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Managing Phragmites Australis on Corps of Engineers Ecosystem Restoration Projects

Phragmites australis is one of the most troublesome invasive plants encountered on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. The USACE-Engineer Research and Development Center is investigating an integrated weed management approach for managing phragmites on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-listed Areas of Concern in New York, Illinois, and Ohio. The approach involves intensive management of phragmites and other invasive plant species by mowing, herbicide application, and mechanical removal followed by re-establishment of native vegetation. In addition, the USACE-ERDC is also investigating the feasibility of biological control as a control strategy against phragmites. Research on the identification and host specificity of insect biocontrol agents is being conducted by scientists at Cornell University. USACE-ERDC scientists have also surveyed invasive phragmites populations for plant pathogens as biocontrol agents. The status and results of these field demonstrations and the biocontrol research will be discussed. Identifying new and improved management strategies against phragmites will reduce the invasiveness and spread of this noxious weed on USACE projects while improving the quality and function of native aquatic and wetland plant habitats.