

An alien invader is choking the life out of Ontario wetlands

Georgian Bay Forever is fighting to control Phragmites and needs your help

Toronto, ON – Feb 23, 2017 – You see the tall, fast growing plants along local highways and increasingly on coastlines throughout Ontario. They're called Phragmites and they are literally choking the life out of sensitive coastal wetlands. Georgian Bay Forever is a charitable organization that has mobilized concerned citizens to fight this invasive plant. They are calling on residents and cottagers around the Bay to mark Invasive Species Awareness Week on Feb 27 to March 1 by joining the fight to eradicate them.

Phragmites is a fast-growing, invasive plant originally from Europe that has taken root in Ontario and is threatening to destroy fish and wildlife habitat and alter wetland hydrology. The plant is a “nutrient bully” that disperses a chemical from its roots that harm other plants. It grows densely and quickly develops into large mono-dominant stands, creating ‘dead zones’ and transforming wetlands into habitats that are impossible for native species to survive in. Phragmites can grow in excess of 15 ft. high, blocking views and access ways to waterfronts, and creating visual hazards.

“Georgian Bay is home to some of Canada's most pristine coastal wetlands,” says Georgian Bay Forever Executive Director David Sweetnam. “Many creatures and organisms depend on these wetlands for life-sustaining activities including food and foraging, nurseries, spawning, shade, and shelter. We are extremely concerned about the threat of invasive Phragmites and are particularly concerned about the effects on the health of Georgian Bay's coastal wetlands. They need to be controlled or eradicated to help protect the natural environment that is so sensitive to this kind of deadly disruption.”

Ontarians who want to help fight the spread of Phragmites can get the information they need about how to identify this invasive species as well as proper cutting techniques for shoreline control by going to www.georgianbayforever.org.

“We're confident that a concerted effort to educate Ontarians about the threat of this invasive plant, and proper training on how to control or eradicate it will go a long way to restoring the health of many affected coastal wetlands in and around Georgian Bay,” says Sweetnam. “We hope people take the time to mark World Wetlands Day by taking action to support healthy coastal wetlands and visiting our websites so they can learn about the threat and how to join or support the fight.”

About Georgian Bay Forever

Georgian Bay Forever is a charity dedicated to scientific research and public education on Georgian Bay's aquatic ecosystems. Our mission is to protect, enhance, and restore the aquatic ecosystems of Georgian Bay by funding accredited research on water levels, water quality, and ecosystems; by educating the public and governments about issues related to environmental protection, conservation, the safety and preservation of the water and natural features of Georgian Bay, often referred to as Canada's sixth Great Lake.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Georgian Bay Forever has a spokesperson who can tell your listeners how to fight them

Who: Georgian Bay Forever is a charity dedicated to scientific research and public education on Georgian Bay's aquatic ecosystem.

Georgian Bay Forever Executive Director David Sweetnam is available to describe the threat of Invasive Phragmites and how your listeners can learn more about how to identify and control them.

What: Phragmites is a fast-growing, invasive plant originally from Europe that has taken root in Ontario and is threatening to destroy fish and wildlife habitat and alter wetland hydrology. The plant is a "nutrient bully" that disperses a chemical from its roots that harm other plants. It grows densely and quickly develops into large mono-dominant stands, creating 'dead zones' and transforming wetlands into habitats that are impossible for native species to survive in.

- Georgian Bay is home to some of Canada's most pristine coastal wetlands
- Many creatures and organisms depend on these wetlands for life-sustaining activities including food and foraging, nurseries, spawning, shade, and shelter.
- Invasive Phragmites need to be controlled or eradicated to help protect the natural environment that is so sensitive to this kind of deadly disruption.
- Mr. Sweetnam will describe the threat and direct your listeners to the information they need to take action.

When: Immediately and at your convenience.

Where: Television, remote interviews or in your studio
Radio and print via phone or in person

Why: February 27- March 1 is Invasive Species Awareness Week – a perfect time for Ontarians to take action to protect their sensitive coastal wetlands around Georgian Bay.

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