

NEWS RELEASE

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Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program Earns Top EPA Award, Gears up for Field Season

Keene Valley, N.Y. - The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) was one of 26 projects across New York State to receive the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's highest honor: the Environmental Quality Award. The award ceremony was held last week in Manhattan in conjunction with Earth Day.

"These exemplary environmental stewards have gone above and beyond for environmental change in local communities across New York," said EPA Acting Regional Administrator George Pavlou.

Founded in 1998 and housed by The Nature Conservancy in Keene Valley, APIPP is leading the charge to protect Adirondack natural resources from the damaging effects of invasive species by engaging partners and finding solutions through a coordinated, strategic, and integrated regional approach. Unlike many places, the opportunity exists in the Adirondacks to hold the line against invasive species and prevent them from wreaking havoc on natural resources and economic vitality.

"We are pleased that one of our very important partners has received federal recognition for their exceptional contributions in the fight against invasive species," said New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis. "APIPP has been so successful that we have used it as a model to develop other regional partnerships for fighting invasive species. Especially in fiscally constrained times, effective public-private partnerships such as this one are critical to everyone's success."

"We are honored to be among the recipients of the EPA's Environmental Quality Award. This recognition is a testament to APIPP's many partners, community leaders, and volunteers working together to protect the Adirondacks from harmful invasive species," said APIPP Director Hilary Smith.

The threat of invasive species is far-reaching, impacting forest and freshwater resources throughout the world. Invasive species typically come from other parts of the world, and in the absence of natural checks and balances, reproduce and spread at alarming rates, putting native plants and animals at risk. Nationwide costs for controlling them are estimated to be in the billions; Adirondack costs in the millions.

Sharing in the EPA recognition are APIPP's principal partners - the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, NYS Adirondack Park Agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and NYS Department of Transportation - as well as more than 30 cooperating organizations. The program's accomplishments include innovative invasive species educational programs, systematic monitoring, controlling hundreds of infestations, and serving as a model for other regional partnerships. In 2008, the program received one of the first contracts for invasive species funding through New York State's Environmental Protection Fund.

To date, hundreds of volunteers have monitored 216 Adirondack lakes, finding 53 infested with one or more harmful plants like Eurasian watermilfoil, curly leaf pondweed, or water chestnut.

Aquatic invaders are easily, and often inadvertently, spread from lake to lake when plant fragments “hitchhike” on boat bottoms, propellers, paddles, clothing or waders. Everyone who enjoys water sports can help prevent the spread by checking and cleaning equipment between uses. For those interested in doing more, APIPP offers free training sessions to help citizens learn how to identify plants and monitor water bodies. This year’s sessions are as follows: June 16 in Bolton Landing, June 18 in Tupper Lake; and June 23 in Northville. Contact Tyler Smith, (518) 576 - 2082 x 119, or tyler_smith@tnc.org, for more information.

Land-based invaders-Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard, and others-have also taken root on private and public lands in the Adirondacks. Last field season alone, APIPP oversaw the removal of some seven tons of invasive plants at 33 Forest Preserve Campgrounds and 125 sites along 275 miles of state highways. There are volunteer opportunities for citizens to get involved in these efforts as well. Contact Steven Flint, (518) 576 - 2082 x 120, or sflint@tnc.org for details.

“We’ve been at this for more than a decade and still the dedication of our partners and volunteers is stronger than the most persistent and harmful invasive species,” Ms. Smith said. “We must be vigilant about detecting new infestations and responding to them quickly. With stronger-than-ever state programming, we are forging ahead with a more regional emphasis on aquatic invasives and forest pests like emerald ash borer.”

EPA selects Environmental Quality Award winners from non-profit environmental and community groups, individual citizens, educators, business organizations and members of the news media, as well as from federal, state, local or tribal governments and agencies. The honor is given to those individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to improving the environment and public health in EPA Region 2, which covers New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and seven federally-recognized Indian Nations. More information is available online at www.epa.gov/region2.

Among APIPP’s past honors are NYSDEC’s Environmental Excellence Award in 2007 and two from the Federal Highway Administration: Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative in 2004 and Environmental Excellence in 2001. Find out more about APIPP online at www.adkinvasives.com .