

Southern Maine Invasive Plant Coalition (SMIPC) Guiding Principles for Protecting Native Habitat During Invasive Plant Management

Invasive plants pose a significant threat to biodiversity across the US. To mitigate their impact while protecting native species and habitats, SMIPC has developed the following Guiding Principles* for invasive plant removal:

Preferred Method: Mechanical Removal

Whenever feasible, mechanical methods of removing invasives should be used instead of herbicides. These include pulling & digging, repeated cutting or mowing, smothering, etc.

When using mechanical removal methods:

- **Protect native species:** Identify and preserve native plants growing among the invasive species.
- **Manage soil disturbance:** Pulling and digging can lead to rapid re-infestation. Develop a plan for replanting or reseeding with native species, along with ongoing site monitoring.
- **Prevent erosion:** Take appropriate steps to stabilize soil, particularly on slopes, when root systems are removed.
- **Avoid spread:** Clean equipment after use to prevent the spread of invasive plant fragments to other locations.
- **Plan for restoration:** Replant or reseed area with native plants and implement regular monitoring to prevent recurrence.

When Chemical Control is Necessary

If mechanical removal is not viable due to the species of plant, or the size or location of the infestation, chemical methods may be used under strict conditions.

Guidelines for chemical use:

- **Comply with regulations:** Follow all federal/state laws and local ordinances regarding herbicide use.
- **Read and follow the label:** Herbicide labels provide legal instructions for safe use, where it can be legally applied (e.g. aquatic) and personal protective equipment requirements.
- **Select appropriate chemicals:** Use herbicides proven effective for the target species.
- **Use correct timing:** Apply during the season that is proven effective for the target species. If foliar spraying, choose calm, low-wind days and avoid the flowering period to protect pollinators.
- **Minimize non-target harm:** Identify and protect nearby native species.
- **Apply with precision:** When feasible, opt for targeted application methods (e.g., to cut stems or bark) rather than foliar spraying to reduce chemical drift.
- **Plan for restoration:** Replant or reseed area with native plants and implement regular monitoring to prevent recurrence.

*For more information: USDA National Invasive Species Information Center - Integrated Pest Management: <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/subject/integrated-pest-management>