Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

Resource Brief

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Invasive Plant Management in the Apostle Islands

Introduction

- Invasive plants are non-native species that have significant potential to cause environmental harm to biodiversity and wildlife habitat quality.
- National Park Service Management Policies (2006) direct invasive plant management in parks. Efforts focus on conserving ecosystems and wildlife habitat, and maintaining cultural landscapes.
- Invasive plants thrive in disturbed ecosystems; staff find infestations by surveying campsites, lighthouses, ranger stations, trails, and other public use areas.
- Early detection and rapid response are key to addressing invasions.
- Spraying herbicides, pulling individual plants, and cutting with brush saws are different methods used to treat invasive plants.
- Staff re-visit treated areas to assess management effectiveness and adjust where needed.

Mapping spotted knapweed near a ranger station

Tansy infestation on hillside at Raspberry Lighthouse

Species of Management Concern

The following species occur in the park and are of concern due to their invasive abilities:

- Non-forested habitat (3% of the park) - bull and Canada thistles, spotted knapweed, and tansy.
- Forested habitat (96% of the park) - common and European buckthorn at extremely low numbers.
- Wetlands (1% of the park) - purple loosestrife, cattails.

The recent discovery of garlic mustard on the mainland raises concerns because this species thrives in forests.

Management Implications

- In general, it is not possible to eradicate invasive plants. However, the island nature of the park presents a unique opportunity to maintain vegetation in a more native state.
- Management actions completed over the past several years have kept exotic species at lower levels compared to the mainland.
- Future efforts will continue and include education, coupled with surveys and treatment of known problem areas. However, due to the threat of garlic mustard to forests, survey efforts will include these habitats as well.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Look for invasive species and report them to staff.
- Clean your gear before arriving at the park.
- Use boot brush stations to clean dirt and seeds off your shoes!

Boot brush at an Invasive Species information station

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