



News Release

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 100 people attend Port Franks event to fight invasive phragmites plant *Pilot project to control plant in Port Franks area to proceed this month*

PORT FRANKS – More than 100 people attended an information meeting on Tuesday, August 30 at the Port Franks Community Centre to hear about plans to confront a plant that is invading beaches, riverbanks, wetlands, and islands.

Phragmites, or European common reed, is an invasive plant that can grow up to five-metres high. It chokes out other plants, destroys wildlife habitat, and it is causing damage to wetlands in Port Franks and area.

Dr. Janice Gilbert, wetlands ecologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, has worked on control of *Phragmites australis* for many years. She showed striking photos of areas in Ontario where the plant has invaded. Plant seeds spread by water, air, or human activity, but, once a plant is established, it can quickly spread through rhizomes (the plant's horizontal stem that sends out roots from its nodes) and blanket an area. Dr. Gilbert also provided examples where the plant has been controlled. Some photos provided documentation of dramatic improvements in an area following phragmites control.

Frank Letourneau, of Dover Agri-Serve, is implementing phragmites control projects in Port Franks in September. There is one project on the beach in Port Franks and a second on a small island in the Ausable River. These two sites will demonstrate how the invasive plant can be controlled.

Mike Fair, of the Township of Huron-Kinloss, shared the frustration that was felt during many unsuccessful early attempts to control phragmites along the Lake Huron beaches in that municipality. It wasn't until 2010 that the community was able to make a significant reduction in the phragmites population with the assistance of Letourneau.

The council of the Municipality of Lambton Shores will be discussing phragmites at an upcoming meeting. St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority staff members are in discussions to determine how the two conservation authorities can assist with a strategy and to help with implementation of control of the invasive plant.

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