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### Local Agencies and Companies to Form Local Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

Invasive plant species are a widespread public and private land issue that requires coordinated control actions from public and private parties. Ohio River Foundation has been awarded a grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to establish a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) in the tri-state. Partnering with Great Parks of Hamilton County, Cincinnati Parks, Clermont County Park District and others, the Ohio River Valley CISMA will focus on coordinating the actions of multiple parties in controlling the spread of invasive plant species and educating the public regarding their participation in controlling and reducing these populations.

An invasive species is one that is not native to a specific location, and has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health. A non-native species is one that is introduced, and not necessarily invasive. Once a species is introduced, it may become invasive if it no longer has natural predators and out-competes the native plants by using up resources such as space, sunlight, water, and nutrients. Invasive plants often provide poor habitat for the local fauna as well. Some of the most prevalent invasives in the Greater Cincinnati area include Amur Honeysuckle, Callery Pear, and Lesser Celendine.

There is more private property in the Greater Cincinnati area than is owned by parks or natural areas, so private landowners can have a big impact on the presence of an invasive species. With the increasing awareness of the invasive species issue, several hundred CISMAs have been created across the country but very few in the 200,000 square mile Ohio River watershed. These local organizations facilitate collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries for more effective invasive plant management.

Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas can be important in the war on invasives because they cross jurisdictional boundaries, allowing partners to share and leverage limited resources. Being part of a CISMA can also help secure funding for future invasive control projects, and provide an early detection and rapid response network for incoming new invasives. CISMAs are highly visible, raising public and commercial awareness. With public education and increased awareness, the presence of invasive species can be diminished not only in our parks, but in our local nurseries and in our neighbor's backyards. Through cooperation between organizations and individuals, Cincinnati can be a leader in the Midwestern war on invasive plant species.

This fall, the Ohio River Valley CISMA, in coordination with its partners will host several workshops for businesses, government agencies, and the general public. Workshops will be held in September 2016 to enlist more companies and local governments as CISMA partners. The workshops will also include sessions ranging from invasive plants 101, to the latest research on the most effective control and removal techniques. Following these workshops, there will also be two volunteer days in October. The meetings to begin formation of the Ohio River Valley CISMA will begin in October 2016.

For more information on attending the workshops and other developments of the Ohio River Valley CISMA visit [ohioriverfdn.org](http://ohioriverfdn.org).