

Brittany's Brush Busters: Fighting Invasive Species on the Naval Base

Brittany Callaham is not afraid to get her hands dirty. With her team of Brush Busters, she battles invasive plants that are choking out native species on the Sugar Grove Naval Base, where she resides with her husband.

After participating in last year's National Public Lands Day event on base, she was inspired to combat the non-native invasive species surrounding her home. Callaham noticed the prevalence of invasive plants, like bush honeysuckle and Japanese stiltgrass, on the base and knew the harm they caused to the local habitat. A skilled entomologist with a passion for fighting weeds, the California native formed a group of hands-on weed warriors. With the help of Navy volunteers and the guidance of Environmental and Natural Re-sources Programs Director, Steven Niethamer, Brittany's Brush Busters were born. Callaham's first offensive against the invasive plants took place on the most overgrown location on base. She recruited volunteers at orientation and through the base's POW, or Plan of the Week, which is read by all stationed Navy personnel. Brittany's Brush Busters have received a small, yet dedicated, turnout to her weekly event. She hopes that more people will join her to fight against non-native species, as they come to understand that invasive plants have serious impact on local flora and fauna diversity.

With weed warriors like Brittany Callaham scouting for new recruits in the fight against invasive species, the seeds of new partnerships are sown. Though it may take time for some people to join the fight, "you never know when one thing might make a difference." Article provided by Caroline Dunlap, USFWS AmeriCorps member.



Brush busters Chris Martin, Brittany Callaham, Steven Niethamer & Jack Markham

The CWPMA's New Invasive Species Short Films!

Recently, local videographer, Joel Wolpert completed a series of short videos for the Potomac Highlands CWPMA which will serve as public outreach tools. These films were funded by a Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center's Partnership Grant. The films complimented the goal of this grant which were to expand available outreach materials for increasing invasive species awareness in the Potomac Highlands and beyond.

Five short films were created. There are three invasive species features, one each on garlic mustard, tree-of-heaven, and Japanese knotweed. Another film focuses on "Why You Should Care About Invasive Species". In addition, a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) was created. The PSA will be broadcast throughout the Potomac Highlands area on local cable networks and on other channels as funding allows.

All films are available for our partners to use during meetings, presentations, or other public education events. To view our films visit our website (phcwpma.org) and click on the educational resources tab. A special thanks to Joel Wolpert for his hard work and creativity, and to our partners who were willing to be our 'actors' in front of the camera. Article provided by Devin Gill, USFWS Field Office Ameri-Corps member.

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