



SUDBURY-ASSABET-CONCORD Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

Photo courtesy of US FWS

Working Together to Control Non-Native Invasive Plants

Non-native invasive species are changing the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers (SuAsCo) watershed, and disrupting ecological processes at the landscape scale. The impacts don't stop at our property boundaries, and our efforts to control them need to take this into account.

We are inviting your organization to join the SuAsCo CISMA!

The SuAsCo CISMA (Cooperative Invasives Species Management Area) is a dedicated group, including signatories to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and non-signing Supporting Partners, committed to controlling invasive species in the SuAsCo watershed area. The MOU describes the purposes and goals of the SuAsCo CISMA and outlines anticipated activities of the group.

There are no fiscal or policy obligations associated with becoming a member of the SuAsCo CISMA, but by joining this cooperative effort, your organization will participate in a network of expertise and labor, as well as benefit from funding that is obtained by the SuAsCo CISMA for regional invasive species control efforts.

A New Collaboration

Over the last three years, a group of like-minded conservation professionals and volunteers has been building a coalition of organizations, each of which are individually faced with invasive species control issues. This Working Group has recognized that since invasive species readily spread across ownership boundaries, a collective, regional approach is the only effective way to make significant progress. With this understanding, this group is establishing a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area for the SuAsCo watershed. A CISMA (often called a Cooperative Weed Management Area in other parts of the country) is a geographically-defined approach to invasive species management being successfully implemented across the U.S. The SuAsCo CISMA involves groups such as non-profits, municipalities, and state and federal agencies planning and acting together, across jurisdictional boundaries, to focus on invasive species control in the SuAsCo Rivers watershed.

Purple loosestrife, an ornamental plant brought to New England in the early 1800s for its beautiful purple-spiked flowers, is a well-known invasive plant that has taken over vast areas of wetlands across the country (see the photo above). This plant disrupts the native ecology of wetlands by spreading quickly, crowding out native plants, and eliminating open-water habitat that is so important for amphibian and other species.



Photo by John Burns/New England Wild Flower Society

Less well-known is the emerging threat of Japanese stilt grass (above). This Asian plant, a lime-green grass 24 to 40 inches tall, spreads rapidly especially in wooded areas near streams or wetlands. Left uncontrolled, it can completely replace the herbaceous ground vegetation within three to five years. Japanese stilt grass has already spread in New York and Connecticut. However, only small stands have recently been spotted in Massachusetts. This is a case where effective, collective action could prevent yet another disastrous blow to our native plant communities.

Why Should I Join the SuAsCo Cisma?

The main focus of the Cisma is to develop a strategic plan for invasives management in the SuAsCo watershed area along with an Annual Priority Action list, and to promote collaborative approaches to carrying out those priority actions. Information sharing and dissemination are also important goals of the group. Members of the Cisma will work to identify and pursue new sources of funding to support joint initiatives. Members can choose to participate in cooperative efforts in the manner that fits with their own organizational priorities, and Cisma participation is in no way designed to dictate or limit management decisions on your own lands.

By participating in the SuAsCo Cisma, you can benefit in several ways:

- Use the combined knowledge and expertise of the group to develop a coordinated approach to managing existing invasive species problems
- Partner with other Cisma members to obtain funding for implementing invasive species control projects
- Share knowledge and stay up-to-date on effective control measures and efforts
- Tap into existing pools of volunteers for “invasive species work days” and/or learn how to cultivate your own cadre of volunteers
- Gain access to education and other outreach materials or approaches developed or tested by Cisma members
- Participate in or just keep informed of early detection efforts related to emerging invasive species threats

What is the Next Step?

Maximize the effectiveness of your efforts by becoming a member of the SuAsCo Cisma. The Memorandum of Understanding can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatmeadows>. The official signing of the MOU and establishment of the SuAsCo Cisma is planned for Spring 2009.

For further information or to be put on the mailing list of potential members and learn about our ongoing meetings, please contact Jeff Collins at Mass Audubon (jeffcollins@massaudubon.org or 781-259-2159).

SuAsCo Cisma Working Group Participants

Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
Mass Audubon
National Park Service
New England Wild Flower Society
Organization for the Assabet River
SuAsCo Watershed Community Council
Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council
Sudbury River Watershed Organization
Sudbury Valley Trustees
Towns of Concord and Carlisle
The Walden Woods Project
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

