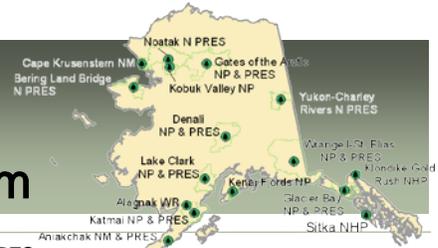


# Alaska

## Exotic Plant Management Team



**Partner Parks:** *Alagnak WR, Aniakchak NM & PRES, Bering Land Bridge N PRES, Cape Krusenstern NM, Denali NP & PRES, Gates of the Arctic NP & PRES, Glacier Bay NP & PRES, Katmai NP & PRES, Kenai Fjords NP, Klondike Gold Rush NHP, Kobuk Valley NP, Lake Clark NP & PRES, Noatak N PRES, Sitka NHP, Wrangell-St. Elias NP & PRES, Yukon-Charley Rivers N PRES*

People often think of Alaska as too cold or remote for invasive species to become problematic. The past decade has demonstrated that Alaska is just as vulnerable as other regions of the country, especially as climate change potentially increases the range of invasive species. Aggressive invaders such as spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, yellow toadflax, and purple loosestrife have already taken hold of areas in Alaska's wildlands. Operating under the "Early Detection Rapid Response" strategy the Alaska EPMT is able to manage these aggressive invaders early in the invasion process on the 54 million acres of National Park Service land in Alaska. This greatly improves the potential success of managing invasive plants in Alaska.

2009. To date the team has eradicated nearly 300 infestations, including bird vetch, reed canarygrass, and many others.



Figure 1. EPMT members collecting data by the Northeastern Glacier in Kenai Fjords National Park.

2009 Accomplishments	
Inventoried Acres	481
Gross Infested Acres	504
Infested Acres	310
Treated Acres	86
Monitored Acres	343

This year emphasis was placed on backcountry areas. Kenai Fjords National Park crew members were able to visit several remote beaches along the outer coast of the park, including backcountry campgrounds and public use cabins. To date 12 of the park's over 400 coastal miles of Kenai Fjords have been inventoried for invasive weeds. Fortunately, no new infestations were discovered at any of the newly inventoried areas.

In this seventh year, the Alaska EPMT continued a small but concerted effort towards invasive weed management. In response to a shrinking budget, the Alaska team has creatively addressed the invasive plant management workload in the region. Building upon our limited budget we work cooperatively with our partner parks to train existing park staff, partially fund seasonal park staff, and support internship positions and Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) AmeriCorps crews. In 2009, the Alaska EPMT program involved 17 park staff, nine interns, and 2 months of SAGA crew work.

The Alaska EPMT education and outreach program engaged local residents and park visitors teaching about the unique situation that faces Alaska parks when it comes to invasive weeds. The team hosted 14 separate educational events to engage the general public during Alaska's short summer season, including volunteer weed pull days, summer camp presentations, 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities, and informational booths. A few of the more creative outreach activities include creating invasive weed recipes, an invasive plant identification table with fresh samples, and a non-native flower arranging contest. These activities encouraged volunteers and community members to have a more hands on learning experience with invasive plants.

These personnel, combined with volunteer assistance from community groups and partnerships with neighboring land managers, worked towards containing existing infestations and eradicating new or smaller infestations using manual control methods in eight of our partner parks. The team was able to target its work and eradicate 194 infestations in

## An Integrated Approach

The Alaska EPMT has a history of taking an integrated approach to weed management in the region. Heavy emphasis is placed on prevention stipulations such as washing equipment prior to entering a park. Invasive plant inventories in high risk areas, such as campgrounds, trailheads, and parking lots, occur multiple times a season. Any infestations detected during these inventories are mapped, immediately controlled using manual techniques, and closely monitored until they have been eliminated.



Figure 2. EPMT members conducting inventories along trails in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

In Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve (GLBA) infestations, such as Oxeye daisy, are likely a result of escaped ornamentals which have proven very successful at growing throughout the area. Most often, a single plant is located indicating that it is likely the first year of establishment. In other areas, multiple plants suggest that the species has been present and reproducing for many years. Infestations are visited multiple times a season to pull any new plants. One of the major invasion pathways, the Park Entrance Road, is monitored inside and outside the park boundary to ensure that any encroaching plants are controlled.

Dry Bay has the most severe oxeye daisy problems of any area in GLBA or the National Park Service Alaska Region. This location has been manually treated, through mowing or hand pulling, each year since 2005 with varying results. Although the large Dry Bay oxeye daisy infestations persist after five years of manual treatment, the effort required to control the plants is steadily decreasing each year – from 150 person hours for a 1.7 acre infestation with 100% cover in 2007 to 40 person hours for a 0.8 acre infestation with 5% cover in 2009.

While this is a relative success story for manual control, there are numerous areas across the region where multiple years of hand pulling have had negligible impacts on an infestations size or density.

The Alaska EPMT has spent a good deal of time and effort on controlling dandelions along the Park Road in Denali National Park and Preserve, 2,168 person hours hand pulling 5 acres in FY2009. While these efforts have been worthwhile in keeping this species from spreading into the backcountry it has done little to reduce the amounts found growing near the park entrance.



Figure 3. A mutant oxeye daisy found growing in Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve this summer.

The Alaska Region Invasive Plant Management Plan was released for a final comment period which ended on November 20, 2010. Currently, only manual control techniques are approved for use in Alaska parks and this plan includes the addition of herbicide treatment techniques for invasive plant control. Herbicide use is highly controversial within the state and the Alaska Region felt it necessary to complete a full Environmental Assessment to analyze potential impacts from herbicide use within the parks. The plan would allow for up to 150 acres of herbicide treatment each year and incorporates a Decision Tree which helps determines whether herbicide use would be necessary, safe, and effective for a given infestation based on the weed species, size of the infestation, and potential sensitive resources found in the area.

### Contact Information

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