

April 1, 2011

FAQ for Great Lakes Invasive Plant Management Plan/ Environmental Assessment

1. What is scoping?

Scoping is used to identify key issues of concern at an early stage in the planning process. We are interested in determining who the interested parties are, what their concerns are, and why they are concerned.

2. Why are invasive species an issue?

Minimally, invasive species are excellent competitors and they aggressively replace native plant species affecting food and habitat for wildlife. In the larger context, they disrupt normal ecosystem function and can halt processes such as forest regeneration or exacerbate processes such as erosion.

3. What is the biggest problem?

It depends upon the park. Some of our parks, such as Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, are heavily impacted by invasive plants. Other parks, such as Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and Isle Royale National Park, are minimally impacted. This is one of the reasons we want to include prevention and education, as well as control as part of our management plan.

4. Can you give me a specific example of a species impacts?

Two species that tend to be very problematic in the Midwest are buckthorn and garlic mustard. These are both shade tolerant forest species. Buckthorn is a shrub or small tree and garlic mustard is an understory herb. Together they reduce light availability for other species. No new native tree seedlings or other plant species are able to grow. Because of them, we've lost not only species diversity but the ability of the forest to regenerate. This has serious ecological and economic consequences.

5. How will climate change affect invasive species?

We do know that the climate is changing and that we will probably see greater impacts of invasive species. The magnitude is yet unknown. We do know that extreme ecosystem stressors such as floods, droughts, and major blow downs provide opportunity for invasive species to establish.

6. What will this plan do?

Currently, invasive species management in the Great Lakes parks has focused on short-term fixes. However, current invaders, as well as those that will arrive in the future, are part of a long-term

problem. We want to create a structured yet flexible management plan to help with that big picture. The content of those plans is what we are asking the public for help with right now.

7. How will the public be involved?

The public comes into this process at two key stages. The first is scoping. This helps us identify the issues and concerns. The second stage is a public review of the draft management plan. We anticipate that plan to be available in about a year from now.

8. Will there be interim opportunities for the public to be involved or documents to review prior to the publication of the draft management plan?

Currently, we are not planning to release any interim documents for review prior to publication of the draft management plan. However, we encourage you to check the project website on PEPC frequently, as any project updates or new information for the public will be posted there.

9. What is the source of the funding for the plan?

Plan development is funded through the Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lake's Restoration Initiative.

10. What is the source of funding for implementation of the plan?

Invasive species management is expected to be on-going and funded through park budgets as well as special project initiatives.

11. How is NPS going to prevent adverse effects of herbicide treatments on water and wildlife?

The effects of proposed treatment strategies (chemical and otherwise) will be addressed in the environmental assessment, and the document will include strategies and mitigation measures to prevent adverse effects of treatments on other natural and park resources.

12. I own property near / within the ____ park boundaries and have lots of buckhorn, garlic mustard, _____, on my property. Will the NPS help me eradicate these species on my land?

That depends. The park service can certainly provide you will information on how to remove these species yourself. In some cases if invasive species are seen as a threat to critical habitat, with landowner consent, the park service may aid in their physical removal.