

2011 Unusual Outreach Challenge Entrants

Judging Committee: Heather Fuller, Taylor Maida, Trish Wurtz

Thanks to everyone who entered. Start your engines for next year's contest!

Winner: Gino Graziano, UAF – CES, Anchorage. Gino was involved in several different types of unusual outreach. He presented information on invasive plants to the Alaska Rock Products Association, he lead a bike tour of weeds on the Chester Creek Greenbelt, and he made a presentation at an Alaska Coastal Management Program conference to a group of people in the Natural Disasters session. The other presenters covered subjects such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Gino presented the topic of invasive plants as a natural disaster of the biological kind.

Runner up: Katie Villano, UAF and Center for Alaska Coastal Studies - One People, One Earth Conference. I did outreach to Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other faith community leaders on invasive plants and earth stewardship at the "One People, One Earth Conference" in Fairbanks on May 7. Additionally, in July, I identified ornamental jewelweed on the Sacred Heart Cathedral grounds and assisted Fr. Fred, the priest of the parish, in performing Early Detection and Rapid Response. Father Fred then dedicated an entire sermon to the topic of invasive plants, educating over 300 Catholics in Fairbanks on the connection between invasive plants and care for God's creation.

Runner up: Denny Lassuy, FWS - Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). PIJAC works with folks who produce, distribute, or sell pets (many of which are non-native and imported). Back in the 70's (I'm told) PIJAC sued "the Feds" for the way the Lacey Act was proposed to be implemented (this is a law under which "injurious" species can be prohibited entry). I first met the CEO of PIJAC in the 90s when I helped run a nationwide review of federal policy on "intentional introductions" (including aquarium releases). They weren't exactly thrilled, but they worked with us to identify some potential ways forward and in the process I managed to develop a good working relationship with PIJAC. So, when Alaska found out we'd been invaded by *Elodea* and that this was a common aquarium plant, I contacted PIJAC and began working on identifying some alternative aquarium plant species -- ones that were still marketable, but less cold tolerant (thus less risk to Alaska waters). Through a series of conversations and emails we got the nation's leading producer of aquarium plants to provide a preliminary list of species that he thought may fit the bill. That list is now being vetted through a risk assessment model developed by an AIS compatriot in the Midwest & will hopefully prove useful for additional future outreach to Alaska aquarium sales outlets. It took years of sustained outreach and collaboration, but it sure was nice to see the shift from suing us to supporting us!

The rest of the entries were also really fun and inspiring:

Laura Allen, Upper Susitna SWCD – Auto mechanics and car dealers in Trapper Creek and Talkeetna. Mechanic shops receive high volumes of vehicles, ORVs, and motors of all types. These motors spread a lot of weeds in AK. If mechanics were aware of the problem, they could clean up their auto yards of weeds and could educate their customers. They could have posters in their shops and other information available.

Laurie Thorpe, BLM – BLM Cadastral Survey Crew. The BLM Cadastral Survey Crew is made up of highly technical land surveyors and property boundary and monument markers. They were scheduled to survey BLM property lines at Rohn Roadhouse along the Iditarod Trail. I collaborated with the crew on the trip so I could teach them about NNIS and what they should look for in their field work, and specifically at Rohn I got to do on-site education and EDRR with them – hempnettle, narrowleaf hawsbeard, *Brassica rapa*, foxtail barley and flixweed. They helped me pull these species and I provided them with AK invasive species books to take with their survey gear so they can be more eyes and EDRR people for us in the areas they go throughout the state.

Crystal Wheeler, BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – 150 Bridge engineers and inspectors. Presented about identification of the invasive Quagga and zebra mussels which are not known to be in BC yet, and asked the group to watch out for these mussels during their routine inspections. Since I had their attention, I threw in a few slides on invasive plants! I was surprised and delighted when many participants came up to me afterwards for more information. I guess my presentation was more interesting than the rebar talk before me!

Rob Develice, Chugach National Forest – The 7th and 8th grade ecology class at Begich Middle School in Anchorage. I presented (to 30 students) a talk focused on vegetation diversity of the Chugach National Forest, including information on invasive plants. The presentation was spiced with numerous slides of landscapes and plants to make it compelling to students interested in the outdoors.

Jennifer Robinette, Ekuk Village Council – I spoke to a Native Corporation. This is out of the ordinary because they are only concerned with the bottom line most of the time. My public outreach was scheduled at the same place and time as the corporation board of directors' meeting. I had to sell the group that the topic was worth their while.

Dana White, AACD, Juneau CWMA – The Juneau community. Held two knotweed workshops, which included adopting knotweed “stands” for monitoring and control via the “Knot-head adoption agency.” Talked to neighbors and got landowner permission and plot maps, bought their herbicides together as a team, helped each other with processes, involved their neighbors. Dana also suggested an additional idea: A naked, solstice, wine-tasting weed pull.

Diane Claassen, Fairbanks CWMA – Eielson Middle School Science Camp, Camp Liwa. Presented a 1.5 hour presentation, weed relay and weed pulling. This occurred at a camp outside Fairbanks. As the pull was coming to an end, a gentleman drove by in a pickup and asked what we were doing. He said he would be happy to take our bird vetch and white sweetclover for his livestock. He said he could save us a trip to the landfill and we would help him because he wouldn't have to fill all those bags himself to haul home. Win / win. It was a great lesson for the students because it introduced them to more than one method of invasive weed control. Also the passerby was very happy to see someone interested in pulling weeds on the gravel road he lived on.

Janice Chumley, UAF – CES, Kenai Peninsula – Participated in Health and Safety Days for Conoco Philips at the Kuparak oil field on the North Slope. Provided invasive plant information to 450 contractors and employees. Many had never heard of “problem” plants before and had requests for survey work.

Ruth Gronquist , BLM – Northern Latitude Mine Reclamation Workshop. We presented information in our talk on what occurs on mine sites in Central and Eastern Alaska. People attending were conducting research on reclaiming abandoned and other sites to functioning parts of the landscape. There was overwhelming interest.

Darcy Etcheverry , Fairbanks CWMA – Hired one youth in Fort Yukon to survey and control white sweetclover. Darcy spoke with various people, including Yukon Ron, an elder, who was very interested in invasive plant control, both in his yard and in his community.

Cheryl Anderson, US FWS - Worked with ADF&G, spoke to Southcentral AK media campaign, which includes TV and radio PSAs, videos, rewards for illegal stocking (of lakes), web sites, You-Tube and Facebook. “ I have been getting a lot of response from people that have heard or seen one of the above – I assume the message is reaching a very large audience and they are becoming aware of the problem.”

Agent X , ? - The hourly employees (underlings) of select interior nurseries and greenhouses. Agent X identified employees, then inserted him or herself into casual social functions. Talked loudly about key issues / topics to non-targets, while standing within earshot of targets. Made a point of focusing on valid points from both sides of issue.