Vegetation Management Update & Weed Warrior Volunteer Program

Friends of Sligo Creek & Neighbors of the Northwest Branch Meeting
June 23, 2020

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Vegetation Management Update

Ryan Colliton – Principal Natural Resources Specialist
Vegetation Management Unit
Montgomery Parks

424 parks across 37,072 acres
Goals and Objectives (Measurable and Achievable)

• **Goal:** Conservation of native biodiversity (flora and fauna) through the management of vegetation
  
• **Objective 1:** Establish prioritization matrix by spring 2020
  
• **Objective 2:** Establish baseline conditions (invasive species coverage, native diversity, RTE, etc.) by summer 2020
  
• **Objective 3:** Establish habitat classifications based on Maryland Classification by fall 2020
  
• **Objective 4:** Develop early detection rapid response system by winter 2020
Prioritization

- Categories: Size, floristic diversity, % invasive cover, RTE species, habitat ranking, edge to interior, connectivity

Size: larger habitats can support larger populations, larger populations are more stable

Floristic Diversity: native richness and abundance, current status of habitat

Invasive Species Coverage: ROI
Prioritization Continued

RTE: species conservation, regulatory, biodiversity

Habitat Classification: Habitats are ranked by their rareness within the state

Edge to interior ratio: Conservation of core/interior habitat

Connectivity: square footage of divisions (fragmentation)
Establish Baseline Conditions

Native floristic biodiversity, RTE species, invasive species coverage
  • Establish permanent plots
  • Assessment of historic populations of RTE species
    • NNI Quick assessment method, point survey

(Need to stay focused and do the work to collect the data and make decisions based on the results – mission creep)
Habitat Classification System

• Maryland Habitat Classification: State Ranked Habitats based on their rareness
• (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5)
• Examples: Serpentine Red Maple – Virginia Pine/ Greenbriar Forest (S2), North-Central Appalachian Acidic Shale Woodland (S2)
• What is the status??? (Impact of COVID-19)
THE NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF MARYLAND

2016 NATURAL COMMUNITY CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Wildlife and Heritage Service
Invasion Curve

- **I.** Introduction
  - Prevention or Eradication SIMPLE
- **II.** Detection
  - Eradication FEASIBLE
  - Public awareness typically begins
  - Eradication UNLIKELY, intense effort required
- **III.** Local control and management ONLY

**Early Detection Rapid Response**
How does this fit into the Vegetation Management Program

• 1) Conservation, 2) Consultation, 3) Mitigation
• Conservation through vegetation management program including the WW program
• Consultation on projects impacting parkland
• Mitigation projects to compensate for land impacts on parks property
Special Projects

- Weed Warriors – Move to a restoration paradigm, provide strategic follow-up, engage in monitoring activities, native plantings where appropriate
- Pope Farm – assess ability to propagate native species for WW sites
- Nature Center Collaborative – Work with Nature Centers (especially those with dedicated WWs) on select restoration projects
- Meadow management – Separate program to manage this unique habitat
- FIL funds: identifying restoration priorities
- Invasive Species Prioritization: what to work on first?
- Annual reports: centralized data storage, annual tracking of work
Weed Warrior Volunteer Program

Corinne Stephens
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Non-Native, Invasive Plant (NNI)

A plant that evolved in another part of the world (introduced intentionally or accidentally to our area), which is capable of spreading rapidly, causing ecological or economic harm or is a threat to human health.

kudzu covers a bush

bush honeysuckle covered in porcelainberry
Weed Warrior Volunteer Program
www.WeedWarrior.org

• Created in 1999
• Empowers community members to help Montgomery Parks staff manage NNIs on parkland
• Volunteers taught to ID and manage specific NNI species using BMPs
• Top priority = save trees from NNI vines
• Hand control methods only
• Coming Soon: restoration paradigm
WW Priority NNI Species list

**First Priority Species (Vines)**
- English Ivy
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Mile-a-Minute
- Oriental Bittersweet
- Porcelainberry
- Wintercreeper

**Second Priority Species**
- Autumn Olive
- Bush Honeysuckle
- Garlic Mustard (flowering & not seeding)
- Japanese Barberry
- Multiflora Rose
- Wineberry

mile-a-minute leaf & barbs  
bush honeysuckle flower  
flowering garlic mustard
WW Priority NNI Species list

Third Priority Species
- Bradford Pear seedlings
- Japanese Stiltgrass (small infestations only)
- Wavyleaf Basketgrass (small infestations only)
- Winged Burningbush/Euonymus

Fourth Priority Species
- Kudzu (small infestations only)
- Wisteria
Two Weed Warrior Certification Levels

**Level 1 Certified Weed Warriors**
- Control 1\textsuperscript{st} priority NNI vines

**Level 2 Certified Weed Warriors**
- Control *all of* the approved plant species

***All Weed Warriors, certified prior to 2020= Grandfathered into the Level 2 Certified Weed Warrior designation***
Requirements:
Level 1 Weed Warrior Certification

- Participate in at least 2 Weed Warrior Workdays
- Complete the online e-course: The Basics
- Complete the online e-course: NNI 101 (Vines)
- Attend a classroom training
- Participate in a field training with Montgomery Parks Staff
Reminder

Per the announcement that Montgomery Parks programs are cancelled and facilities are closed, all group volunteer projects are cancelled through June 30th. The Montgomery Parks COVID-19 webpage will continue to be updated as we learn more:

https://www.montgomeryparks.org/covid-19
Weed Warrior Supervisors

Specially trained and authorized to lead groups and Weed Warrior Workdays

Weed Warrior Supervisors:
In and Around Northwest Branch and Sligo Creek watersheds

• Jim Anderson
• Rochelle Bartolomei
• Ross Campbell
• Larry Hush
• Ellen Mann

• Kathleen Michels
• Greg Odegaarden
• Allison Rivetti
• Kathy Treat
• Katya Vert-Wong

WW Supervisor Greg shows how to ID a plant in winter
2020 Weed Warrior Reported Volunteer Service Hours (as of 6/15/20)

NW Branch and Sligo Creek watersheds 1,195 HOURS

All Montgomery County watersheds 3,118 HOURS

Sligo Weed Warriors with large bittersweet vine
Fall 2019
Weed Warriors are Invaluable Partners

• It will take long-term dedication for us to recover from extensive NNI infestations; this effort starts by protecting our existing high-quality areas first and moving outward from there.
• The Montgomery Parks Natural Resources Stewardship team is small and dealing with NNIs is just one of its many tasks.
• The Regional Park Management staff also devote resources to NNI removal.
• Modest funding in recent years has enabled us to hire natural resources management contractors.
• Weed Warriors= Main boots on the ground in the NW Branch and Sligo watersheds!!
Coming Soon

1. E-courses for current Weed Warriors to review
2. Trainings (e-courses and in-person) for new Weed Warriors
3. Weed Warrior (New) Supervisor Trainings
4. Training for certified Weed Warriors who want to help us monitor
5. Community-involved native plantings in areas where Weed Warriors are making positive progress

WW Supervisor Dick Kerr trains new volunteers

Successful Sligo Weed Warriors
NNI Resources

**Online Field Guides:**
- Mistaken Identity-Invasive Plants and their Native Lookalikes: An Identification Guide for the Mid-Atlantic
- Plant Invaders of the Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas
- Common Non-Native, Invasive Plants- MD DNR printable cards (print and fold into cards)

**Professional Plant Identification Websites:**
- Wildflower Identification Website
- A Community for Naturalists (iNaturalist)
- Leafsnap: An Electronic Field Guide and Free Phone App

**Local Facebook Discussion Groups:**
- Invasive Plant ID & Removal Facebook Group:
  - Moderated by Certified Weed Warrior, Keith Sanderson
- Capital Naturalist Facebook Group for the Washington, DC area

***Please note, these links are not produced or moderated by Montgomery Parks***
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Please contact me for more info, if you want to be trained as a Certified Weed Warrior, or if you are already a Weed Warrior and want to be a supervisor and lead groups!