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The National Park Service's Exotic Plant Management Teams: A Rapid Response to Controlling Invasive Species

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Today, exotic plants infest approximately 2.6 million acres in the national park system, reducing the natural diversity of these special places. Drawing funds from the Natural Resource Challenge, the National Park Service (NPS) Biological Resource Management Division (BRMD) established rapid response Exotic Plant Management Teams (EPMT) to control exotic plants. Modeled after the approach used in wild land fire fighting, EPMTs provide highly trained, mobile strike forces of plant management specialists who assist parks in the control of exotic plants.

The success of the EPMT derives from its ability to adapt to local conditions and needs. Each team employs the expertise of local experts and the capabilities of local agencies. Each sets its own work priorities based on the following factors: severity of threat to high-quality natural areas and rare species; extent of targeted infestation; probability of successful control and potential for restoration; opportunities for public involvement; and park commitment to follow-up monitoring, treatment and restoration. Aquatic resources are often a focus of invasive species management in the NPS. Several EPMTs focus on aquatic invasive species concerns in riparian, lacustrine, wetland and estuarine resources, including tamarisk, Eurasian water milfoil, Japanese knotweed, reed canary grass, spartina, and melaleuca. This talk will focus on case studies of current NPS EPMT efforts to manage aquatic nuisance species throughout the country.