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## SHAWNEE NATIONAL EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE REMOVES AQUATIC INVASIVE

Harrisburg, IL - December 30, 2008 - A kayaking trip on Dutchman Lake in early September, 2008, turned into an adventure in early detection and rapid response for Melissa Mead, Student Career Employment Program ecologist for the Shawnee National Forest, when she collected water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), an invasive aquatic plant species, for the first time on the Forest. Melissa collected and pressed the unknown plant for later identification in her Wetland Ecology Course at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Melissa reported the site to Susan Corey, Botanist/Ecologist on the Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District and, together, on a cold November day, they removed all of the visible plants from the lake. A total of 14 large trash bags and an estimated 700 pounds of soggy plants were removed.

While removing the water hyacinth, the two discovered the presence of another invasive aquatic plant species, parrot feather watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), and also removed it. This was the first documentation of the parrot feather watermilfoil on the Shawnee National Forest.

The collaborative effort between the Shawnee National Forest and the River-to-River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) developed over the past couple of years has been highly beneficial, not only to the Forest, but to all of Southern Illinois. During the summer of 2008, Chris Evans, Coordinator for the CWMA, organized aquatic invasive plant surveys at all boat ramps on impoundments in southern Illinois. Melissa and two seasonal Student



Temporary Employment Program employees on the Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District were involved in conducting these surveys on national forest lands.

When Mr. Evans received the report of the water hyacinth and parrot feather watermilfoil populations, their removal and plans for monitoring the populations in the coming years, he stated, “This is a great example of effective early detection and rapid response within an agency: find a new plant, identify it as a problem, contact the appropriate persons within the agency, rapidly respond to neutralize the threat and develop a plan to continue monitoring the site to ensure the population remains controlled.”

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