



Invasive Species Program

National Wildlife Refuge System Fiscal Year 2008 Update

Invasive Species Management in the National Wildlife Refuge System

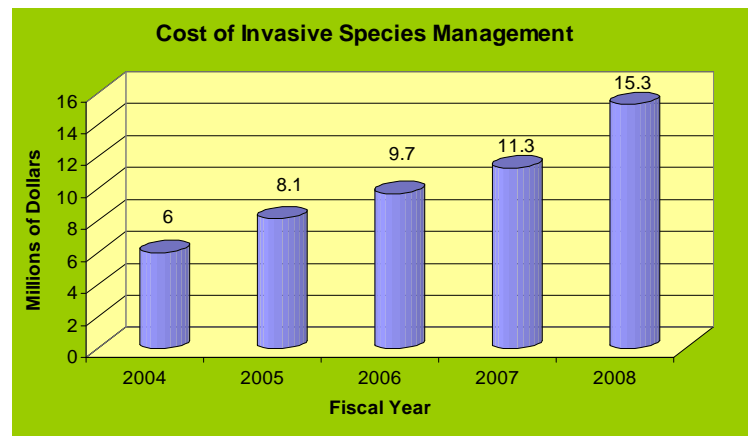
Invasive species continue to be one of the greatest challenges for managers in the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). At the 2001 Conservation in Action Summit, concerns over invasive species management received twice as many votes as any other issue in the Wildlife and Habitat Challenges section. When the NWRS Threats and Conflicts database was filled out by managers in 2003, invasive species were the most frequently cited threat to the System. According to the 2008 Refuge Annual Performance Planning database (RAPP), 2.3 million acres of refuge lands are reported as infested with invasive plants. In addition, there are 4,387 invasive animal populations on refuge lands. While the NWRS is committed to eradicating or controlling these invaders, in FY 2008 we were only able to treat about 15% of lands infested by invasive plants. The good news is we treated over 60,000 more acres in FY 2008 than in FY 2007 for invasive plant infestations.

GAO Report Highlights Importance of Invasive Species Management on National Wildlife Refuges

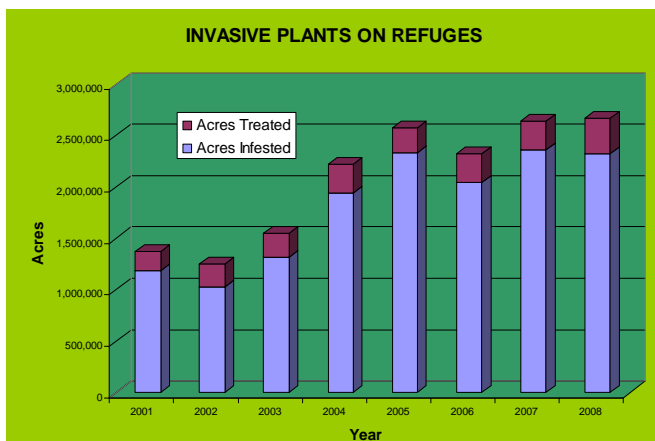
In September 2008, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released its landmark assessment of funding for the NWRS entitled, "Wildlife Refuges: Changes in Funding, Staffing and Other Factors Create Concerns about Future Sustainability." Among the findings of the report were two very important facts about the management of invasive species on refuges from 2002 through 2007:

- When refuge managers were asked about common problems affecting habitat trends, invasive plants were the most frequently reported problem. Of the managers that responded, 78% reported invasive plants to be a large to moderate problem and 42% reported invasive animals to be a large to moderate problem.
- When refuge managers were asked what management actions had increased the most in cost, invasive plant management was the number one reported action.

this system we can track the amount of money spent in the NWRS on invasive species management activities. In FY 2008, the NWRS reported \$15.3 million spent on invasive species management activities. This is a 155% increase over



Costs Associated with Invasive Species Management on National Wildlife Refuges from 2004-2008. Data Sources: ABC



Number of Acres Infested and Treated on NWR's, 2001-2008. Data Sources: RMIS and RAPP

Costs Associated with Invasive Species Management Continue to Climb

Starting in 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began tracking costs associated with particular activities using Activity-Based Costing (ABC). Using

the \$6 million spent in FY 2004. These findings echo the results of the 2008 GAO report that found the invasive species management to be the single greatest increasing cost to refuge management.

Invasive Plant Training Programs

The year 2008 brought important developments in training for invasive plant management. The NWRS online training program for volunteers won a national award and the online training program for refuge staff was completed and posted on our website. In addition, we were invited to teach our hands-on invasive plant management training program, normally held at NCTC, in Hawaii.

Online Program for Volunteers Wins National Award

We are proud to announce that the online training program, "Volunteers and Invasive Plants: Learning and Lending a Hand", received a national award in late

2008 from the National Association for Interpretation. The program, www.fws.gov/invasives/volunteersTrainingModule/ was developed in collaboration with the Center for Invasive Plant Management and is comprised of a series of training modules designed to engage refuge volunteers, Friends groups, and the public in invasive plant issues and management. It provides science-based, introductory information suitable for



Jenny Ericson and Mary McFadzen accepting award from the National Association for Interpretation for the invasive plant online training program for volunteers

anyone interested in learning about invasive plants. The five self study modules address the purpose and history of the NWRs, how volunteers assist staff with invasive plant management, how refuges manage invasive plants, and tips for community outreach. Each module contains a quiz and web-based resources that enable learners to explore topics more thoroughly.

Refuge Staff Training Program Goes Online

Invasive plant management training for refuge staff is now available online: www.fws.gov/invasives/staffTrainingModule. The program, "Managing Invasive Plants: Concepts, Principles, and Practices", was developed especially for staff of the NWRs in



www.fws.gov/invasives/staffTrainingModule

collaboration with the Center for Invasive Plant Management and can be used as an introduction to the fundamentals of invasive plant management or as a refresher for staff already engaged in management activities. It focuses on planning and assessing, as well as specific IPM strategies, such as biocontrol, chemical, mechanical, and prescribed grazing and burning. This course is recommended as a supplement to the NCTC-based course, "Field Techniques for Invasive Plant Management."

Hands-On NCTC Course Goes to Hawaii

By special request, the NCTC-based course, "Field Techniques for Invasive Plant Management" was held in Hawaii in November. This course introduces participants to invasive plant management at the field level and since Hawaii has such tremendous challenges with invasives, the course was well received. There were 26 participants in attendance with representatives from the National Wildlife Refuge System, National Park Service, state of Hawaii and Department of Defense. Among the subjects covered in the training were new technologies for invasive plant management, including a delivery system being developed at the University of Hawaii for applying herbicide to difficult-to-reach areas using paintball guns.

Updates from Around the Refuge System

Battling phragmites at Eastern Neck NWR

Eastern Neck NWR in Maryland has inspired local government officials to tackle phragmites on County lands. Successful control efforts have created viewsheds that are largely free of this aggressive invader. Volunteers and invasives grant program funding has supported the collection of critical monitoring data by a father and son mapping team. Kent County Commissioners have commended the refuge for their efforts and commented that it is one of the few places in the County where the public can see the marsh as it once was. This success has inspired the Commissioners to train and outfit county employees and increase their efforts to control phragmites in other strategic locations.

Liberation of Rat Island, Alaska Maritime NWR

The Alaska Maritime NWR, partnering with The Nature Conservancy and Island Conservation, recently conducted

an invasive rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) eradication on Rat Island, located in the Aleutian Islands. With the benefit of exceptionally good weather, the team applied 51 tons of pelletized bait over the 6900-acre island in 11 days using two helicopters. The project was timed to minimize risk to nontarget wildlife. The project will be monitored for at least two years with no rat sign before the eradication is declared a success.

Caddo Lake Partnership takes on Giant Salvinia

Caddo Lake NWR in Texas partnered with the Cypress Valley Navigation District (CVND) via a challenge cost share grant to assist the Giant Salvinia Response Team (GSRT) in efforts to abate and eradicate giant salvinia on Caddo Lake. The \$40,000 matching grant was used to supply labor, materials and equipment to local spray teams. The refuge partnered with CVND/GSRT to test new products (Galleon) by providing expertise and funding for chemicals. The program is scheduled for completion in spring of 2009. The refuge manager served on the GSRT Board of Directors.



Giant Salvinia Spray Teams at Caddo Lake, TX

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