meeting featuring a panel of herbicide experts at Ivy Creek Natural Area.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS			
Topic	Date	Location	Attendance
Tree-of-Heaven Biocontrol	1/16/19	Ivy Creek Natural Area	45
Forest Health Update	4/17/19	Virginia Department of Forestry	25
Landowner Success Stories	7/17/19	Samuels Library in Front Royal	12
Herbicide Expert Panel	10/16/19	Ivy Creek Natural Area	35
		TOTAL	117

Tabling Events

Events such as county fairs, festivals, partner events and conferences where we set up our display table and hand out factsheets expose PRISM to new audiences around our ten-county region. These tabling events are used to spread the message about invasive plants. Many of the landowners we encounter at tabling events sign up for our



A typical PRISM display features a poster and factsheet handouts.

email list. This year, PRISM tabled at twenty three different events and was exposed to thousands of people.

EVENTS WHERE PRISM HAD DISPLAYS		
Event	Date	Attendance
McIntire Botanical Garden Workday	1/19/19	12
Virginia Association of Forestry Health Professionals	1/28-29/19	100
PLA Seminar	2/7/19	400
EmpowerU Farmville	2/15/19	9
EmpowerU Blacksburg	2/16/19	5
Woods and Wildlife Conference	2/23/19	180
EmpowerU New Kent	3/8/19	7
EmpowerU Madison	3/9/19	9
Earth Day Staunton	4/13/19	100+
Ivy Creek Farm Day	4/13/19	200
Harrisonburg Historic Garden Club Tour	5/1/19	563
Tree Stewards Tree Sale	5/4/19	125
Izaak Walton League	5/28/19	18
Nurturing Native Plants Symposium	6/1/19	79
Augusta County Fair	7/30/19-8/3/19	15000
Rockingham County Fair	8/12-17/19	76000
The Paramount Master Gardeners Event	9/8/19	603
Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival	9/21/19	3700
VNPS Annual Meeting	9/27-29/19	140
Nelson County 4th Graders	10/4/19	35
Going Native	10/19/19	100
Albemarle Ciderworks Apple Harvest Festival	11/2/19	400
Farm Field Day	11/19/19	100
TOTAL		97,785

Speaking Engagements

The PRISM leadership team offers presentations at no charge to various groups, ranging from professional organizations to garden clubs. Speaking engagements allow the PRISM to bring our message directly to interested people. As we have become better known, the requests for speakers has increased each year. The PRISM gave twenty two different presentations in 2019.



Rod Walker addresses a group of landowners.

EVENTS WHERE PRISM PRESENTED		
Speaking Engagements	Date	Attendance
Northern Virginia Daylily Society	1/16/19	45
Spotswood Garden Club	2/8/19	30
EmpowerU Farmville	2/15/19	9
Empower U Blacksburg	2/16/19	5
EmpowerU Madison	3/9/19	9
EmpowerU New Kent	3/8/19	7
Calfee Garden Club	3/20/19	24
Master Gardener Class DOF	4/1/19	30
Virginia Forestry Summit	5/3/19	30
Rappahannock Garden Club	5/15/19	40
VNPS Williamsburg	5/16/19	20
Izaak Walton League	5/28/19	18
Naturing Native Plants Symposium	6/1/19	79
Earlysville Women's Group	6/1/19	17
Shannon Farm	8/3/19	15
Regional Native Plant Campaign	8/14/19	20
Warm Springs Valley Garden Club	9/18/19	22
VA Master Naturalist Conference	9/21/19	35
Invasive Plant Overview for Landscape Professionals	10/3/19	15
Event with Master Gardeners	10/7/19	55
Middle James Roundtable	10/17/19	50
Indian Springs HOA	10/21/19	11
TOTAL		586

PRISM'S Educational Events

After receiving the RCPP award, PRISM leaders, realizing there was an urgent need for landowner education, began offering workshops on invasive plant identification and control geared toward landowners. We began offering these workshops to the public in the summer of 2017.

The objective of all of these events is to provide landowners with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle invasive plant management on their own properties. The participants in these workshops and classes have varied backgrounds. Some are already managing invasives on their land, others know they have an invasives problem but don't know where to

begin their control efforts, and still others have very little knowledge but are eager to learn. Many of these participants return for another class or workshop in a different season to continue their education.

PRISM WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES	DATE	ATTENDANCE
PRISM Spring Workshop - Blandy	3/1/19	24
PRISM Workshop - Richmond	3/2/19	25
PRISM Spring Workshop - Ivy Creek Natural Area	3/11/19	27
PRISM Workshop - Albemarle County Public Schools	4/9/19	13
PRISM Spring Workshop - Rockfish Valley Foundation	4/10/19	6
PRISM Workshop - Albemarle County Public Schools	5/14/19	5
Dept Of Forestry Woods and Wildlife Camp for High School Students	6/1/19	13
PRISM Summer Workshop - Blandy	6/5/19	10
City of Charlottesville Adult Nature Camp	6/7/19	5
PRISM Summer Workshop - Ivy Creek Natural Area	6/10/19	21
PRISM Summer Workshop - Rockfish Valley Fdn	6/19/19	7
Arboretum Lecture Series (12:00-1:00)	7/24/19	20
Tree Steward Class	10/8/19	40
PRISM Fall/Winter Workshop	10/9/19	32
PRISM Workshop - Albemarle County Public Schools	10/17/19	4
PRISM Fall/Winter Workshop	10/29/19	17
PRISM Fall/Winter Workshop	11/5/19	29
PRISM Workshop - Albemarle County Public Schools	11/14/19	8
PRISM Fall/Winter Workshop	11/23/19	12
Total		318

Marketing & Outreach

Outreach Materials

PRISM offers invasive plant factsheets that include information on individual plant identification and management as well as overarching principles in invasive plant management. We estimate that over the five years, we have printed and handed out about 25,000 factsheets.

E-Newsletters

The PRISM began publishing a volunteer-written, illustrated quarterly newsletter in October 2017, which is emailed to our members' mailing list. At the end of 2019, our mailing list consisted of 1,356 subscribers.

The newsletters include event announcements as well as updates on PRISM activities and news related items, such as recent research results about invasives, newly sighted invasives, and new weed regulations – all subjects of interest to our members. We also publish event reminder emails and timely updates on invasive plant management.

Using MailChimp, we can determine the “open rate” of our emails, which helps us fine-tune subject lines, timing, and content to encourage a higher rate of opening. MailChimp Learning Center reports that nonprofits typically average a 24.98% open rate. The PRISM currently exceeds the average with a 38.5% open rate.

Social Media Presence

The Blue Ridge PRISM has had a Facebook page since 2016 where information is shared and announcements of upcoming events are made. At the end of 2019 we had approximately 356 followers with moderate activity (average of 1-2 posts a month). Our followers are 72% women and 28% men between the ages of 25 and 64. Our goal for our Facebook page is to connect with our audience and steadily growing our following.

In September 2019, PRISM had a particularly successful Facebook post that went viral reaching 17,400 people with 4,300 engagements (clicks) and 638 reactions, comments or shares. This post featured timely information on removing Japanese stiltgrass. Since this post, PRISM has shared more timely alerts on invasive management.

LANDOWNER PROGRAMS: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

In 2016, the Blue Ridge PRISM received a major award from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The contract for this award was signed in September 2016. The award, in the amount of \$894,000, provides for three-year contracts to assist private landowners in controlling specific invasive plants. The PRISM and the NRCS collaborated on designing this new landowner assistance program. The PRISM contracted with the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) for administrative and technical assistance.

Of these funds, the NRCS retains 20% to cover their costs and roughly \$50,000 goes to the DOF for costs involved in evaluating applications, determining the control work to be done, and administering the contracts. The remaining \$643,000 is designated as payments to landowners for their actual control work. The Blue Ridge PRISM, which received no funds from this award for its expenses, is responsible for recruiting eligible landowners and coordinating education-and-outreach for the RCPP award. *In addition*, the PRISM must match the entire award with monies spent and/or in-kind work by their members and partners. The PRISM is also required to provide quarterly status reports during the five-year program. In 2019, PRISM exceeded its \$1.1 million match commitment well ahead of schedule.

Our RCPP program rolled out at the end of October 2016. The program proved so popular that all funds were allocated within the first five months to 95 landowners in ten counties, whose combined acreage is over 2,000 acres. (A few of these landowners later dropped out of the program.) Participants signed three-year contracts to remove specific invasive plants from designated portions of their properties. Most of the grant recipients began the invasives control work in 2017; some delayed work until 2018. In 2016 and 2017, the PRISM's program director and leadership volunteers collaborated with the NRCS and DOF to create and offer various events to prepare NRCS and DOF staff for the RCPP and to train landowners and contractors in invasive plant control. This type of effort by the PRISM is no longer needed to support the RCPP program, but it has formed the basis for our ongoing workshops for all the landowners in our targeted geography.

The RCPP award created an excellent opportunity for the PRISM to deliver its message about the threats invasive plants pose to Virginia's natural landscapes and to offer concrete assistance by helping to fund landowners' efforts. The program validated us as a successful organization with a voice and presence within the environmental community. If funding is available, the PRISM will be applying for additional such grants in 2020.

The following summary of our RCPP program status was provided by the NRCS:

ACTIVE CONTRACTS IN 10 COUNTIES

- ❖ 92 active contracts
- ❖ 2,097.30 acres under contract
- ❖ Total obligation - \$601,657.88
- ❖ Total payments made - \$466,869.48
- ❖ Remaining unobligated funds - \$42,869.48

SUMMARY OF RCPP CONTRACTS BY COUNTY

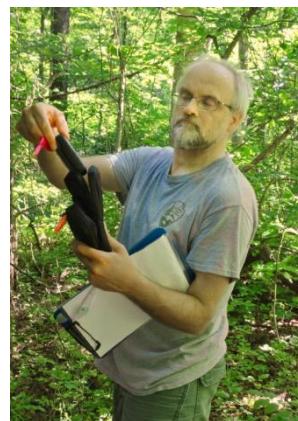
County	Contracts	Total Contract Acres	Obligation	Payments
ALBEMARLE	21	543.8	\$117,515.00	\$90,293.60
AUGUSTA	10	143.6	\$33,635.94	\$24,194.94
CLARKE	8	144.1	\$39,573.93	\$29,985.93
GREENE	7	214.3	\$67,758.55	\$45,918.55
MADISON	7	139.1	\$47,349.21	\$42,751.21
NELSON	5	91.6	\$28,162.06	\$27,544.06
RAPPAHANNOCK	15	467.1	\$176,220.01	\$138,825.01
ROCKINGHAM	12	194.4	\$43,825.88	\$28,771.88
PAGE, WARREN	7	159.3	\$47,617.30	\$38,584.30
Totals	92	2,097.30	\$601,657.88	\$466,869.48

Natural Resources Conservation Service's Report Summary prepared by Todd Groh, DOF Coordinator and Patrick Vincent, NRCS Farm Bill Specialist.

DuPont Settlement Grant

Shenandoah National Park (SNP) currently has one of the largest infestations of wavyleaf grass in Virginia. This serious, invasive threat to forested areas in Virginia is a relative newcomer to the commonwealth. Due to budget constraints, the park is limited in its capacity to manage wavyleaf, and the invasive grass has escaped from the park to adjacent private land and a town park and continues to spread within the national park. The highly shade-tolerant grass spreads readily because sticky seeds attach to hikers' pant legs and to the fur of animals, such as deer, bear and dogs, and can be transported long distances.

In October 2017, the PRISM submitted a proposal to the DuPont Settlement - Land Protection Program to treat wavyleaf grass at multiple sites in the South Fork watershed of Shenandoah Valley. The award recipients were announced in December 2017.



Jake Hughes setting up a GPS device for volunteers to use while hunting down wavyleaf grass in SNP.

The PRISM received a grant of \$250,000 to fund work at six of the proposed sites in SNP and one in the town of Elkton in Rockingham County, three miles downstream of the largest SNP wavyleaf infestation. The funds from this award are paying to treat wavyleaf grass at these sites each summer for five years.

In 2019, PRISM leaders Jake Hughes and Jim Hurley organized the second year of Dupont-funded wavyleaf grass control in SNP and Elk Run Park just downstream from SNP in Elkton. They engaged two contractors: The National Park Service's Mid-Atlantic Exotic Plant Management Team (EPMT) and the Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (GAVCC) for the work at Elk Run Park. For treatments in SNP, Jake relied on the EPMT as well as seasonal staff. These teams treated Elk Run Park in late June, and SNP beginning in July.



Volunteers armed to treat wavyleaf grass in Shenandoah National Park. Organizers Jake Hughes in foreground and Jim Hurley in back row center, along with, from left to right, Rick Barnett, Tim Maywalt, Mark Walkup, and Anna Castle.

Successful treatment of wavyleaf grass is time sensitive because it flowers and sets its sticky seeds unpredictably beginning in July or August, depending upon weather and growing conditions. To prevent workers from inadvertently carrying seeds out of the park on their clothing, treatments must be conducted differently and more carefully once the sticky seeds appear. In 2019, the EPMT treated first during late June, followed by GAVCC in early August. GAVCC reached patches on acres that the EPMT could not get to, and the entire site was treated. The EPMT deployed a tank sprayer supplying two 600-foot hoses, while GAVCC used a crew of eight AmeriCorps volunteers to walk close transects with backpack sprayers.

In SNP, a crew funded by the grant was able to treat all the other project areas during July, despite challenges posed by rain and high water. This crew continued to treat more

wavyleaf patches in September once they completed their August Japanese stiltgrass treatment in other areas of the national park. By the end of September, more than 360 acres of parkland, many containing heavy infestations of wavyleaf grass, had been treated. Again, this is the second year of a five-year treatment program for these sites. Depending on the depth and longevity of the seedbank, we are cautiously optimistic that this program will be sufficient to eradicate this plant from these sites. To our knowledge, a sustained, five-year treatment program on an infested site has never been done before with this species.

PATC Land Rehabilitated by Grants & Volunteers

In 2017, PRISM leader Jim Hurley facilitated the provision of a PRISM/NRCS-RCPP-EQIP grant to the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) for controlling invasives and rehabilitating a meadow on ten acres that they lease from the Vining family in Mutton Hollow in Greene County. The meadow and surrounding forest were overgrown with tree-of-heaven, paulownia, autumn olive, multiflora rose, wineberry, Japanese stiltgrass, perilla, Japanese honeysuckle,

etc. Jim volunteered to oversee the project, which is funded by grants and PATC donations. He arranged for the Virginia Forestry and Wildlife Group (VFWG) to clear the five-acre meadow with a forest mulcher in December 2017 and to spray new and resprouted invasives in the meadow during 2018. Jim then convened two volunteer work-trip weekends during which more than 40 PATC volunteers pulled, hacked, cut, and squirted woody invasives in the surrounding forest.

PATC's Thomas Jorgenson and Mark Walkup demonstrated exceptional leadership as PATC partnered with the PRISM on this ecological project. The enthusiastic hard work of the PATC volunteers is truly impressive. The PRISM welcomed the opportunity to teach new skills to these volunteers, many of whom volunteer to rebuild or maintain the AT, but have little knowledge about invasive plants.

Jim, Thomas, and Mark convened two more volunteer work weekends in 2019 to treat autumn olive and stiltgrass around the meadow, and the meadow was again sprayed twice. Similar work will continue in 2020. In 2021, a second NRCS grant will fund the planting of warm-season grasses and wildflowers. Volunteer weekends will continue indefinitely as we push the invasive-free zone further into the forest, protecting the meadow and creating a healthy environment for wildlife.



A volunteer saws a tree-sized autumn olive trunk before spraying the cut with herbicide.

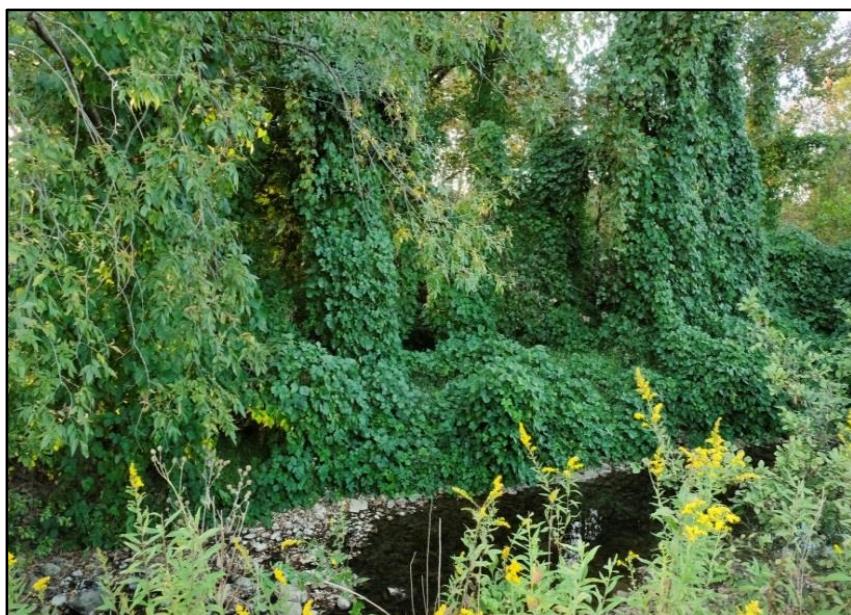
NRCS Grant for Drone Research

In 2019 PRISM began working with the University of Virginia to pilot the use of drones to map individual invasive plant species. Today there is no easy way to produce an accurate map showing where to find all the major infestations of a specific plant. By proving that today's technologies are capable of producing such maps, we will create a new set of tools and capabilities for landowners, policymakers, and public and private conservation organizations. Some preliminary results may be available by the end of 2020.

LANDOWNER PROGRAMS: EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE (EDRR)

Continued Battle with Kudzu in Greene County

PRISM leadership member Jim Hurley discovered kudzu growing in two locations in Greene County in spring of 2017. Until then, kudzu was known to be present at only two other locations in the county. Although kudzu is present in all of the PRISM's 10 counties, it is considered an EDRR opportunity where new infestations pop up, especially along a stream or



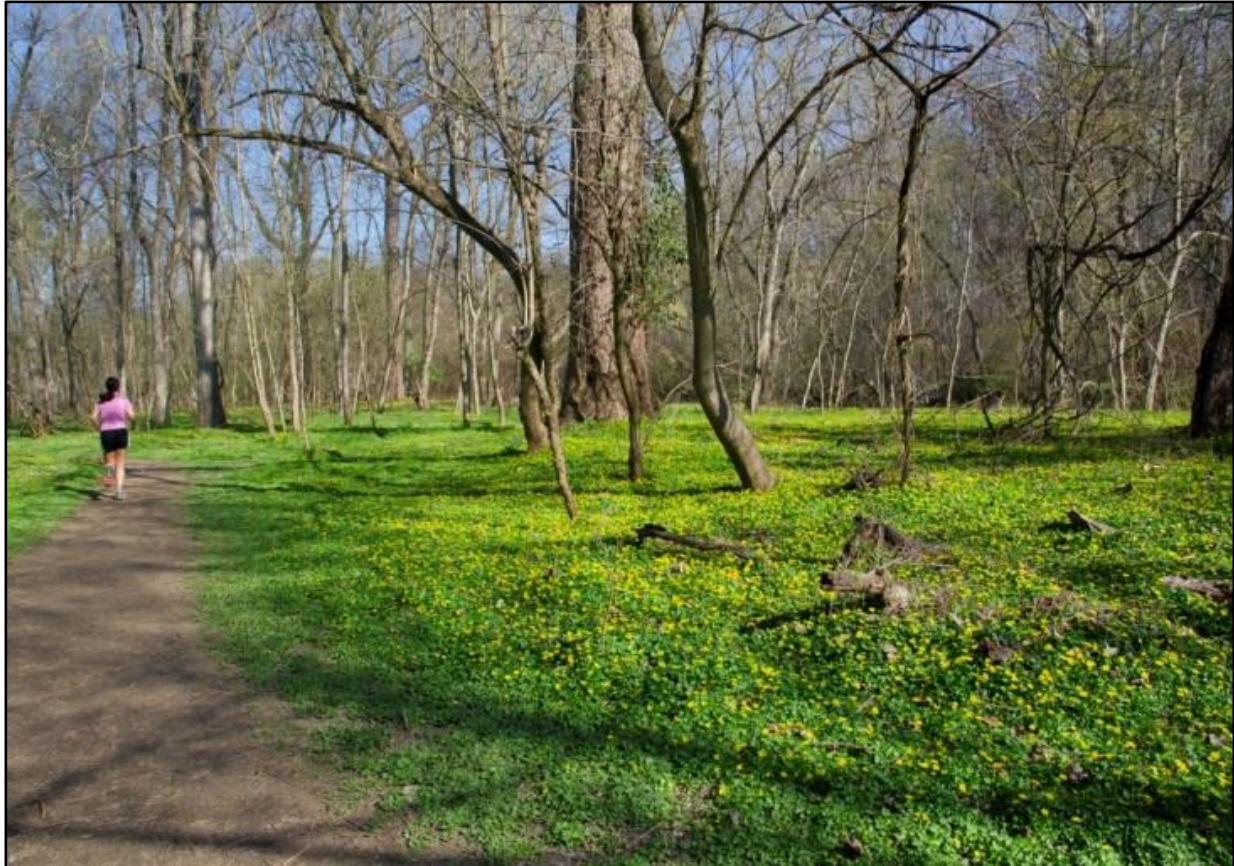
Kudzu vines smothering trees along Swift Run in Greene County pre-treatment

river where seeds and plant fragments can float downstream and sprout to begin new problems. This was the fate of the Conway River, the border between Greene and Madison counties, from the flood of 1996. At Kinderhook, there are now miles of kudzu shrouds on both streambanks eating into the floodplain forests in both counties.

One newly discovered infestation

was on Swift Run on a farm owned by a farmer whose personal circumstances did not allow him to pay for controlling the rampantly spreading, invasive plant. The PRISM secured a grant from The Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy to cover the entire cost of treating this invasive over the course of three years. Jim Hurley is managing the work for the owner, who is grateful for the assistance. Treatment began in the fall of 2017 with a contractor cutting the climbing vines to the ground. During the summer of 2018, the contractor twice treated the regrowth from the severed root systems with herbicide.

Jim also discovered the source of this kudzu infestation further upstream on Swift Run and assisted two neighboring landowners in securing RCPP grants to control the invasive vine. These landowners attempted some treatment in summer of 2018, but a 14"-in-24-hours deluge at the end of May, resulting in flooding and scouring of the kudzu-infested streambanks, washed plant fragments downstream to generate new patches in 2019. These patches should be treated in 2020, although funding is uncertain. If this effort is successful, the PRISM will have saved Swift Run from the kudzu devastation of the Conway. However, the PRISM has an urgent need for an EDRR fund of \$5k - \$10k to deploy on these kinds of infestations while they are still manageable. Control of the kudzu on the Conway River is probably now, and forever, out of financial reach.



All the green foliage and yellow flowers shown carpeting the floor here in Rock Creek Park are lesser celandine. The nonnative invasive plant has obliterated all the native wildflowers that once decorated this woodland.

Lesser Celandine

A PRISM factsheet was created in spring of 2018 for lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*). The highly invasive early spring-blooming floodplain plant creates carpets of shiny foliage and yellow buttercup-like blossoms, and reproduces by dropping tiny bulbils onto the soil, which are carried downstream or spread through surface flows to create new infestations. The plant is extremely difficult to control and has totally wiped out spring wildflowers in many locations outside of the PRISM's geography, notably in Rock Creek Park in Washington DC. So it was with great alarm that PRISM members spotted the plant in Greene and Albemarle Counties where it has not been known previously. Along Parker Branch in Greene County, Jim Hurley found it intermittently along five stream miles owned by some 30 property owners. Using a contractor, he was successful treating it on the first six upstream properties covering 3/4 of a mile. Again, as with kudzu, an EDRR fund is urgently needed by the PRISM to treat a still relatively manageable infestation.

Spotted Lanternfly

A PRISM factsheet was also prepared early in 2018 to alert the public about this new insect menace. While the PRISM concentrates on invasives plants, from time to time we will alert our members about new invasive insects. This factsheet was distributed to the public at PRISM events in 2019. This insect pest feeds on over 70 different plants, but its preferred host is the invasive Ailanthus tree.

Incised Fumewort Found in Madison County

PRISM members spotted incised fumewort (*Corydalis incisa*) in a wildflower garden on private property in Madison County during 2017. This rapidly spreading, newly introduced invasive annual has been found in only a few locations in the eastern U.S., most notably along the Bronx River not far from the New York Botanical Gardens. It has also been spotted in Albemarle County and in Fairfax County. No one knows where this plant came from – it is probably an escapee from a garden. One mail-order nursery is known to have sold it in the U.S. The highly ornamental plant has aroused much concern among professional land managers because of its ability to spread rapidly and crowd out native spring ephemeral wildflowers. This invasive plant sets prolific seeds, which explode from its ripened seedpods and can be propelled as far as nine feet away.

With the permission of the Madison County landowner, the PRISM members treated the incised fumewort population in spring of 2018 before the plants set seed for the year. They sprayed plants and colonies where there was no danger of harming desirable plants and hand-pulled seedlings that were growing among native wildflowers. The landowner continued to treat this plant in 2019. Hopefully, it can be stopped and eradicated before it spreads.



Incised fumewort produces eye-catching purple flowers in spring and explosive seedpods later in the year. It is shown here crowding out native spring beauties.

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS: PREVENTING THE SALE AND PLANTING OF INVASIVE PLANTS

Several members of the PRISM leadership team, Rod Walker, Jim Hurley and Ruth Douglas, are active members of the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee for the Commonwealth of Virginia. This committee makes recommendations to the Board of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) on changes to the noxious weed regulations and carries out detailed assessments to justify recommending specific plants to be added to the official noxious weeds list. Up until 2016, no plant that was “widely disseminated” could be added to the noxious weed list. This restriction prevented virtually all of Virginia’s nastiest invasive plants from being listed as noxious weeds, because they were indeed already widely disseminated. With the changes to the law and the regulations, which the PRISM members helped negotiate, it is now possible to add some of the worst nonnative invasive plants to the noxious weed list and to begin restricting shipments of them into Virginia.

In 2017, the committee drafted the new regulations to go along with the changes that had been made to the Noxious Weed Law in 2016. In 2018, the committee completed and approved weed risk assessments for six invasive species: tree-of-heaven, porcelainberry, Oriental bittersweet, mile-a-minute, hydrilla, and incised fumewort. These species were recommended by VDACS to the VDACS Board for designation as official Virginia noxious weeds. These invasive plants are expected to be added to the official list in 2020. The committee will continue to assess and recommend additional species to be listed.

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS: VDOT PARTNERSHIP

In December 2018 we began working with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to address the planting of invasive plants alongside roadways in the state. Since our initial meeting, we have continued to meet with VDOT and are in the process of collaborating to identify a plan to reduce and eventually replace the use of invasive plants with native plants along Virginia’s roadways. Our efforts have been an illustration of the Collective Impact created

with our statewide partnerships. Other agencies involved in this planning process include Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Native Plant Society, Virginia Tech, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

PRISM OPERATIONS: FUNDRAISING

The PRISM began its 2019 fundraising campaign in November with the first of four email blasts, which went to the entire email list of over 1,000 people, and one mailed printed letter, which went to all members for whom we have mailing addresses, which is over 350 people.

The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) honored the PRISM with a matching grant opportunity of \$20,000, which was the focus of the end-of-year fund-raising campaign. The VEE grant was matched by the end of 2019 with numerous small donations and several generous donations.

Near the end of the year, another \$20,000 matching grant became available to the PRISM from a family foundation. Fund-raising to match this additional grant rolled out just before the end of the year with another email blast. The effort to match and maximize this second grant will continue into 2020.

The PRISM is honored and grateful for these contributions and matching grants, which makes our work possible. These funds are essential to keeping the PRISM operational. They pay the salary of our program director and the expenses for hosting our website and printing our factsheets, as well as travel, office and miscellaneous management expenditures.

PRISM OPERATIONS: STAFFING & ORGANIZATION

The PRISM is a volunteer-driven organization with two paid part-time employees, our Program Director Ashton Stinson, and our Program Assistant, Carolyn Politis. We also rely heavily on a few dedicated members of our leadership team, with help from time-to-time from other reliable volunteers, to carry out our mission. The steering committee, which meets once or twice a year, is made up of men and women from prominent environmental organizations, state agencies, and private landowners. To date, there are nine members of the PRISM's steering committee.

Below is an example of the PRISM's newsletter.

Restoration Speakers at April Meeting, New Invasives, and more!

BLUE RIDGE PRISM
PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

April 2018 Newsletter

Join Us for Our Spring Quarterly Meeting

Guest speakers: *Invasive Plant Control and Restoration*
Thursday, April 19, 2018, 1:00 - 4:00
Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
1500 Remount Rd, Front Royal VA 22630

This meeting will focus on natural lands restoration following invasive species removal. What, if anything, should I do next to continue land? In focused presentations, followed by extensive audience participation, natural lands managers will address:

- Realistic goals for restoration efforts.
- Planning methodologies for achieving chosen goals.
- Examples of functional and dysfunctional restoration projects.
- Should I plant something or leave it alone?
- If I plant something, what should be my guide?

Presenters:
Rod Simmons: Rod is the natural resource manager and plant ecologist for the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and has worked extensively for 25 years in natural resources management and ecological restoration. He is a member of the Virginia Native Plant Society and works closely with the Virginia and Maryland natural heritage programs. Rod is also a past president of the Botanical Society of Washington and a member of the American Society of Botany. He serves on the boards of the Maryland and Virginia Native Plant Societies and is a regular field trip leader for all of these organizations.

Charles Smith: Charles is currently branch chief of the Fairfax County Natural Resources Division, focusing on stream and natural area restoration. He has over 24 years of experience working primarily in natural resource management for the Fairfax County Park Authority and five years with the Prince William Park Authority. Charles is a U.S. Army veteran, a board member of the Prince William Wildflower Society, Prince William Wildflower Society and Prince William Conservation Society, and a member of Friends of the Potomac River Refugees.

Free and open to the public, but registration is necessary for event. Register [here](#).

PRISM UPDATES & NEWS

EMERALD ASH BORER RESEARCH
Researchers at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) recently received a grant from the Shenandoah National Park Trust to study the effects of emerald ash borer (EAB) on invasive species in Shenandoah National Park (SNP). They expect that essentially all of the ash trees in SNP will succumb to EAB over the next several years, and that the die-off will have a significant impact on the landscape and of invasive plants as the forest regenerates.

EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE

LOOK OUT FOR SPOTTED LANTERNFLY
This new, sap-sucking, nonnative invasive insect has come to Virginia. It was found first in Berks County, Pennsylvania, in September 2014, where it is causing extensive damage, and just this winter it was found for the first time in Virginia, in Frederick County. Just because you do not live near the Pennsylvania border doesn't mean you are unlikely to see this pest. Spotted lanternfly infestations spread when egg masses laid on vehicles, firewood, stones, and other objects are moved to new locations.

SLF feeds on 70 tree species by sucking sap from leaves, twigs and branches, seriously weakening the trees. However, it seems to prefer tree-of-heaven, and may even require it to complete its lifecycle. It may still be early enough to control and eradicate this insect if all new outbreaks are quickly controlled. Report all sightings to: [VA Office of Plant Industry Services \(804\) 786-3515](#).

Additional Spotted Lanternfly Resources:

- [PRISM's Spotted Lanternfly Alert handout](#)
- [PRISM's factsheet on tree-of-heaven control](#)
- [Virginia Tech's information on SLF](#)
- [Virginia Tech's informative webinar on SLE](#)



leaf grass in Shenandoah National Park. The park's \$250,000 DuPont Settlement will help treat the infestation. Because of this, Jake will be available for summer 2018! Hope to see you there!





ers in 2017.

sessions on identifying and controlling the pest. People are out there fighting the pest before it sets seed!

BUCKTHORN ESCAPED AND MOVING
Common buckthorn is here! A scourge in the Midwest, where it can cover acres, buckthorn behaves much like autumn olive, privet, and bush honeysuckle. Not known to be a problem in the East, this nonnative invasive shrub is reportedly causing damage near Winchester VA. It's likely that the shrub, which spreads by copious seeds, escaped from an ornamental planting.

Like many nonnative shrubs, common buckthorn leafs out early in spring and retains its leaves late into fall, shading out spring wildflowers and tree seedlings. Buckthorn also alters ecosystems by changing soil chemistry.