

Regional Symposium to Build Capacity for the Management and Control of *Phragmites australis*

Project Fact Sheet

Background

The non-native variety of the common reed, *Phragmites australis* (phragmites), has invaded many coastal areas in the Great Lakes region and has been identified as a priority problem in the state of Michigan. This invasive plant commonly inhabits coastal and interior wetlands, river banks and lakeshores. The species is especially common in disturbed or polluted soils, ditches and dredged areas.

Upon invasion, phragmites grows in tall, dense stands, crowding out native plants and animals. During the process of decomposition, the plant produces mats that prevent growth of native vegetation, alter wildlife habitat and impair beneficial uses. Phragmites also poses a fire threat in extreme dry conditions, particularly in urban areas where dense stands exist near homes and commercial structures.

Problem Statement

As a priority invasive species for Michigan, given its rapid spread and mounting ecological impacts, the need has emerged for a comprehensive and systematic approach to phragmites management and control across the state. Although significant work is underway to control phragmites infestations in distinct areas, there is concern that efforts are fragmented on a state level due to varying local capacity, limited resources and insufficient public awareness and understanding of the problem and its scope. Further, the agencies, academic institutions and other organizations working on phragmites control often lack the capacity to integrate, communicate and market their information and management tools on a systematic, large-scale basis. Overall, the cross-boundary nature of phragmites introduction and spread calls for a comprehensive, multijurisdictional approach to combating this invasive species in the state of Michigan as well the other Great Lakes states and provinces to ensure that there are no gaps in management across the region.



Photo by Jill M. Swearingen, USDI
National Park Service, Bugwood.org

Project Goal

Develop a strategic framework to advance implementation of a comprehensive phragmites management and control plan in Michigan with relevance to the Great Lakes region. The strategy will be based on information gathered through a management status assessment and conduct of a symposium to facilitate information sharing and to identify management priorities and opportunities.

Regional Symposium

The Great Lakes Commission (Commission) is working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) and other partners to plan and conduct a regional symposium on phragmites management and control. An emphasis will be placed on facilitating information exchange, increasing awareness of prevention and control issues, identifying priorities to advance management, and providing opportunities for building partnerships. Symposium participants will:

- Gain a broad perspective of the phragmites issue, including challenges and success stories, through plenary sessions. Symposium participants will be provided briefing materials based on staff research assessing the status of phragmites management and control on a state and regional level;
- Attend concurrent break-out sessions focused on core areas of phragmites management; and
- Participate in a process to assess needs and opportunities that will provide the basis for a strategic framework to advance phragmites management on a state level with regional implications.

The target audience for the symposium will include state and federal resource managers, planning commissions, watershed councils, lake associations, researchers, GIS practitioners and other relevant public and private stakeholders. Four core areas of phragmites management have been preliminarily identified for presentation and discussion through concurrent break-out sessions as part of the regional symposium:

- Building capacity for effective management and control;
- Regulatory and policy approaches;
- Outreach and collaboration; and
- Monitoring and distribution mapping.

Project Elements and Proposed Timeline

- **Assessment of the status of phragmites management and control: June-December 2010**
The Commission is working with representatives from DNRE and other relevant entities in Michigan and across the region to conduct an assessment of the status of phragmites management and control on a state and regional level. This includes identifying information, scientific research, and tools that are currently available or are needed to advance management and control strategies.
- **Plan and publicize regional symposium: July 2010-February 2011**
The Commission will work with DNRE to plan and publicize the regional symposium. Information on the symposium will be available via hard copy mailings, email, and web pages. The services provided by the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) such as “GLIN-Announce” and the Great Lakes Regional Calendar will be heavily utilized.
- **Regional symposium on phragmites management and control: March 28-30, 2011**
The regional symposium will be held at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, Michigan. The structure of the symposium will include a combination of plenary presentations on phragmites management issues and facilitated breakout sessions. Overall, the symposium will be designed to engage participants in a dialogue on how to advance efforts on phragmites prevention and control.
- **Disseminate and publish project outcomes: March-May 2011**
Outcomes from the project, based on the management assessment and symposium proceedings, will be documented and applied towards developing a strategic framework for an effective phragmites management and control plan for Michigan. The strategic framework will be made available to support similar efforts in other states and provinces throughout the Great Lakes region. The Commission will disseminate project information and outcomes, including briefing materials developed from the management assessment, symposia proceedings, and the strategic framework.

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