Wild Rivers Invasive Species Coalition

Serving Florence, Forest, Marinette (WI), Dickinson, and Menominee (MI) Counties

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Be On the Lookout for Crazy Worms: So Destructive, They're Insane!

By Nicole Shutt (USDA-USFS)

They mature in 60 days. They reproduce without mating. Their populations can double in one summer. And if you think that's crazy, consider this: they voraciously eat all organic matter they find. You're not being paranoid if you think Asian Crazy Worms (*Amynthas agrestis)* are a game-changer. Unlike Nightcrawlers (*Lumbricus terrestris*) and other European earthworms that eat the forest's fallen leaves, Crazy Worms eat all organic matter, even plant roots! In the process, Crazy Worms change the soil itself into a grainy, sand-like texture with reduced capacity to hold water or support any plants. These voracious worms can even damage ornamental plantings and lawns.

Native to Japan and Korea., Asian Crazy Worms were first confirmed in WI in autumn 2013 at the University of WI-Madison Arboretum, and despite the brutal winter of 2013-2014, the worms' eggs survived. In 2014, Crazy Worms were confirmed in five WI counties and even within Appleton city limits. There are also sites currently suspected / unconfirmed in northern WI and MI. So now is the time to join together by learning to: 1) recognize this new invader, 2) prevent the spread, and 3) respond appropriately if you find these worms.

Crazy Worms get their name from the way they behave when handled: they are extremely active, wriggle frantically, thrash about, appear to jump, and can even shed their tails. Like Nightcrawlers, Crazy Worms can be from one to eight inches long, but the similarity ends there. Crazy Worms look different: while a European earthworm's clitellum (the obvious band around the worm's body) is raised, a Crazy Worm has a flat clitellum that is milky white in color and visibly different from the rest of the worm's dark body.

Although Crazy Worms are currently a Prohibited species under Wisconsin's Invasive Species Rule NR 40 (making it illegal to possess, transport, transfer, or introduce them in WI), these worms remain popular for composting and fishing bait. They are sold under the names "crazy worms," "Alabama jumpers," or "snake worms," and even if you purchase Red Wriggler worms (*Eisenia fetida*) for composting, it's likely the batch is contaminated with Crazy Worms ***Continued on Pg 3…***

Wisconsin Invasive Law Changing

Wisconsin's invasive species rule (Wis. Adm. Code ch. NR 40) makes it illegal to possess, transport, transfer, or introduce certain invasive species in Wisconsin without a permit. As some may have heard, the DNR is proposing several revisions to the law. The proposed changes include delisting 2 species, changing the regulated states of 6 species, listing 49 new prohibited species, listing 32 new restricted species, and listing 2 species as split-listed (prohibited/restricted). Proposed revisions also include language changes and name updates.

These changes are expected to take effect this spring or early summer. Since several of the added species are popular landscape plants, for species listed as Restricted, there will be a phase-out period for producers to sell plants that are already in the state (3 years for herbaceous plants and 5 years for woody). However, it will immediately become illegal to bring any new regulated species into the state.

The rule changes are very specific, and include some exceptions for plant cultivars designed to be sterile , so it is important to know what you are buying/planting. For more information on the changes, including a list of species to be added, visit http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/classification.html.

Japanese Barberry is one popular species that will soon have many cultivars restricted

Partner Projects—It's all about that Phrag

Non-native Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) has become an increasing problem across the Midwest. This invasive wetland grass quickly forms dense stands that can grow 20 feet tall! Once established in a wetland or along a waterbody, this can create serious economic and environmental impacts.

Luckily, several WRISC Partners are working to combat phragmites. In 2013 and 2014, the Upper Resource Conservation & Development Council (UP RC&D) began a UP-wide project entitled "Invasive Phragmites Control in Michigan's Upper Peninsula" through a $458,600 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The UP RC&D worked with partners to map native and non-native phragmites across the entire Upper Peninsula, educate landowners, prioritize infestations, and conduct herbicide treatments. The project was a success, revealing approximately 1,950 acres of phragmites in the UP, most of which is along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Delta (1,256 acres) and Menominee counties (596). Infestations were prioritized for treatment according to their proximity to high quality natural communities, rare species, and other highly valued sites, as well as isolated outlying patches considered the leading edge of the infestation. Remaining funds were used in treatment zones on the large infestations along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Menominee and Delta counties. These treatment zones were chosen to maximize the effectiveness of treatment by finding long, contiguous stretches of Great Lakes shoreline where the infestations were not too massive and where permission to treat could be secured from almost 100% of the landowners. In total, UP RC&D grant funds paid for herbicide treatment of just over 800 acres. Additionally, private landowners in Menominee county paid for treatment on 93 acres, and the MI DNR funded treatment of 152 acres of state land in Luce and Mackinac counties.

Mackinac County phragmites infestation before treatment in summer 2013, and the same time in 2014

But the work doesn't stop there. The EPA recently awarded the UP RC&D $964,922 of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding to continue and build on their previous work with the new project: "Phragmites Prevention and Control Coalition of Michigan's Upper Peninsula." These funds will allow the UP RC&D to continue working for two more years to restore at least 800 additional acres of coastal shoreline and wetlands in the Upper Peninsula by treating invasive phragmites. In addition to control work, the project will support early detection of new infestations, and establish long-term control of phragmites in the region by identifying local partners or stewardship groups which will assume responsibility for phragmites management after the grant-funded project ends.

In addition, other WRISC Partners around the region are targeting invasive phragmites. In Wisconsin, phragmites is widespread in much of the eastern counties boarding Lake Michigan, but rare or absent in the western half of the state. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) received a $400,000 grant from GLRI to eliminate pioneer populations of the invasive grass before it expands its range into the western counties. In fact, a proposed change to the state's invasive species law could change the regulation of phragmites in the western half of the state, making control of any existing populations there mandatory. The Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission (Bay Lake RPC), has also received a GLRI grant to work with public and private landowners to remove 1,500 acres of phragmites in areas of concern in the Green Bay area. Both the Delta Conservation District and the Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District were successful in securing funding from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program to conduct additional non-native phragmites management in the UP, and will coordinate those efforts with the UP RC&D. Local counties, conservation districts, and other partners often assist on these larger projects and conduct their own phragmites education/control work. In the end, control of phragmites truly requires a collaborative approach to achieve success, a good principle in invasive management, and a founding principle for WRISC itself.

2015 WRISC Projects

WRISC is gearing up for a busy season,. Here's a look at what activities we will be working on this year.

May 2014: Crandon HS Env Science Class helps pull garlic mustard at a workday.

Education/Outreach: Education is vital to WRISC's mission. This year expect to see staff and Partners with displays and information at events, and hosting trainings. We will also be bumping up our online presence with additional pages and information on the website.

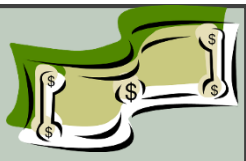
Invasive Mapping and Control: WRSIC is excited to continue on-the-ground work this year. Staff will be mapping 50+ acres of invasives across the area and targeting an estimated 50-60 acres of high priority invasives for control work. We will also continue to work with citizens volunteers to map invasives through the Adopt a Spot program and control invasives during public workdays.

Aquatic Invasive Survey and Planning: With new funding, WRISC will be working with several lakes in Michigan to conduct surveys and eventually lake management plans. We expect to have 5-10 lakes surveyed this year.

Watercraft Cleaning and Boater Education: WRISC will continue to operate two portable boatwashes at landings across the area to educate boaters and stop the spread of aquatic hitchhikers. One boatwash will be based out of Kingsford and the other will operate in the southern region of WRISC out of Marinette for a combined 1,210 hours this summer.

Private Landowner Invasive Management Plans: Through a WI DNR grant, WRISC will continue to work with select private landowners in Wisconsin to inventory for invasive plants and write management plans for the properties.

Grants:



WRISC is funded by numerous grants. This year, we will be finishing up 3 grants from the Wisconsin DNR that fund work with citizens and landowners in Wisconsin: two Weed Management Area Grants and a Citizen Based Monitoring grant. We are also in the last year of two federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grants funding Rapid Response control and Watercraft Cleaning/Boater Education.

In addition this year, we will be starting work under 4 new grants. Two of the awards are from GLRI funds to continue our rapid response control work and boater education. Another grant from the WE Energies Mitigation and Enhancement Fund will support invasive species education/outreach, mapping, and control work within the Menominee River Watershed. And lastly, in the largest single grant award WRISC has ever received, the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program will support an expansion of WRISC activities in Michigan including invasive species education/outreach, mapping, control, and lake surveys.

Continued from pg 1 (Crazy Worms)…

– so buyer beware! Since there currently are no control methods for Asian Crazy Worms, our efforts must focus entirely on early detection and preventing the spread.

Crazy worms are surface dwellers, and they're transported whenever plants, soil, leaves, compost, or mulch are moved. If you suspect a site may have Crazy Worms, never dig up plants for transplanting, and never move any soil, leaves, compost, or mulch from that site. Inspect any compost or mulch you buy, and if you buy plants, purchase bare root stock – you don't want to get "bonus" worms! Anything that moves soil will move worms, so whether working or recreating, remember to clean all tools, equipment, and tires before leaving a site. When fishing, make a commitment to *Contain Those Crawlers* by always disposing of unused bait in the trash. These simple habits will help prevent the introduction all non-native worms, not just the crazy ones.

If you suspect you've seen Crazy Worms, please contact WRISC and also Bernie Williams of the WI DNR (bernadette.williams@wisconsin.gov or 608-266-0624).

Help protect your sanity - and the places you love - by visiting these websites to learn about Crazy Worms:

- WDNR Crazy Worm Fact Sheet - http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/documents/CrazyWormFactSheet.pdf
- Great Lakes Worm Watch - http://www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/identification/european_asian.html

Upcoming Events

Want to be more involved with WRISC? Check out our upcoming events or contact the coordinator to schedule a WRISC event in your area!

Clean Boats Clean Waters Trainings

Attend these trainings to learn more about local aquatic invasive species and the Clean Boats Clean Waters educational campaign. (Note: The Florence training will include details on the Wisconsin and Michigan programs.)

- April 28th 5-7pm at the Crandon Public Library, training conducted by AIS Coordinator John Preuss
- May 20th 4-6pm at the Florence Natural Resource Center, training conducted by WRISC Coordinator Emily Anderson and County Conservationist Margie Yadro
- May 29th 5-7pm at the Crandon Public Library, training conducted by AIS Coordinator John Preuss

Emily Anderson
WRISC Coordinator
420 N Hooper St
Kingsford, MI 49802
wildriverscwma@gmail.com
906-774-1550x102

Check us out online!
www.wrisc.org

Or Like us on Facebook!

Dickinson Outdoor Extravaganza: Saturday May 2nd 10:00am-3:00pm
Celebrate the nature of Dickinson County during this event organized by MUS-Extension. Visit the WRISC booth at Iron Mountain City Park and learn about local invasives from Americorps intern Quinn Collins.

Menominee County Phragmites Workshop: Tuesday May 12th 7:00-9:00pm At the Belgiumtown Restaurant (W4346 Belgiumtown Rd Stephenson, MI). This workshop will introduce citizens and landowners to the invasive grass Phragmites, what is being done to manage it, and how they can help. Call 906-225-0215 for more information.

Volunteer Workdays

Help protect our area from invasive plants by joining WRISC for a volunteer workday! You'll learn how to identify and remove invasive plants, while giving back to the community. Come prepared for work with sturdy shoes, long pants, and work gloves (extra gloves provided by WRISC). Snacks provided for hard workers.

Crandon Garlic Mustard Workday: Friday May 22nd 1:00pm-4:00pm Join us for a volunteer workday pulling garlic mustard at the Crandon Rifle Range. To get there, take Hwy 8 east of town to Bear Rd.

Fumee Invasive Workday: Saturday July 18th: 9:00-Noon Help protect the Fumee Lake Natural Area from invasive plants! Meet at the east end parking lot of off Upper Pine Creek Road.

WRISC Annual Meeting!

Wednesday June 3rd
4793 Forestry Drive
Florence, WI

Join WRISC for our 7th Annual Meeting at the Florence Natural Resource Center! The meeting kicks off with information-packed presentations on invasives such as Emerald Ash Borer, Spiny Waterflea and Crazy Worms, and a summary of 2015 projects. An optional lunch is available ($5 or bring your own), and attendees can choose to stay for the afternoon where they can join the Board meeting or learn about invasive smartphone mapping during a free training.

Agenda:
8:30-9:00am Registration
9:00am-Noon Presentations
12:00-12:45 Lunch ($5)
12:45-1:45 Citizen mapping training
Or
12:45-2:45 WRISC Board Meeting

WRISC Partners and members are encouraged to bring displays and handouts. There will also be a "freebies" table to share extra outreach materials.

For more information...contact Emily Anderson at wildriverscwma@gmail.com or 906-774-1550x102.