



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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Park Authority Marks Ten Years of Invasive Management

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Fairfax County Park Authority's national award-winning Invasive Management Area (IMA) program.

The hugely successful stewardship effort started in 2006 with 454 volunteers donating just over 1,600 hours to remove non-native invasive plants from 21 places on park land. Program growth has led to about 2,000 volunteers pitching in during each of the last four years. Through 2015, since the program's debut, some 13,441 volunteers have donated 43,442 hours during 2,108 workdays to remove 8,706 large bags of invasive plants from 68 park sites. REI, Inc. has donated \$55,000 in grants through the Fairfax County Park Foundation over the past four years to support the program and an annual spring event called Take Back the Forest.

Take Back the Forest is a recruiting tool for IMA. It emphasizes volunteering in the spring when invasive species are readily attacked without having to fight through summer forest growth. Take Back the Forest annually coincides with national volunteer days such as Earth Day, National Volunteer Week, Potomac River Watershed Cleanup Day and Arbor Day.

IMA has received multiple awards, and in 2013 the National Association of Government Communicators named Take Back the Forest one of the top communications initiatives of a government agency in the nation.

Take Back the Forest will run from April 15 to May 15 this year. The Park Authority will have many volunteer opportunities available during that time. More information about the program and becoming an IMA volunteer is on the Park Authority's website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resource-management/ima/>.

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