

# Controlling Invasives Terrestrial Plants in Falmouth

## Background

Like many southern Maine coastal communities, Falmouth has a substantial infestation of invasive terrestrial plants along roadsides, on town-own property and on private lands. Left unchecked, these populations will only increase, overwhelming native plant and animal communities and degrading their health and diversity. While the state and a number of communities, usually through their lake associations, are addressing the problem of aquatic invasive plants, we know of no community that is tackling the issue of their terrestrial counterparts. Indeed, Maine is one of only two northeastern states that do not ban the importation and sale of terrestrial invasive plants.

Exerting some control over invasive terrestrial plants is a concern of both the Conservation Commission and its Open Space subcommittee. Both groups have taken some initial steps to deal with the problem. The Conservation Commission has begun to map the areas where invasives are most prevalent and has established a test plot next to the Bucknam Road fire station to demonstrate the effectiveness of various approaches to controlling Asiatic bittersweet, one of our most prevalent invasive plants. The Open Space sub-committee has identified problematic invasive areas on town-owned conservation lands and has received a grant from the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership to control invasives at the River Point Conservation Area. They are also in the process of getting three Falmouth Conservation Corps volunteers certified as Master level pesticide applicators.

Both groups have met to discuss the problem invasives pose to our environment and various approaches to controlling invasives and both agree that it is time to ratchet up our efforts to address this problem before population levels get so high that they will be impossible to control.

## Proposal

With Town Council support, we propose a systematic effort to bring our invasive plant problem under control over the next several years that builds on our existing resources. Key steps in that process would include:

1. A highly visible effort to educate Falmouth residents about the scope of the problem and the kind of plants that are contributing to it.
2. Continued mapping of infested areas in need of treatment.
3. Partnerships with other people and organizations concerned about this problem and/or who have the resources and expertise to help address it.
4. Development and implementation of control strategies.
5. Monitoring control efforts to assess their effectiveness and to prevent further infestations.

For this process to work, we need an effective structure to manage it and the resources required to implement it. The management structure would consist of a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission, expanded to include members of the public, natural resource organizations representatives (e.g. – Maine Audubon, Cooperative Extension) and the landscape/nursery industry professionals with expertise in such matters (e.g. – Skillins, Lucas Tree). We also need a paid part-time staff person or contractor to coordinate and oversee the implementation activities, raise grant funds, and be actively involved in the control work. An action plan to accomplish this follows.

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### Proposed Budget

Income		
	CBEP grant	3,690
	MOHF grant	4,000
	Town contribution	10,000
	<b>Total =</b>	<b>\$17,690</b>
Expenses		
Printing	Forecaster supplement	\$700
	Lawn signs	750
	Posters	300
Advertising	Forecaster ads	2,500
Meetings	All	100
Contracted Services	Coordinator	8,000
	Graphic Artist	500
Equipment	Sprayers	2,100
	PPE	300
	Storage equipment	500
	All other	200
	Loosestrife beetles	300
Supplies	Herbicides	1,000
	Hand tools	300
	All other	140
<b>Total =</b>		<b>\$17,690</b>

## Action Plan

Activity	Key Steps	Who	When	Notes
1. Educate residents about the nature of the problem, the specific plants involved, effective control measures, and landscaping options that use native plants to replace invasive species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Get local TV and print media to publicize the fact that Falmouth is getting serious about dealing with its invasive problem.</li> </ul>	Sub-committee, ombudsman	Summer 2012	Recruit marketing person to serve on the management team.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Special <i>Forecaster</i> insert paid for by ads from landscape &amp; nursery business.</li> </ul>	Sub-committee, ombudsman	Summer 2012	Full color, 4 page insert with information about why invasives are a problem, which plants are to blame, how they can be controlled, and what native species make good substitutes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Produce short (10-15 min) videos to show on Channel 2 on identification, control and effective substitutes for various invasive species.</li> </ul>	Ombudsman, M. McDade	Summer 2012	These can also go on the town website.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sponsor events that help educate people about the problem, the plants and their control measures.</li> </ul>	Sub-committee, ombudsman	Ongoing	Use Maine Audubon, Lucas Tree, local landscape / nursery personnel to lead these events. Tie into media coverage and demonstration sites established for this purpose.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop a cadre of neighborhood “watchdogs” to look for infestations in their area and educate home / property owners about the problem plants and their control.</li> </ul>	Sub-committee, ombudsman	Ongoing	Recruit garden club and master gardeners to take on this role in their neighborhoods. Perhaps students as well.
2. Work to control existing infestations of invasives on public and private land, and along roadsides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to map areas of infestation in town; prioritize treatment areas.</li> </ul>	Sub-committee, ombudsman	Ongoing	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use Falmouth Conservation Commission volunteers to actively treat infested areas on town land. And acquire the needed equipment and supplies required.</li> </ul>	Ombudsman, FCC members	Ongoing	Sprayers, weed wrenches, pesticides and safety equipment will be required.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use FCC members as a “swat team” to control extensive invasive infestations on private land at the invitation of landowners.</li> </ul>	Ombudsman, FCC members	Ongoing	Probably a limited capacity for this, but useful for landowners who cannot physically deal with their invasives.

## Action Plan

	➤ Raise the beetles that eat purple loosestrife and release them at the appropriate time.	Falmouth students?	Spring, summer	Good school project!
	➤ With support from area nurseries, sponsor a bounty program where people can get 10-20% off the purchase of native species when they bring in invasive plants they have removed from their property.	Sub-committee, nursery sponsors.	Spring-Fall, ongoing	Print coupons or have nurseries include this offer in their advertising.
	➤ Create small durable signs that landowners can place on their lawn to show their commitment to “no invasives.”	Ombudsman Graphic artist	Ongoing	Might also do small car window or bumper stickers.
	➤ Create a “friendly flyer” to leave in mailboxes to alert people to the presence of invasives on their property.	Sub-committee, ombudsman, neighborhood volunteers.	Ongoing	Print copies at town hall.