



Exotic Plant Management Teams

Safeguarding native plants and animals



Exotic Plant Management Teams have been established through the Natural Resource Challenge to control exotic plants in the national parks.

“The presence of nonnative plants, animals, and other [pest] organisms pose a major and nearly universal threat to the preservation and restoration of natural habitats. Identifying, mapping, and evaluating nonnative species is critical to an effective and well-targeted effort to control their negative effects. The National Park Service must aggressively target these invaders where they threaten park resources.”

Fran Mainella,
Director of the National Park Service

National parks are home to complex native communities of plants and animals that have developed over millions of years. The delicate natural balance within these communities is threatened by the invasion of exotic plants (species introduced into a natural community that are not native to that place). These exotic plants are able to reproduce rapidly, because the animals and diseases that kept them in check in their home ranges are missing. Melaleuca trees from Australia threaten to replace the wet prairies of the Everglades and leafy spurge, an import from Eurasia, easily supplants the grasslands of the northern Great Plains. When the populations of native plants are reduced, the animals that depend upon them lack the food and shelter needed for survival. Today, exotic plants infest some 2.6 million acres in the National Park System, reducing the natural diversity of these places. With funding provided by the Natural Resource Challenge, the National Park Service is establishing Exotic Plant Management Teams (EPMTs) to control exotic plants.

Modeled after the teams used to fight wildfires, EPMTs are designed to provide a highly trained, mobile strike force of plant management specialists to assist parks in the control of exotic plants. Nine EPMTs were established between FY 2000 and FY 2002, and seven are proposed to be added in FY 2003. In 2002 the teams served over 95 parks and treated over 100 species of harmful invasive plants on 68,000 infested acres, and monitored over 34,000 acres. Six species of exotic plants have been eradicated from parks since the establishment of EPMTs.

The EPMTs use an integrated pest management (IPM) approach to exotic species control. Integrated pest management embraces every appropriate control method.

The EPMT concept is validated by the enthusiastic support of our partners. Every dollar spent on exotic species control by the Florida EPMT is matched by the State of Florida. Partnerships with three federal agencies, and Nevada State Parks and Clark County, Nevada, allowed the Lake Mead EPMT to double its crew to 15 people, enabling them to greatly increase the number of acres treated.

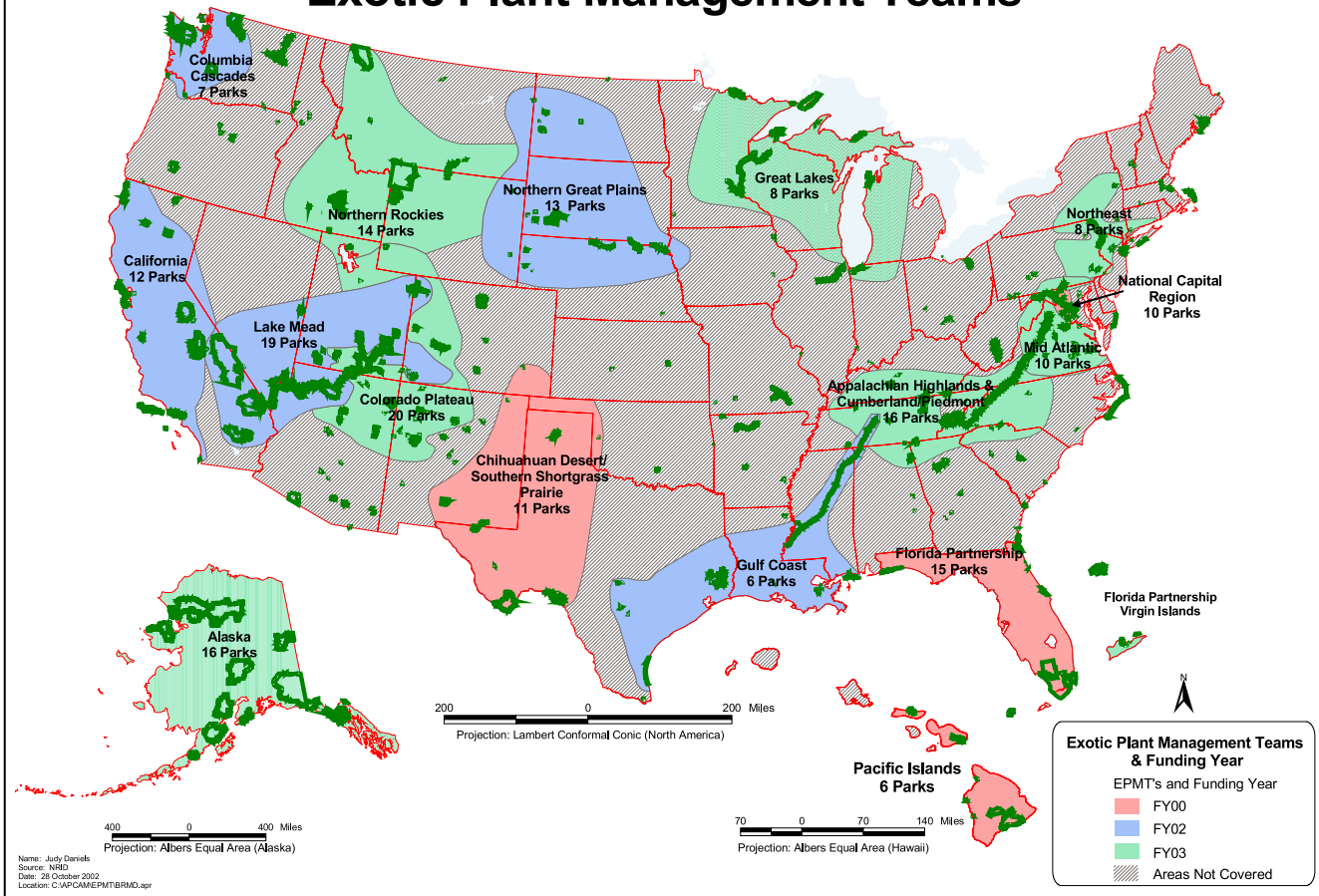
The State of Hawaii established the Emergency Environmental Workforce to provide employment to displaced workers in the tourism industry. The 17 workers provided by the state contributed 5,380 hours to the Hawaii EPMT. The primary target for their efforts was *Miconia calvescens*, an aggressive tree from Central America that is poised to overrun the pristine rain forest in Haleakala National Park.

Stemming the spread of exotic species is critical to protecting the health and natural heritage of our national parks. EPMTs are meeting this challenge.

For information

www.nature.nps.gov/epmt and
www.nature.nps.gov/challenge/nrc.htm.

National Park Service Exotic Plant Management Teams



Pacific Islands EPMT

Host park: Haleakala National Park

Florida Partnership EPMT

In partnership with the State of Florida
(funding doubled in FY 2002)

Chihuahuan Desert/Southern Shortgrass Prairie EPMT

Host park: Carlsbad Caverns National Park

National Capital Region EPMT

Host park: Rock Creek Park

Lake Mead EPMT

Host park: Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Northern Great Plains EPMT

Host park: Theodore Roosevelt National Park

California EPMT

Host park: Point Reyes National Seashore

Gulf Coast EPMT

Host park: Big Thicket National Park

Columbia Cascades EPMT

Host parks: North Cascades and Olympic National Parks

Colorado Plateau EPMT

Host Park: Petrified Forest National Park

Northern Rocky Mountain EPMT

Host Park: Yellowstone National Park

Great Lakes Network EPMT

Host Park: To be determined

Mid-Atlantic Network EPMT

Host Park: Shenandoah National Park

Northeast Regional EPMT

Host Park: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Appalachian Highlands & Cumberland/Piedmont EPMT

Host Parks: Mammoth Cave National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway

Alaska EPMT

Host Park: Alaska Regional Office