



AmeriCorps*VISTAs Help Wayne NF with NNIS Inventory and Control

A crew of AmeriCorps*VISTAs contributed over 150 hours of volunteer work, aiding Wayne National Forest staff in performing surveys and treatments for non-native invasive plants.



The group pulls Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) along a trail near Buffalo Beats. Photo credit:

Linda Hirst

Six AmeriCorps*VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America) assisted Wayne National Forest's Invasive Plant Management Program during the week of July 24th. Working with botany technicians Linda Hirst and Julie Wnuk, the volunteers participated in non-native invasive plant surveys and carried out control efforts.

Early in the week, the group surveyed National Forest tracts in the Federal Valley Watershed as part of a National Forest Foundation grant received by Rural Action's Appalachian Forest Resource Center (AFRC). The grant is funding the inventory and treatment of invasive plants within the watershed area. "The surveys were significant because there was no previously recorded data on the presence of invasive plant species in these areas," stated Wnuk. "Now that we're aware of what's there, we're in a better position

to control the infestations." Information collected on the species, locations, and extent of invasive plant populations will be added to NRIS Terra, a database that helps land managers monitor infestations and prioritize areas for treatment.

The group found invasive species such as Asian stilt grass, exotic honeysuckles, garlic mustard, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, and tree-of-heaven in the sites, especially at the periphery, where they bordered private property or roads. Encouragingly, however, the interiors of the sites had few infestations and those present were of a size that could be easily controlled.

After completing the survey, the next step was to tackle some of the infestations that were readily manageable. The group was able to completely remove the garlic mustard and one of the smaller populations of stilt grass. They also removed tree-of-heaven seedlings, Japanese honeysuckle, and multiflora rose.

Later in the week, the group voted to help control a population of Asian stilt grass along a trail bordering one of the Forest's Research Natural Areas. Buffalo Beats, a relict prairie, is home to many unique species of plants including rattlesnake master and yellow gentian. Efforts to control Asian stilt grass began last year after an infestation was found. There is already a visible difference in the extent of the infestation, claims Wnuk. "When I surveyed the area last year, the stilt grass was much denser. There has been a noticeable reduction in the population since

treatments began. The results are very encouraging and I'm pleased that we were able to continue control efforts this year."

Echoing a sentiment shared by many of the volunteers, VISTA Rosemary Roe said that it felt good to participate in removing invasive plants from the sites. "Because the amount of invasive species wasn't overwhelming, I felt like we were doing something that really made a difference and would help protect these beautiful areas."

Altogether, the volunteers put in over 150 hours of hard work. Hirst noted, "We couldn't accomplish many of our goals without the help of dedicated volunteers. They're vital to our programs and we're extremely grateful that Rural Action and the AFRC have partnered with us on this project and others." Wnuk added, "The VISTAs brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the job, and it was fun to work with such a positive and vibrant group."

For more information contact Julie Wnuk at 740-753-0558