



NJ Invasive Species
Strike Team

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FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE

Strike Team Report June 2019

Thank you for joining us at the First Annual Community Conference!



The New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team was proud to host the inaugural Strike Team Community Conference on Sunday June 2 in the pavilion at the beautiful Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

After a warm welcome from Joe Balwierczak, President of Friends of Great Swamp, the conference kicked off with Strike Team Director Michael Van Clef. Greeting both longtime conservation partners and fresh faces, Dr. Van Clef highlighted the shared goal of stewardship to “mitigate our impact on natural environments.”

Dr. Van Clef provided a snapshot of the Strike Team’s stewardship work, and outlined the stages of tracking invasives, as well as the methodology behind which species and sites to prioritize. Since the Strike Team was founded in 2008, stewards and volunteers searched an impressive 750,000 acres, detected 12,000 populations, and completed 2,100 eradications. With 205 eradications in 2018 alone, Dr. Van Clef and his team are committed to diligently tracking down invasive species in New Jersey.

Presentations appealed to both home gardeners and community organizers, ranging from deer-resistant plants and rain gardens, to forming a local Strike Teams. In a talk focusing on deer-resistant native plants, Rachel Mackow, proprietor of Wild Ridge Plants, discussed the importance of native plants in the struggle against aggressive invasive species, Ms. Mackow pointed out the meaningful impact of planting native species, which support critical pollinators, and encourage balanced ecosystems in our own backyards. David Hughes shared professional insights about sustainable gardening in the form of rain gardens.

Strike Team organizers Maggie Southwell (Watchung Reservation Strike Team) and John Berry (Friends of Great Swamp Strike Team) shared their experience and advice for starting local strike teams. Following the presentations, Laurel Gould (Friends of Great Swamp) led an invasive species identification walk, while Mr. Berry took another group to the nearby Raptor Trust to scout invasives. His team’s work to protect the Swamp from Glossy Buckthorn and other invasive species is truly inspiring! Gardeners, volunteers, and Strike Team members from across New Jersey came out to learn more about native planting, detecting invasive species, and organizing at the community level.



John Berry (above) leads conference attendees in identifying invasive species.

It was a fantastic Sunday afternoon at our inaugural Community Conference! It was a perfect reminder that invasive species control requires individual dedicated volunteers working as a team, a very persistent team. This year has brought interest in forming new local Strike Teams throughout the state and it is great to have working models such as the Friends of Great Swamp.

We'd like to thank the Fox Foundation for their generous donation this month! Since we currently do not have a grant to support formation of local Strike Teams, their support really helps.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Van Clef". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Van Clef, Ph.D.
Strike Team Program Director

Live and Learn!

The goal of this 'Live and Learn!' feature is to spread newly obtained knowledge provided from Strike Team partners. Please share your expertise! Send news of successes or lessons learned, either big or small, to Mike at mvanclef@fohvos.org.

The Strike Team will host a Potluck Social in Central New Jersey in October. More details will follow once we settle on a date and venue. However, it's important that we start thinking ahead as the season is progressing to remind everyone to think about harvesting.

Potluck Social

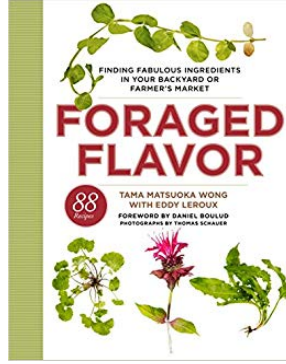
Did you know you can eat [Mugwort as a soup](#), really! Hungry for some [kudzu quiche](#)? [Watercress](#) was introduced for food, so let's accommodate it. Wineberry is probably the tastiest of the bunch, they'll be ripening soon so let's all stop some seeds from spreading. Or maybe a Japanese Knotweed spiced apple pie? For inspiration, you can check out New Jersey's own Tama Matsuoka's [Foraged Flavor](#).

I'll be bringing something made using Jay Kelly's Norway Maple syrup (excessively tapped!) and maybe another dish or two. What will you bring?

If you have some recipes you'd like to share, please post them on our [Facebook](#) page!



Common Mugwort



Watercress

The Strike Team needs your help to fight invasive species throughout New Jersey. By making a membership donation, you directly fund our efforts to keep invasive species at bay and protect our native plants and wildlife. Donate through the link below!

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Contributing Partners

If you would like to know how to become a Strike Team Contributing Partner, please contact lhovath@fohvos.org



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