

Conservation Jobs Training

Program Tackles Invasive Plant Issue and Fills Workforce Shortages

The Challenge

Invasive plants are displacing native vegetation across 22 counties in the most heavily forested area of Ohio. Landowners there complain of infestations of tree-of-heaven, bush honeysuckle, and garlic mustard. At the same time professional foresters recognize a shortage of vendors trained to do timber stand improvement work, including projects for controlling invasive plants. There is also a growing concern that too few qualified loggers will be available in the coming years as current loggers retire. Many of the people currently trained in wildfire fighting are also close to retirement age. All of these things add up to an occupational shortage in forestry and conservation that could adversely affect the health of Ohio's forests.

The Solution

An American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant totaling just over \$4.4 million helped address the issues of invasive plant management and predicted occupational shortages in affected counties. The primary goal of the grant is to provide short-term conservation jobs, while training members of the Ohio Woodlands Job Corps to be potential timber stand improvement vendors. These invasive plant workers were trained to identify invasive plants and obtain commercial pesticide licenses needed to spray herbicides for invasive plant control.

The grant also provided training for all Corps members in a standard wildfire response curriculum (S130/190) and master logger equivalency, including chainsaw safety and operations, and logging best management practices. These measures will help fill job positions that are expected to be needed in the coming years. The Corps members also received training in small business development. The Ohio Division of Forestry and Ohio State University (OSU) managed the training program, and the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry served as a monitor for the grant.



Crew members apply herbicide to tree-of-heaven seedlings.

Resulting Benefits

After receiving small business training, some of the trainees are expected to eventually start their own businesses in the affected job fields. The county level districts need pesticide sprayers to perform these tasks, and many of the trainees were seeking employment at the time the grant was announced. Hocking College provided training on how to interview for jobs and how to draft resumes. The Ohio Division of Forestry also sponsored a job fair to help them connect with job opportunities.

Another outcome of the grant was the development of a deeper pool of timber stand improvement vendors. Additional outcomes of the ARRA grant include the employment of 132 people over the next 2 years, along with promoting the importance of Ohio's \$15 billion wood industry.

Sharing Success

The grant managers wanted to establish effective landscape-level techniques to control invasive species. The Ohio Division of Forestry and OSU Extension Forestry collaborated on techniques to control invasive species. The two agencies also developed three different factsheets focused on controlling tree-of-heaven, bush honeysuckle, and garlic mustard. The factsheets are on the Ohio Division of Forestry Web site and are available for public information and use.

*A creative solution creates multiple benefits
for Ohio forests.*



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