

For immediate release

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Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative launches digital hub for Phragmites information

Ann Arbor, Mich. – A new website, greatlakesphragmites.net, is taking aim at an invasive plant that is plaguing the Great Lakes. Launched by the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the website is intended to serve as a central hub for information on Phragmites and provide an interactive forum for stakeholders to share ideas, showcase success stories, discuss common challenges, identify information gaps, and strengthen ties between management and research efforts.

Greatlakesphragmites.net was developed through the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative (GLPC), a regional partnership established to improve communication and collaboration and lead to more coordinated, efficient and strategic approaches to Phragmites management, restoration and research across the Great Lakes basin.

The introduced strain of *Phragmites australis* (common reed) has become increasingly widespread in wetlands throughout the Great Lakes region. This highly invasive species spreads rapidly and can negatively affect biodiversity, impair recreational use, decrease property values and increase fire risk. Millions of dollars are spent annually across the region to combat Phragmites, but knowing where to go to learn about the plant, how to manage it or keep up on the latest research can be complicated.

The GLPC project is led by a core team, supported by the USGS Great Lakes Science Center and the Great Lakes Commission, with oversight and input from a regional advisory committee. The effort is part of a broader USGS project funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to support research on the development of sustainable Phragmites management strategies throughout the Great Lakes basin.

According to Dr. Kurt Kowalski, wetland ecologist and principal investigator for the USGS, extensive communication and coordination among stakeholders is important to help get information into the hands of those who need it.

(more)

Great Lakes Commission

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“A tremendous amount of effort is being expended to manage the invasive form of Phragmites, but there is an ongoing need to coordinate efforts, learn from each other, and develop an active adaptive management strategy that reduces the landscape impact of invasive Phragmites,” Kowalski says. “We are excited to be working with our partners to develop this collaborative and promote an integrated approach to research and management.”

Tim Eder, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission, notes that this new website and the work of the GLPC is a critical component of building a coordinated approach to invasive species management in the Great Lakes region.

“The Phragmites Collaborative website and communication strategy is an important part of the Great Lakes Commission’s efforts to facilitate access to information and resources, and encourage technology transfer and network building among habitat managers, governmental agencies, and private landowners,” Eder says. “The Commission is proud to be engaged in this effort.”

Greatlakesphragmites.net is intended to be a dynamic resource. Stakeholders are invited to actively participate in the website by sharing ideas and providing input on its content, including a multimedia section. Webinars hosted by the GLPC will be archived on the site, along with videos, presentations, management documents and the most up-to-date science and research.

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The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Kenneth G. Johnson, water division administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors’ appointees, state legislators, and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a “Declaration of Partnership.” The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Learn more at www.glc.org.