

# Kettle and Stony Point First Nation controlling Phragmites

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We were facing the loss of many of our natural shoreline plants; the decline of our annual shorebirds, mammals, and waterfowl; and losing much of our beautiful view of Lake Huron at Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. This was because of an invasive plant known as Phragmites australis or European Common Reed. This is why our First Nation undertook a project in autumn of 2010 to control this invasive plant.

The first obstacle we faced in the project was the lack of funding.

A generous donation of time and equipment from Frank Letourneau, Phragmites Control Specialist, enabled us to complete a demonstration area using modified

equipment and expert applicators following strict guidelines. We were successful in applying for and getting a grant in 2011. The grant was from the Canada-Ontario Resource Development Agreement (CORDA).

We were then able to begin two years of control efforts involving mechanical spraying, rolling, burning, backpacking, and cutting. We managed to control and eradicate Phragmites in approximately half of our coastline and all of our drainage ditches in that time frame.

Phragmites control is expensive and must be monitored and touched up annually. The lack of approved 'over-water' chemicals and rising water levels are more obstacles we encounter. Currently, we are trying underwater cutting, hoping to drown out some of the Phragmites.

Our successes are evidenced by the return of a number of species at risk including the Least Bittern (a small heron) and the Eastern Musk Turtle. Numerous Snapping Turtles, Painted Turtles, and Bald Eagles are now a regular sight, as is our seasonal clan of Sand Hill and other cranes. Many shorebirds are returning and the migrating species are now actually stopping in our First Nation. The re-emergence of Cattails and other native plants, signals the return of the muskrats, amphibians, and reptiles.

We do have our setbacks, but we strive forward towards our ultimate goal: the control and eradication of the invasive Phragmites and the return of the natural life cycles of our lands and waters.

## Tips to control Phragmites

The tall, thick, aggressively spreading grass called *Phragmites australis* (European Common Reed) has been described as Canada's "worst" invasive plant. It can reach heights of more than five metres. It chokes out native plants, alters wetlands, and impacts species. It limits people's ability to enjoy their properties or have access to shorelines and streams. It can pose a fire hazard during the dormant period with standing dead biomass and creates safety hazards blocking sight lines. Control and management needs to start now, be done properly, and continue.

You can help to stop the spread of Phragmites by controlling the plant on your property and not spreading it with contaminated equipment. Control options are site-specific and include herbicide application, excavation, cutting or burning. Animals, including nesting birds and turtles, may be on the edges of Phragmites

cells. Timing control to reduce potential harm or mortality should be a consideration.

Cutting does not kill the plant but it may slow growth and reduce stand density and seed head development. If this management method is used, permanent regular cutting must remain in place since the plants grow rapidly and dense cells can re-establish when cutting stops.

The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group has created fact sheets on Phragmites control with support of funding partners. For links and to learn more visit: [www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=Phragmites](http://www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=Phragmites)