



PEI Invasive Species Council Newsletter

Welcome!

With seeds on the goldenrod, leaves turning yellow, and pumpkins being sold, you know another PEI summer is coming to an end. PEIISC staff are wrapping up our field work for the year, and moving into our winter office torpor. We had a busy field season, so let's take a moment to recap and look back on another year of hard work.

Thank you to Promise & Jacob for a great summer season. Promise came to the PEIISC through the UPEI ClimateSense program. His dedication and interest in invasive species issues proved valuable both in field work and in the office, where he began the creation of a grow-me-instead guide highlighting non-invasive

alternatives to commonly planted invasive ornamental species.

Jacob came to us through a Canada Summer Jobs in July. His keen attitude in field work to learn and develop his skills while supporting invasive species removal efforts across PEI. He also supported the council by producing social media posts and processing data.



Promise, Jacob, and others after Himalayan balsam removal.

Planting the seeds of change...

Over the growing season, the PEIISC has been occupied with a number of projects to protect our Island ecosystems through the management of high priority invasive plant species.

WILD PARSNIP, *Pastinaca sativa*

This year, the PEIISC began the management of a high-profile invasive plant, wild parsnip. Originally introduced for use as a minor agricultural crop, this plant has begun to expand rapidly out of cultivation. After seeking public reports, the PEIISC discovered that distribution is much wider than previously thought. Many areas of PEI are heavily infested, but the situation is much less dire than on the mainland in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. For this reason, the PEIISC has begun to target the plant in key areas where the public may be impacted by its presence.

How would the public be impacted? Like giant hogweed, its carrot family cousin, wild parsnip has phototoxic sap. This means that when the plant's sap gets on skin and is exposed to the sunlight, a severe skin reaction (chemical burn) will occur.

The PEIISC has managed wild parsnip at nine sites across PEI, from Summerside to Earnscliffe. The PEIISC would also like to recognize the dedicated efforts of the Confederation Trail Crew, Pisquid River Enhancement Project, Tignish Watershed Management Group, and Parks Canada [for their work to control the plant across PEI](#).



Above: Jacob and Clay (PEIISC) with Ruth DeLong (PEI Parks) after a long day of wild parsnip removal. Below: Wild parsnip hanging out at the beach in Earnscliffe.





Thank you to our funders...

The PEIISC's operations are undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the federal Department of Environment and Climate Change and PEI Forest Fish and Wildlife Division under the PEI Forested Landscape Priority Place, as well as the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund.

Planting the seeds of change... (CONT)

PHRAGMITES, *Phragmites australis ssp. australis*

This extremely tall and conspicuous grass species is considered to be Ontario's worst, and at one time topped the list of the world's worst invasive species. On PEI, invasive phragmites has a limited distribution, with only 5 known infested sites.

The most prolific site of invasion is found along Highway #2 in Miscouche. Over the past couple of years, the PEIISC has cut this patch when in flower to prevent seed production. In the future, we hope to implement a chemical control program to eliminate the plant before it can spread far and wide. With the nearby Miscouche Bog being a hotspot for biodiversity and species-at-risk activity, the management of this site is of prime importance. Thanks to Kensington North Watersheds Association, Bedeque Bay Environmental Association, and Trout River Environmental Committee for their hard work and assistance on this.

If you see phragmites on PEI, please report it to the PEIISC ASAP. Any grass taller than 10ft should be considered suspect, and worth a report. It is important to note that a native variety of phragmites exists on PEI, *Phragmites australis ssp. americanus*. This plant is native and in fact considered to be vulnerable.

For more information and to determine which plant you are dealing with, check out the information available on our phragmites webpage:

<https://peiinvasives.com/common-reed-grass/>



GLOSSY BUCKTHORN, *Frangula alnus*

This plant is likely the most abundant invasive shrub on PEI. Its hold on many areas is nearly irreversible, especially in many parts of Charlottetown and the surrounding area. Because of its broad distribution and high degree of establishment, the PEIISC has to be selective about the areas we manage, and predominantly we focus on supporting other groups that are undertaking their own projects. We provide direction and insight to ensure these groups are making the best, most effective attempts to roll back the buckthorn tide.

This year, we conducted our third year of management with the Trout River Environmental Committee at the Devil's Punchbowl trail system. This beautiful natural area is heavily impacted by buckthorn, but over the past three years our efforts have made a significant impact on the plant's presence. We have seen reductions in all managed areas.

In partnership with Winter River - Tracadie Bay Watershed Association, the PEIISC managed some glossy buckthorn near the Winter River and Union Rd. Pumping Station. The goal here is to push back the buckthorn and restore habitat to improve biodiversity in the area.

Every year, PEIISC staff help lead an ongoing removal effort for glossy buckthorn found near Hermitage Creek at Charlottetown Rural. Conservation students have continued this program for years, and the results are readily apparent. Hundreds of square meters of natural space have been reclaimed by their efforts. As Simon Wilmot (PEIISC member and City of Charlottetown employee) says, there's no better solution to a glossy buckthorn problem than a herd of highschoolers!





Sharing knowledge...

At the PEIISC, awareness & outreach are our bread & butter. If people don't know about invasive species, they can't report them, manage them, or spread the word. For this reason, outreach is one of our primary functions. This year, we had the opportunity to meet with a wide variety of groups across PEI to spread the word. Let's take a look at some of the events we've participated in this year.

May

- Chase & Jess presented to the Charlottetown area Beavers and Girl Guides groups. The kids loved the activities, and will take that knowledge with them as they grow!
- Clay presented to the Tignish Green Thumbs Gardening Club on invasive species in the garden and horticulture industry. Thanks to the group for coming out on a Friday night.
- Chase presented for an inquisitive crowd at the Cornwall & Area Watershed Group AGM. Thanks for having us, CAWG!
- Clay held a session on emerald ash borer information at the PEI Woodlot Owner's Association AGM. Thanks for having us, PEIWOA!

June

- Chase & Clay presented to groups of Provincial Department of Transportation and Infrastructure staff on the role of roadway maintenance in the spread of invasive species, and distributed a newly published guide to the management of several high priority invasive species on PEI roadways.
- Jess & Clay attended Trout River Environmental Committee's Riverbank Heritage day, displaying an information booth. Always a great event!

July

- Clay & Jess attended the Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association's annual environmental activity session at the Summerside Lobster Carnival. We always love to see the cardboard boat races!

August & September

- Chase & Jess led a day of invasive species learning and play with the Sierra Club's Wild Child camp at Strathgartney Provincial Park.
- Chase & Jess led invasive species learning activities with Kids Hub summer camps in Stratford and Sherwood.
- Clay & Chase held an invasive species workshop for the Holland College Environmental Applied Science and Technology program first-year students.



Butternut Canker Found on PEI

Butternut, *Juglans cinerea*, is a medium-sized tree native to much of Eastern North America. Butternut's designation as an endangered species is due to the impacts of butternut canker, a fungal disease caused by the fungus *Ophiognomonia clavignenti-juglandacearum*.

Butternut is thought to be non-native to PEI, but there is some debate about this designation. Today, butternut is widely planted on the island. Despite the tree likely being non-native, it is a part of the broader Wabanaki/Acadian/Hemlock-Hardwood forest. The tree's nuts are edible and nutritious to both people and wildlife.

In Canada, the disease was first reported in Québec in 1990, in Ontario in 1991, and in New Brunswick in 1997. Despite the disease not being reported until 1990, it may have existed in Canada as early as 1978. Today, the disease is present throughout the native range of butternut. Over 80% of butternut trees in Ontario have The first known observation of butternut canker on PEI was made on August 27th, 2024, by PEIISC Technician Clay Cutting. The canker was observed on two butternut trees in Robert Cotton Park in Stratford. Photos were taken, and PEIISC staff reached out to the Forest Gene Conservation Association and Natural Resources Canada - Canadian Forest Service for assistance with surveying. Surveying was conducted in June 2025 on butternut populations in Charlottetown and St. Catherine's. A majority of trees surveyed demonstrated signs of butternut canker infection. This identification was confirmed by Canadian Forest Service Scientists on July 10th, 2025.

Despite the fact that no known effective control measures for butternut canker exist, improving the health of remaining trees that show the highest degree of tolerance through good silvicultural practice is recommended. Taking such measures will improve the health and survival of the remaining trees.





iNaturalist is an application used to track, identify, and share what you find in the great outdoors. By reporting populations of invasive species you see on this platform, you are sharing this information with the PEIISC and other concerned organizations.

www.inaturalist.ca

On the Horizon: Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*)

Zebra mussels, *Dreissena polymorpha*, is an invasive freshwater mollusk native to Eurasia. The species was recently identified in the Wolastoq (Saint John) river system in New Brunswick. These freshwater bivalves form dense colonies that disrupt ecosystems and displace native species.

Zebra mussels are not yet known to be present on PEI. Report any sightings to the PEIISC via email at peiinvasives@gmail.com.

To learn more, visit: <https://peiinvasives.com/zebra-mussel/>

Project spotlight: Yellow Nutsedge, *Cyperus esculentus*, Control on PEI

As a continuation of our funding project through the Agriculture Research and Innovation Program in partnership with Agriculture Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), AAFC and the PEIISC have conducted a second year of management trials on the lone known population of yellow nutsedge, *Cyperus esculentus*, found on PEI.

Last year, chemical control trials showed that despite damage to aboveground biomass, chemical treatments available at the time do not appear to have a significant impact on belowground tuber production. Thus, chemical treatment apparently has a limited impact on local spread, at least in the first year of treatment.

This means we will likely need to look to alternative methods to achieve the desired level of control. For this, we turned to a novel process, called anaerobic soil disinfestation. That's quite a mouthful, so we'll call it ASD for short. ASD involves using natural microbial populations to control weeds in select areas.

In May, PEIISC, AAFC, and Island Nature Trust Staff members combined efforts to prepare the site. The site was cleared of debris and covered with a nutrient substrate (mussel offal) which was tilled in. Then, the soil was saturated with water. At this stage, the soil was full of nutrients, and ready to feed the hungry microbes.

The next step was creating the anaerobic environment. For this, we used 6mm thick polyurethane silage plastic cut to fit the testing area. The edges of the covering were buried, sealing the area off from oxygen. The covering was weighted across its surface with bags of topsoil, and the setup was left to incubate over the summer. PEIISC & AAFC staff returned periodically for sampling.

Initial results were quite promising. After removing the covering at the end of the summer, almost no yellow nutsedge was found growing underneath aboveground. How belowground biomass was effected remains to be seen.

For more information, review our yellow nutsedge factsheet here: <https://peiinvasives.com/yellow-nutsedge-factsheet/>





Diving Into Aquatics: PEIISC Launches Aquatic Invasive Species Program

This year, the PEI Invasive Species Council launched an aquatic invasive species project funded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada through the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Fund. Through this project, the PEIISC conducted four aquatic vegetation surveys across the island to monitor for the presence of aquatic invasive plants. The surveys, using the “rake toss method” (photo above, left), were conducted at Andrew’s Mill Pond, Lake Verde, Scales Pond, and Officer’s Pond. Hundreds of data points were taken during these surveys, capturing a variety of abundant native aquatic plants, and no invasive species.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling was conducted at ten water bodies across the province, targeting zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*), goldfish (*Carassius auratus*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), and Chinese mitten crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*). The results confirmed that there are no populations of zebra mussels or Chinese mitten crab, and no new populations of goldfish were detected.

Invasive pond water starwort was discovered in Prince Edward Island, thanks to a report from the Hunter-Clyde Watershed Group. This marks the first recorded presence of the invasive plant in the Maritimes. Upon further research, the council detected three additional water bodies potentially infested by invasive pond water starwort.

To promote aquatic invasive species prevention, the PEIISC focused on raising awareness of the Clean, Drain, Dry program. This initiative encourages boaters and water recreationalists to clean, drain and dry their watercraft after use. The council installed ten Clean, Drain Dry signs at boat launches across the island to raise awareness.

The council developed an aquatic invasive species outreach booth, which was introduced at seven events this year. Educational resources, including “Clean, Drain, Dry” and “Don’t Let It Loose” rack cards, were distributed at these events, along with aquatic invasive species stickers. The rack cards were also distributed among local retailers and seven PEI visitor information centres. The aquatic invasive species project is funded until 2027.

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 peiinvasives@gmail.com