

Kittery Land Trust Volunteers Clear Historic Mill Pond on Spruce Creek

Led by Kittery Land Trust (KLT) steward Gary Mitchell, volunteers tied, cut, and bundled almost an acre of stands of invasive phragmites plants on Spruce Creek during the month of September 2011. Joe Anderson, a state-licensed herbicide applicator with the York County Soil and Water Conservation District, was contracted to treat the cut stems with an environmentally safe toxin that will be drawn down to the extensive root systems before the plant goes dormant for the winter.

Phragmites is a bamboo-like perennial grass which grows to a height of 11 feet in just one year. The root systems spread easily in shoreline areas, crowding out native species and interfering with natural drainage systems.



It takes a team of volunteers! Pat DeGrandpre, Polly Rines, Tom Rines, Alex Dearborn, Steve Hall, Sondra Newman, Jenny Freeman, Martha Petersen, Erin Heffron, Lindsay Gee, Tim Case, Joan Beskenis, Rich Noonan, Zoe Noonan and leader Gary Mitchell tied the standing phragmites into over 4,000 bundles, using nearly 14,000 feet of natural twine. These were then cut at waist height so the herbicide could be more easily applied.

The mill pond is part of KLT's Thompson Preserve, located on the western shore of Spruce Creek. It was once the site of a tidal mill, and has the remains of a mill dam. A beautiful, calm cove and salt marsh, it is protected from development by the KLT, and is home to much wildlife.

Anyone wishing to volunteer for the next project is encouraged to write KLT at: stewardship@kitterylandtrust.org. A second assault in 2012 will be needed to eradicate the stubborn shoots.

Photos by Gary Mitchell

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