

NoVA PRISM – A New Partnership

BY ALEX SANDERS  PHOTOGRAPHY BY HA BROCK

Have you been on the Washington and Old Dominion Trail lately? Or one of Reston’s wonderful parks? If you have, you’ve seen invasive plant species. Autumn olive, porcelain-berry and English ivy are just a few of the many invasive plants that reside in our public and private spaces. While they may look pretty, invasive plants are a major threat to wildlife and wildlife habitat, especially in our region where some habitats are increasingly rare and fragmented. Since they are not native to our area, few animals feed on them, and they can spread so easily that they harm native species. Invasives can shade out and strangle trees, change the soil chemistry and overwhelm natural areas. Japanese barberry, a popular landscaping shrub, even harbors deer ticks, which spread Lyme disease to humans.

Many, including the Reston Association, have been working to control invasive species on their lands for years. But invasive species do not care if they grow on public or private land or whose jurisdiction they are in, and their spread has become regional. In a new effort funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, several partners, including Reston Association, Arlington County, NOVA Parks and Dominion Energy, are joining together to form a Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management in Northern Virginia (or



IN A NEW EFFORT FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION, SEVERAL PARTNERS, INCLUDING RESTON ASSOCIATION, ARLINGTON COUNTY, NOVA PARKS AND DOMINION ENERGY, ARE JOINING TOGETHER TO FORM A PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA (OR NOVA PRISM).

NoVA PRISM). PRISMs are partnerships of government agencies, conservation organizations, volunteers, landowners, businesses

and academic institutions that work cooperatively to coordinate invasive species management across political and ecological boundaries

within a defined geographic area. PRISMs and Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs, another cooperative framework) are being created around the country to help manage invasive species.

The NoVA PRISM has an ambitious agenda to coordinate existing efforts to control invasives and restore habitat, share information to improve management techniques and engage in community outreach to educate landowners and land managers about invasives and native alternatives. Local cooperative efforts are already making a difference. For



replanting a city park with native species this autumn after a multiyear campaign to clear the park of invasive plants.

Want to join the effort and make a difference? Email NoVA PRISM at novaprism1@gmail.com for more information on invasives and native alternatives. To volunteer in Reston, join Habitat Heroes and contact Ha Brock, Volunteer Reston Manager, at habrock@reston.org or 703-435-7986.

example, last spring Dominion Energy mowed green space beneath the power line along the W&OD trail in Arlington County, and afterward staff and contractors continued to manage the area. By June, a mix of native species, including common milkweed (essential to the monarch butterfly),

dogbane and sensitive fern had returned.

The PRISM is also supporting several pilot projects in Northern Virginia to restore meadow and riparian habitats on or near the W&OD trail. In Reston, Dominion Energy, NOVA Parks, Reston Association and volunteers

have combined efforts to protect trees and meadow habitat from encroaching vines and shrubs on the W&OD trail near Reston Parkway. Nearby, they have started a project to clear green space of invasives in order to encourage natives to return. In Falls Church, staff and volunteers will be

Alex Sanders is the coordinator for the NoVA PRISM and has worked as a consultant in environmental history and natural resource management for nearly two decades.

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