INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS COALITION (IWAC)

Restoring a Rarity in New York State

Nestled along the Buffalo River in New York lies the Seneca Bluffs Habitat Restoration Site. Flanked by industrial and residential areas, the 15-acre site contains a mature floodplain forest with towering cottonwoods, nearly 1,000 feet of bluff that is home to many nesting birds, a floodplain island, an emergent wetland and an upland meadow. Its rich soils were once a thriving spot for agriculture; however, this Buffalo treasure is now being threatened by numerous invasive species such as mugwort, (*Artemisia vulgaris),* purple loosestrife *(Lythrum salicaria),* garlic mustard *(Alliaria petiolata),* and its greatest danger, Japanese knotweed *(Polygonum cuspidatum).*

NIWAW
NATIONAL INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS WEEK

Challenge:

Japanese knotweed is an incredibly opportunistic weed. A highly durable species, it spreads rapidly and quickly grows tall and dense, eliminating all competing vegetation. With the rich soils in Seneca Bluffs, Japanese knotweed can grow up to 12 feet tall.

County, city and state officials have been desperate to protect the area; however, many of the most effective control methods for Japanese knotweed have been out of their reach due to budget constraints. As a result, it has been important to foster partnerships to develop cost-effective and innovative ways to attack the spreading problem of Japanese knotweed.

Solution:

In 2003, Erie County partnered with the City of Buffalo and the New York Departments of State and Environmental Conservation to develop five acres of the Seneca Bluffs site. The contractor cleared and grubbed the project area, followed by deep tilling during the summer to expose the roots of re-emerging knotweed during dry and sunny periods. In late summer 2004, native grasses were planted, followed by over 1,100 shrubs and trees planted in the fall. By planting fast growing native shrubs and trees, the goal is to create a canopy to discourage Japanese knotweed from reinfesting the project area.

Inmate work crews assisted with mechanical removal methods to control Japanese knotweed.

Until the canopy of vegetation is established, mechanical removal methods will be used to control the knotweed as it attempts to re-establish itself. The Daemen College Center for Sustainable Communities and Civic Engagement has adopted the Seneca Bluffs site to assist with mechanical removal. Volunteer students, using brush cutters, weed whips and weed trimmers, cut the knotweed regularly throughout the growing season. Supplementing their efforts are inmate work crews that also assist with mechanical removal.

Result:

Ordinarily, mechanical removal is not very effective for controlling Japanese knotweed. However, since the group was careful to design their program to include root exposure, trench burial of plant remnants and deep tilling of soils, the mechanical removal eliminated a great deal of the weed in the restoration area.

Today, the Seneca Bluffs treatment area has restored aquatic and terrestrial habitat, better erosion control, fishing access and a trail system. Until the canopy of vegetation is completely established, the battle against the Japanese knotweed continues.

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