

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Tracy Degnan, Rockingham County Conservation District 603-679-2790,
rccdted@comcast.net

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

Oriental bittersweet has been taking over Odiorne Point State Park! This invasive vine was not noted as being present at the park in a survey completed in 1972, but has since become a dominant species over much of the area, including spreading through some rare plant community types. Oriental bittersweet was introduced to the United States from Asia in the 1860's and has spread rapidly throughout



the eastern US. It is a sprawling vine that has the ability to eliminate native plants by forming impenetrable thickets that shade and strangle supporting vegetation. The vine also can reduce soil acidity, making habitats more favorable for its own growth.



As part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to habitat restoration, the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) in partnership with the NH Department of Division of Parks and Recreation has been removing Oriental bittersweet in the park and has been experimenting with using grass seed mixes to help reduce seedling establishment of invasive species. In addition, the RCCD has been using mechanical clearing to remove invasive shrubs and vines. This technique is then followed up with applications of minimal herbicide treatments to control the invasive plant regrowth. In addition,

during the past two years, RCCD has planted over 1900 native plants to facilitate the re-establishment of native coastal shrub and forested habitats. These native species include bayberry, black cherry, eastern red cedar and shadbush, which help to outcompete the invasive plants. During 2016 and 2017, over 700 volunteer hours have been leveraged on active restoration efforts to improve native coastal habitats. Both container plants and native seedlings were spread over approximately 10+/- acres to re-establish native vegetation.



Over the next several years, data will be collected to determine if these efforts prove to be detrimental to Oriental bittersweet or other invasive seed regeneration, while also being beneficial to the restoration of native vegetation. “It’s a long process, but over the long-term we believe it will ultimately help restored native habitats to be more resilient as time goes on,” noted RCCD ecologist Lenny Lord.

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 by the NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act in conjunction with the NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture Markets and Foods Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. This project was also supported by the NH State Conservation Committee Conservation Grant Program with funds made possible by the sale of NH Conservation and Heritage License “Moose” Plates. If you would like more information or to get involved, please contact the RCCD at rccd@rockinghamccd.org.



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