

# Alaska

## Exotic Plant Management Team

*Partner parks (Alaska): Alagnak NW&SR, Aleutian WWII NHA, Aniakchak NM&Pr, Bering Land Bridge NPr, Cape Krusenstern NM, Denali NP&Pr, Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr, Glacier Bay NP&Pr, Katmai NP&Pr, Kenai Fjords NP, Klondike Gold Rush NHP, Kobuk Valley NP, Lake Clark NP&Pr, Noatak NPr, Sitka NHP, Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr, Yukon-Charley Rivers NPr*

### Accomplishments

Inventoried Acres	0
Gross Infested Acres	0
Infested Acres	0
Treated Acres	0
Monitored Acres	0
Retreated Acres	0
Restored Acres	0



Forestry interns control sweetclover along the Parks Highway, Denali NP&Pr.

In its third year, the Alaska EPMT has become a model early detection and rapid response program for Alaska and its National Parks. Thanks to a new year-round employee, our education and outreach efforts have burgeoned, as have the quantity and quality of our data. Eight field employees worked in 10 far-flung parks, mapping over a thousand invasive plant infestations, eradicating small patches, and organizing volunteer events to control larger ones. It is fortunate that the program has matured into full capacity so quickly, for Alaska and its parks have seen the introduction of many new species in the past year while legacy species spread rapidly.

The most highly visited Alaska parks were the focus of this year's fieldwork. Three parks received their first assessment by the EPMT, while seven others received thorough attention from individually stationed employees, a different model from that of other teams. To provide the level of protection necessary against this growing problem, we work with the parks to jointly hire technicians to be on the ground all summer. Volunteers provide the muscle to remove large infestations found by EPMT staff. Fifteen educational presentations and an original computer display emphasized the need for prevention statewide, while new educational materials sent the message home with park employees, local residents, partners, and visitors. All of this was accomplished with just over half the funding of other EPMTs.

The EPMT provides many benefits to Alaska beyond its parklands. We are working successfully with landowners near each park to foster local invasive plant management. We contributed to the first examinations of the wildfire-invasive plant connection in Alaska. In cooperation with the US Forest Service and the Alaska Natural Heritage Program, we have systematically ranked 75 species for their invasiveness threat and provided an early season workshop for their identification. A more demanding effort with additional partners was the preparation of a new book, entitled "Invasive Plants of Alaska," a sorely needed resource. We have also participated in the reorganization of the statewide working group and planning of its annual conference. Altogether, the Alaska EPMT makes the most of its support through an integrated, collaborative approach to maintaining Alaska's unique position: ahead of the invasive species curve.

### Special Emphasis Species

bird vetch	oxeye daisy
cheatgrass	perennial sowthistle
Canada/bull thistle	purple loosestrife
common dandelion	quackgrass
European mountain-ash	reed canarygrass
garlic mustard	spotted knapweed
narrowleaf hawksbeard	tansy ragwort
orange hawkweed	white/yellow sweetclover
ornamental jewelweed	yellow toadflax

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### Coal Creek Wildfire Survey

Very little is known about the relationship between wildfire and invasive plants in Alaska. Enormous areas burn every year, while invasive plants are just now spreading throughout the state. Funded by the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Program, the EPMT Liaison and Data Manager and a member of the Wildland Fire Program surveyed and controlled invasive plants in the Coal Creek and Woodchopper Creek watersheds of Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in 2005. Focusing on the 2004 fire perimeter, we found no species colonizing burned areas, but another visit next year will be necessary for certainty. In two primary areas where five species of invasive plants were found in 2002, 10 species were mapped in 2005. Two species – smooth brome grass and narrowleaf hawksbeard – were entirely controlled, due to their threat to the region. The others were precisely mapped to provide thorough background information for managing one of Alaska's most remote and historical NPS units.



Penny Bauder uses a GPS unit to inventory invasive plants along the Yukon River shoreline, Yukon-Charley Rivers NPr.

### Glacier Bay Program Expansion

This year's EPMT effort in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve grew by leaps and bounds over the initial EPMT assessment of 2004. An excellent new employee and her volunteers performed a mountain of inventory and control work this summer. Over 3,300 pounds of invasive plant material were removed from among the very few locations in the park where invasive plants are currently found. This work is critical for Glacier Bay, the original mission of which includes the provision of a natural laboratory for post-glacial plant succession. This process could be irrevocably altered by new pioneer species. Our work also benefits the adjacent Tongass National Forest and communities in Southeast Alaska by building knowledge about species distributions, control effectiveness, and local collaboration. A novel outreach program informed local Gustavus residents through many venues about the threat posed to their unique community by invasive plants. At the cusp of an invasive species problem, the Alaska EPMT and the Glacier Bay staff are dedicating sufficient resources to commence a long-term management program.



Whitney Rapp hosts an invasive plant arrangement contest at the Independence Day celebration in Gustavus, Glacier Bay NP&Pr.