

For Immediate Release

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Restoration of Coastal Forest and Shrub Habitat And Pollinator Enhancements at Odiorne Point State Park

In December 2022, the Rockingham County Conservation District (the District) mowed another 6+/- acres at Odiorne Point State Park that had been completely overtaken by invasive plant species, particularly Oriental bittersweet, and glossy buckthorn. Oriental bittersweet was introduced to the United States from Asia in the 1860's and continues to spread throughout the eastern US. It is a sprawling vine that has the ability to overtake and outcompete native plants by forming impenetrable thickets that shade and strangle other vegetation, including trees. Over time, this invasive vine has become a dominant species at the park and has spread through some of the most rare and imperiled plant communities. Combating this invasive plant species as well as others over time allows us to now see the dramatic effects on the native vegetation. Although mechanical equipment is used, native trees and shrubs are saved to the greatest extent possible. Areas in the park that were once a monoculture of Oriental bittersweet are slowly transitioning to habitats with a more diverse native species composition. Within the park, there are several other common state listed invasive plant species that are also being controlled and include bush honeysuckles, multiflora rose, burning bush and black swallow-wort.



Figure 2. Pre-mowing 2020



Figure 1. Post-mowing 2022

In partnership with the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation, and the NH Department of Environmental Services, Coastal Program, an integrated approach to habitat restoration has been going on since 2009. The District has been removing Oriental bittersweet and other invasive plants in the park and restoring critical coastal habitats. Throughout this restoration effort, the District has applied an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach in using mechanical clearing to remove invasive shrubs and vines. This technique is then followed up with low volume herbicide applications to control the invasive plant regrowth, and then



Figure 3. Pollinator habitat planting 2022

replanting with native species takes place. During 2022, the District planted over 1000 native plants in 3-5 +/- acres to facilitate the re-establishment of native coastal shrub and forested habitats. Many of these native species include Northern bayberry, black cherry, Eastern red cedar, beach plum, Virginia rose, shagbark hickory, and shadbush, which also help to outcompete the invasive plants. An additional 1000 pollinator friendly native plants were planted within a two-acre coastal shrubland habitat that had been taken over with invasives and lacked management (due to fencing) that is located adjacent to the bike path and Route 1A. Most of these plants were planted using biodegradable deer protectors and bamboo stakes to protect these young plants. This will help to facilitate volunteer watering efforts in re-establishing this native vegetation.

Approximately 500 volunteer hours in 2022 were provided on active restoration efforts to

improve these coastal habitats, which enables and significantly enhances our collective habitat restoration efforts. The District also collected and grew Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) seedlings and planted them in 2021 and 2022 to increase the milkweed population that is vital for the migrating North American monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) butterfly. Maintaining high native plant diversity, including milkweed, will provide larval host plants and nectar sources for monarchs and other pollinators.

It is anticipated that this long-term restoration effort will significantly reduce the invasive seed regeneration, while also benefiting the restoration of native coastal habitats. "RCCD has been restoring these coastal habitats for well over a decade, and with assistance from our partners we believe this will ultimately help native habitats be more resilient over time. This park is really a seacoast gem, and in addition to our efforts to provide greater ecological benefits, more people are now able to visit and enjoy these unique coastal resources," noted RCCD senior project manager, Tracy Degnan.

The RCCD has been restoring habitats with its partners and hundreds of volunteers at Odiorne Point State Park since 2009. This phase of restoration was funded in part by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act in conjunction with the NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program, the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture Markets and Foods Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program and the New Hampshire State Conservation Committee through the sale of Conservation License Plates. If you would like more information or to get involved, please contact the RCCD at rccd@rockinghamccd.org.



Figure 4. Deer protector on a recent planting 2022