

Blue Ridge PRISM

2018 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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INTRODUCTION

THE YEAR 2018 marked the PRISM's fourth 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 toward all landowners 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 predominantly 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 NEGATIVE IMPACT OF INVASIVE SPECIES IN OUR TARGETED GEOGRAPHY”

The PRISM's key tactics in 2018 for achieving that goal were to:

- ❖ **Offer education-and-outreach programs** to landowners and the general public to increase awareness of the damage caused by nonnative invasives and to offer training in identification and control.
 - o *In 2018, we began featuring expert speakers at each of our quarterly meetings and we offered 18 classes and workshops in invasive plant identification and control, and gave 20 presentations to various conservation organizations and conferences.*

- ❖ **Produce and distribute free, high-quality literature** about invasive species and their control and to keep members up-to-date with the latest applicable scientific research through our factsheets, newsletters and website.
 - o *In 2018 we distributed thousands of factsheets, published four newsletters, and began designing and writing a new, user-friendly website.*

- ❖ **Assist landowners in securing grants** to help defray some or most of the cost of controlling invasives.

- o *In 2018, invasive control work continued for the second year for 94 PRISM-facilitated RCPP-grant recipients. Control work continued for a second year on a kudzu site funded by a PRISM-facilitated grant from a land conservation organization. The first year of five-years of treatment began on PRISM's DuPont Settlement Grant for wavyleaf treatment. Invasive control and restoration work began on a PRISM-facilitated three-year EQIP grant for ten acres of environmentally-sensitive land in Greene County.*

- ❖ **Collaborate with other groups and state agencies**, including the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) to prevent the sale, importation and planting of invasive plants in Virginia.
 - o *In 2017, PRISM leadership participated in numerous meetings and discussions resulting in new regulations to the state's noxious weed law being approved in 2018. Also in 2018, the state's Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (including membership from the PRISM) proposed six plant species to be added to the state's noxious weed list. More are in the pipeline.*

- ❖ **Grow our membership and partner organizations** to include major conservation organizations operating in our geography and to attract more landowners through our own events and our participation at member-organization events.
 - o *In 2018, the PRISM added more than 300 names to its mailing list, which now includes more than 1,000 interested members.*

AWARDS AND GRANTS

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 applicants, 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 coordinating all marketing and 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.

The RCPP 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. (One 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. (The enormous amount of educational and outreach work carried out is detailed in the PRISM's 2017 Annual Activities Report.) During 2018, this type of effort by the PRISM was no longer needed.

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 2019.

Natural Resources Conservation Service's Summary Report for 2018

ACTIVE CONTRACTS IN 10 COUNTIES

- ❖ 94 active contracts
- ❖ 2,150.10 acres under contract
- ❖ Total obligation - \$633,632.67
- ❖ Total payments made - \$265,194.32 to date
- ❖ Remaining unobligated funds - \$10,281.87

SUMMARY OF RCPP CONTRACTS

County	Contracts	Contracted Acres	Obligation	Payments
Albemarle	21	543.8	\$117,539.58	\$64,107.92
Augusta	10	143.6	\$38,425.80	\$16,130.30
Clarke	8	144.1	\$43,656.51	\$9,256.93
Greene	8	220.7	\$70,442.60	\$28,360.60
Madison	7	139.1	\$47,355.00	\$25,038.00
Nelson	5	91.6	\$28,169.38	\$18,888.38
Rappahannock	16	513.5	\$191,212.12	\$78,208.53
Rockingham	12	194.4	\$47,825.67	\$5,161.65
Page, Warren	7	159.3	\$49,006.10	\$20,042.01
Totals	94	2,150.1	\$633,632.76	\$265,194.32

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 for



\$907,000 to treat wavyleaf grass at multiple sites in the South Fork watershed of Shenandoah Valley. The award recipients were announced in December 2017. The PRISM received \$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 will pay to treat wavyleaf grass at these sites each summer for five years.

PRISM leaders Jake Hughes and Jim Hurley organized the kickoff of this five-year grant with a three-pronged attack plan on wavyleaf grass in SNP and adjacent Elk Run Park 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 these two teams as well as seasonal staff and, as in years past, PRISM-recruited volunteers. These teams treated Elk Run Park in late June, and SNP beginning in July.



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. During the unusually wet summer in 2018, we were fortunate to have scheduled and deployed the contractors during a two-week, rain-free window. Otherwise, because of the contractors’ other commitments, the treatment-season might have been lost. The EPMT deployed a tank sprayer and up to 1,200 feet of hose to apply a grass-specific herbicide to approximately 40 acres in Elkton, which was infested with large carpets of the invasive grass.

This left 10 acres containing scattered plants and small colonies to be spot-treated by an eight-person GAVCC crew. The work of both teams went so efficiently that they completed the planned 13 days of treatment in Elk Run Park in seven days. This speedy work allowed the GAVCC crew to redeploy for the remainder of their nine-day contract at the huge West Swift Run infestation in SNP three miles to the east. The PRISM's intrepid volunteers (15 over two days) treated 16 of the most heavily infested acres in SNP's Swift Run during two workdays in July.

In SNP, a crew funded by the grant was able to treat all 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 August Japanese stiltgrass treatment in other areas of the national park. By the end of August, more than 360 acres of parkland, many containing heavy infestations of wavyleaf grass, had been treated. This is just the first year of a five-year treatment program for these sites. The prospects for at least containing all of these serious wavyleaf grass infestations are looking good!

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. VFWG will spray the meadow again in 2019 and 2020. A second NRCS grant will fund the planting of warm-season grasses and wildflowers in 2020. 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.

NRCS Grant for Drone Research

During the fall of 2018, the PRISM and UVA won a \$75,000 grant from the NRCS to fund a UVA doctoral student's research for two years. The student will be working with Professor Howard Epstein in UVA's Department of Environmental Sciences to demonstrate the use of drones to detect and map specific invasive plants. The project will formally begin in January, 2019.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Blue Ridge PRISM reaches and expands our membership and audience through our publications, meetings, workshops, speaking engagements, and website.

Quarterly Meetings Feature Expert Speakers in 2018

The Blue Ridge PRISM offers quarterly meetings every year in January, April, July and October, which are open to the public. Beginning in October 2017, we shortened the business portions of the meetings, which included updates on the PRISM's activities, and began offering expert speakers and/or discussion panels. These speakers sparked some lively and informative discussions. As part of these meetings the PRISM began offering a plant ID clinic where participants could bring samples of plants they suspected of being invasive.



April meeting at SCBI with restoration experts Charles Smith (left), Rod Simmons (center) and moderator Jim Hurley (right).

In 2018, the PRISM featured guest speakers on topics of interest to our members at each quarterly meeting. In January, Rachel Brooks, a doctoral student from Virginia Tech, discussed her research on biocontrol of tree-of-heaven. In April, we presented two well-respected naturalists speaking on ecological restoration after invasive removal. In July, we hosted a panel of herbicide experts to discuss the use of herbicides in invasive control and to participate in a question and answer session. The October meeting featured three landscape architects discussing how they handle natural sites such as wetlands. We have also continued to invite our guests to bring plant samples to each meeting for identification.

We also began making full audios and PowerPoint presentations from each meeting's speakers available on our website.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS			
Topic	Date	Location	Attendance
Tree-of-Heaven Biocontrol	1/24/18	Ivy Creek Natural Area	35
Restoration Experts	4/19/18	Smithsonian Conservation Biology	50
Herbicide Experts Panel	7/18/18	Ivy Creek Natural Area	43
Landscaping Natural Sites	10/16/18	Ivy Creek Natural Area	33
		TOTAL	161

Tabling Events

Events such as county fairs, harvest festivals, environmental organization-sponsored symposia, forestry association meetings, etc. offer the PRISM the opportunity to set up a display table, hand out our factsheets and have conversations with interested people. These events expose new audiences around our ten-county region to our message and informative materials. Many of the landowners we meet at tabling events sign up for our email list to receive newsletters and event announcements. PRISM leadership or volunteers staff tables at these events, which can be demanding and time-consuming. Ruth Douglas, Mary Lee Epps, Tim Maywalt, William Hamersky, Jim Hurley, Susan Roth, Ashton Stinson (the PRISM's Program Director) and Rod and Maggie Walker frequently staff



our tables. We tabled at 21 such events during 2018.

EVENTS WHERE PRISM HAD DISPLAYS		
Event	Date	Event Attendance*
Hometown Habitat Screening	2/11/18	300
Virginia Native Plant Society Jefferson Chapter Meeting	2/14/18	35
Piedmont Landscape Association Seminar	2/15/18	400
Woods and Wildlife Conference	2/24/18	200
Shenandoah Valley Plant Symposium	3/16/18	237
Rockfish Valley Foundation Kite Festival	4/8/18	100
Charlottesville Comm-UNI-ty March for Science	4/8/18	400
Ivy Creek's Inaugural Barn Opening Celebration	4/14/18	300
Virginia Forestry Summit	5/ 1-4/18	270
Thomas Jefferson Soil & Water Conservation District NRCS Field Day	5/2/18	69
Master Gardener Plant Sale	5/5/18	1,062
Grace Church Historic Farm Tour	6/9/18	100
Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association Field Day	7/12/18	145
Augusta County Fair	7/ 31- 8/ 4/18	10,000
Virginia Outdoor Festival	9/8/18	350
Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival	9/22/18	2,966
Rappahannock Farm Tour	9/29&30/18	108
Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards Fall Tree Sale	10/13/18	250
Albemarle Ciderworks Harvest Festival	11/3/18	3,000
Naturally Nelson: Kids Event	10/12/18	59
Wildrock Event	10/31/18	145
	TOTAL	20,292

**The attendance numbers above indicate the total number of people who attended each event, not the number of contacts made by the PRISM.*



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 12 presentations in 2017 and 20 in 2018.

EVENTS WHERE PRISM PRESENTED		
Event	Date	Attendance
Blue Ridge Garden Club	1/16/18	25
VA Association of Forest Health Professionals	1/29-30/18	145
James Madison University	1/31/18	45
Virginia Native Plant Society: Piedmont Chapter	2/18/18	n/a
Rappahannock Valley Garden Club	3/15/18	25
Rivanna Master Naturalists Volunteer Day	3/21/18	20
Seven Bends Lecture Series	3/25/18	40
Environment Virginia Symposium	4/ 3-5/18	25
Redlands Farm	4/8/18	20
Westminister Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville	4/8/18	10
Bundoran Farm	4/27/18	14
Southern Group of State Foresters Annual Meeting	6/6/18	19
Forestry Camp Presentation	6/19/18	40
Shenandoah County Master Gardeners	7/15/18	46
Charlottesville Garden Club	9/19/18	35
Tree Farm Foundation Dinner and Tour	9/20/18	20
Charlottesville Garden Club	9/19/18	35
Tree Farm Foundation Dinner and Tour	9/20/18	20
Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Meeting	10/6/18	5
Central Shenandoah Valley Garden Symposium	10/27/18	150
	TOTAL	514



This meadow of pollinator-friendly wildflowers owes its existence to an NRCS grant that funded invasive plant control and establishment of native wildflowers and warm-season grasses.

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 first offered these workshops in the summer of 2017. In 2018, we continued to host three seasonal workshops, each in three different locations within our ten-county region. The workshops cover the Terrible Twelve Invasives as well as other invasives that might be encountered at that time of year. They also include equipment demonstrations and an invasive plants walk. PRISM leadership volunteers Jim Hurley, Tim Maywalt, William Hamersky, and Rod Walker teach these workshops.

In 2018, the PRISM repeated classes that had been offered the previous year at Albemarle County Public Schools' Continuing Education (taught by Rod Walker) and at RappU (taught by Mike Wenger). The RappU course met in the fall on four consecutive Wednesdays in Sperryville in Rappahannock County.

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 at Ivy Creek Natural Area	3/27/18	29
PRISM Spring Workshop at the State Arboretum	3/29/18	39
PRISM Spring Workshop in Harrisonburg	4/4/18	16
Albemarle County Public Schools Continuing Education	4/10/18	6
Albemarle County Public Schools Continuing Education	5/10/18	5
PRISM Summer Workshop at the State Arboretum	6/20/18	30
PRISM Summer Workshop at Rockfish Valley Foundation	6/25/18	11
PRISM Summer Workshop at Ivy Creek Natural Area	6/26/18	24
James River Assoc. & PRISM Riparian Buffer Workshop	6/26/18	13
RappU Invasive Plant Class: 5-week course - Week 1	9/19/18	12
RappU Invasive Plant Class: 5-week course - Week 2	9/26/18	12
RappU Invasive Plant Class: 5-week course - Week 3	10/3/18	12
RappU Invasive Plant Class: 5-week course - Week 4	10/10/18	12
PRISM Fall Workshop at the State Arboretum	10/18/18	10
PRISM Fall Workshop at Rockfish Valley Foundation	10/20/18	4
PRISM Fall Workshop at Ivy Creek Natural Area	10/28/18	13
Albemarle County Public Schools Continuing Education	10/23/18	9
Albemarle County Public Schools Continuing Education	12/4/18	4
	TOTAL	261

More Education and Outreach Materials Created

The 12 fact sheets detailing the Terrible Twelve Invasive Plants that the PRISM targets were completed by Susan Roth in 2016. Four fact sheets on invasive plant management were added in 2017: *Herbicide Basics*, *How to Control Invasive Plants: Manual, Mechanical, and Biological Methods*, *Controlling Invasive Plants Safely and Effectively with Herbicides* and a chart prepared by VDOF summarizing herbicide treatment methods for the Terrible Twelve. A fact sheet titled *Garden Escape Artists* about the invasive habits of certain garden plants and a wavyleaf grass alert flier were also created.

In 2018, the PRISM added two additional fact sheets about new invasive species to our repertoire to alert the public about worrisome new invaders. A *Spotted Lanternfly Alert* came out in February 2018 in time to be handed out at the Woods & Wildlife tabling event. A *Lesser Celandine Alert* was published in April 2018, after PRISM leaders discovered the plant outside of the limited areas where it had been known in our 10 counties. An alert about incised fumewort, another new worrisome invasive, was included in the April newsletter.

To date, approximately 15,000 printed fact sheets have been handed out. These fact sheets are also downloadable from the PRISM website.

Quarterly Newsletters Published

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 2018, our mailing list consisted of more than 1,000 subscribers; over 300 new subscribers were added during the year.

The newsletters include event announcements as well as updates on PRISM activities and lots of newsy items, such as recent research results about invasives, newly sighted invasives, and new weed regulations – all subjects of interest to our members. The four 2018 newsletters averaged four pages long. We also send out short event reminders just before our quarterly meetings and workshops.

Using MailChimp, our web-based email marketing platform, 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 39.2% open rate.

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

BLUE RIDGE PRISM
PARTNERSHIP
FOR RESTORING
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

The meeting will focus on natural lands restoration following invasions we have wondered: What, if anything, should I do next to control an invasive? In focused presentations, followed by extensive audience questions, 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 manager for the Shenandoah National Park. He is a member of the Virginia and Maryland natural heritage society and past president of the Botanical Society of Washington and the American Botanical Society. He serves on the boards of the Maryland and Virginia Botanical Societies and is a regular field trip leader for all of these organizations.
Charles Smith: Charles is currently branch chief of the Fairfax County Park Authority, focusing on stream and natural area restoration. He is currently branch chief of the Fairfax County Park Authority and has 24 years of experience working primarily in natural resource management with the Fairfax County Park Authority and five years with the Prince William Wildflower Society and Prince William County member of Friends of the Potomac River Refuges.

Free and open to the public, but registration is necessary for access to the meeting. Register on [Facebook](#) or on [our website](#).

Register

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 of invasive plants as the forest recovers will be significant.

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 SLF](#)

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 leaves 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.

...of grass in Shenandoah National Park's \$250,000 DuPont Settlement... get treated. Because of this, Jake... days for summer 2018! Hope to... will be sent out in late May.

...ers in 2017.

...sessions on identifying and... people are out there fighting the...
...ore it sets seed!

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. We have approximately 130 followers with moderate activity (average of 1-2 posts a month). Our followers are 58% women and 42% men between the ages of 25 and 64. Our goal for our Facebook page is to connect with a younger audience while steadily growing our following.

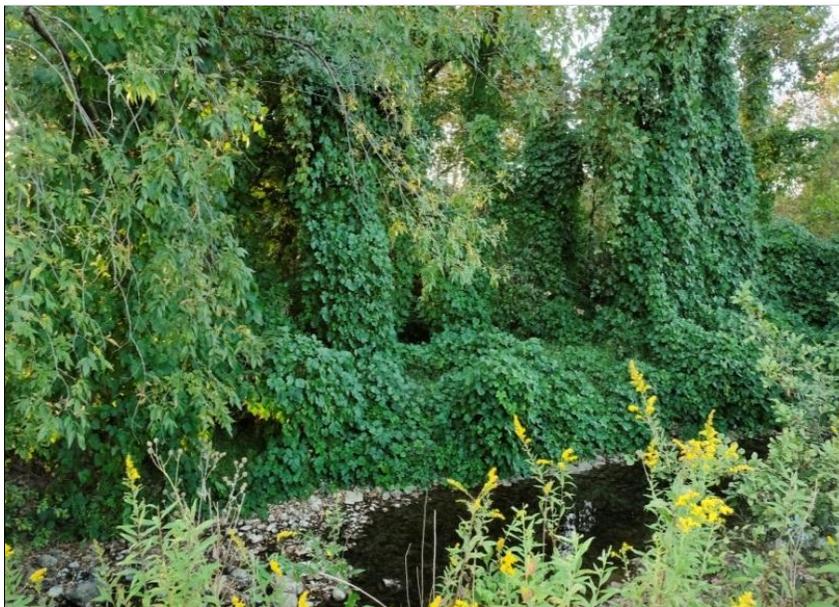
Website Redesign

In the summer of 2018, the effort began to create a new website using a platform that would offer the PRISM more control and metric analysis. The new platform will allow PRISM's program director to more easily update the website herself. A website designer was hired and a new design and layout began with new, updated text written by a volunteer. The new website is expected to be up and running in 2019.

EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE (EDRR)

Continued Battle with Kudzu in Greene County

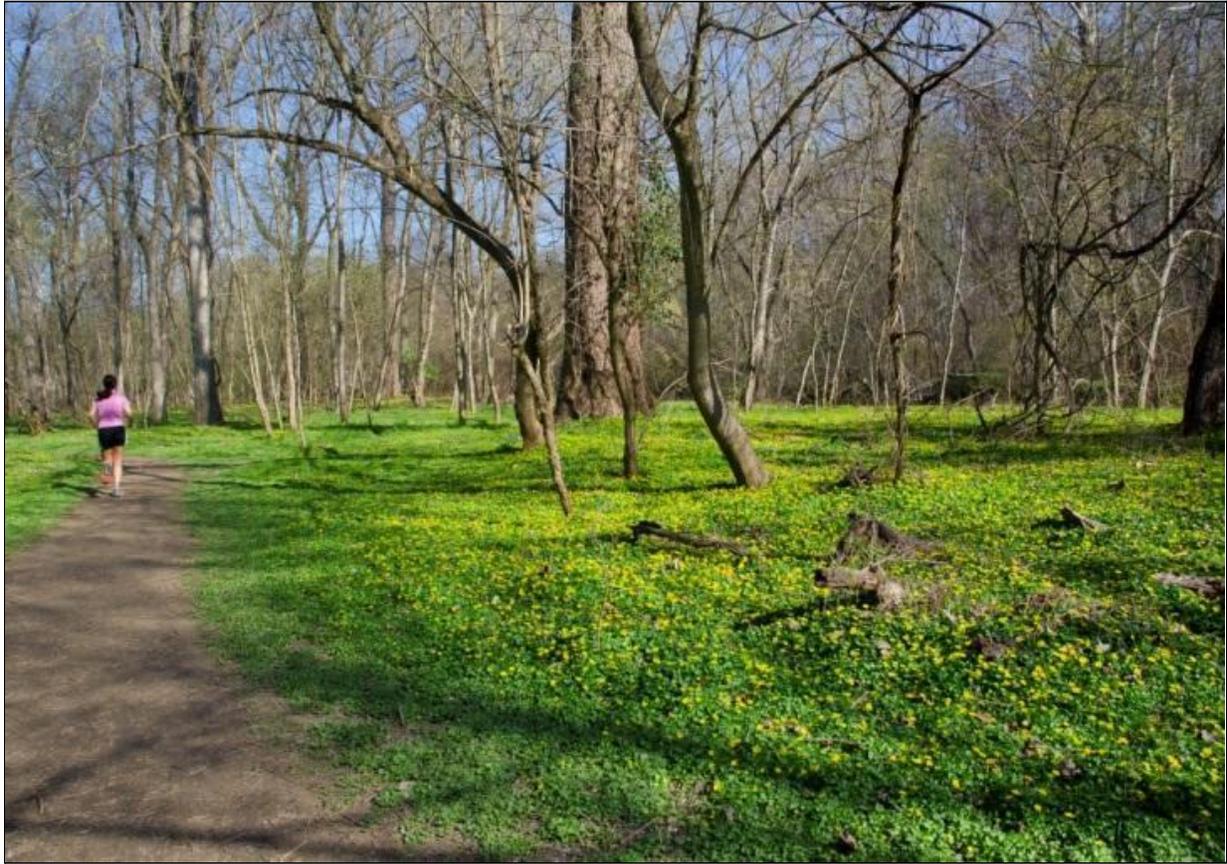
PRISM leadership member Jim Hurley discovered kudzu growing in two locations in Greene County in spring of 2017. Until then, kudzu was known to be present at only one other location in the county. Although kudzu is present in all of the PRISM's 10 counties, it is considered an EDRR opportunity where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



One newly discovered infestation was on a Swift Run farm. The PRISM facilitated 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 kudzu further upstream on Swift Run and assisted three neighboring landowners in securing RCPP grants to

control the invasive vine. These landowners began treatment in summer of 2018. Neighbors cooperating with each other is at the heart of the PRISM's philosophy.



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

As mentioned above, an EDRR factsheet was created in spring of 2018 for lesser celandine (*Ficaria repens*). The highly invasive early spring-blooming plant creates carpets of shiny foliage, yellow buttercup-like blossoms, and reproduces by dropping tiny bulbils onto the soil, which readily float downstream or roll along the ground 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 National Park in Washington DC. So it was with great alarm that PRISM members spotted the plant in Greene and Albemarle Counties where it had not been known previously. A campaign to educate landowners in infested areas will be undertaken in 2019, in hopes of getting them to cooperate with each other to combat the plant.

Spotted Lanternfly

As mentioned above, an EDRR fact sheet was prepared early in 2018 to alert the public about this new insect menace. While the PRISM concentrates on invasive plants, from time to time we will alert our members about new invasive insects.



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.

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 seed pods 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. Hopefully, it can be stopped and eradicated before it does too much damage.

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, porcelain-berry, 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 2019. The committee will continue to assess and recommend additional species to be listed during 2019.

FUNDRAISING

The PRISM began its 2018 fundraising campaign beginning in November with the first of four email blasts, which went to the entire email list of approximately 1,000 people, and one mailed printed letter, which went to all members for whom we have mailing addresses, which is approximately 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. (Last year, VEE awarded the PRISM a \$15,000 matching grant.) The VEE grant was matched by the end of 2018 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 2019.

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 MANAGEMENT

The PRISM is a volunteer-driven organization with one paid full time employee, our Program Director Ashton Stinson, who has been employed since June 1, 2016. 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 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.