

Background:

European common reed occurs throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. The invasive common reed was most likely introduced to North America by accident in ballast material in the 1800s.



Invasive reed before treatment

Common Reed (*Phragmites australis australis*)

Impact on Native Habitat:

Phragmites outcompetes native vegetation and lowers the local plant biodiversity. Phragmites form dense thickets of vegetation that is unsuitable habitat for native fauna. Phragmites displaces native plants species such as wild rice, cattails, and native wetland orchids. Phragmites has a high above ground biomass that blocks light to other plants allowing areas to turn into Phragmites monocultures very quickly. Decomposing Phragmites increases the rate of marsh accretion more rapidly than would occur with native marsh vegetation.

Identification

Leaves: are dark blue-green in color and are long and strap-like with narrow pointed edges. They are alternately dispersed along the plant stem.



Stems: Leaf sheaths of non-native phragmites cling tightly, covering dull tan stems with tiny ridges. The lower leaf sheaths of native phragmites fall off easily, exposing the stem below, which turns red in the sunlight.



Seedheads: form large bushy purple to golden brown plumes that grow to 1-2 feet in length and drape to one side. Flowers bloom in late July and August. Seeds are grayish and are covered with silky hairs.



Rhizomes: Once a patch of Phragmites is established, it can form dense stands and spread rapidly to adjacent areas via rhizomes. Rhizomes can expand at the rate of 30 feet per year, with new plants sprouting all along the rhizome.



Eradication Schedule



How to Kill: Eradication

1. Herbicide application: Two broad-spectrum herbicides, imazapyr and glyphosate, are commercially available and known to control Phragmites effectively when used properly. imazapyr is more effective overall, but often has a residual effect on the soils and occasionally makes native reestablishment difficult. Glyphosate is less expensive and does not persist in the soil. It should ideally be used in late summer or fall, after the Phragmites has produced seedheads. Both herbicides, if used correctly, typically achieve high rates of kill.

- 2. Prescribed Fire-** This practice will not eradicate this invasive species but may help to control its growth by removing excess biomass, potentially killing any living rhizomes and promoting native plant growth.
- 3. Mowing –** This practices reduces the height of vegetation so that foliar herbicide application is more attainable. May not be practicable in all situations. Can also reduce flame heights during a prescribed fire by bringing all thatch to ground before ignition.



Invasive reed after treatment/eradication