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**DEC PARTNERS WITH ADIRONDACK PARK INVASIVE PLANT PROGRAM
5-Year Contract Signed for the First of 8 Partnerships for
Regional Invasive Species Management**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis today announced the signing of a five-year contract with the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), an award-winning program focused on detecting and eradicating invasive species such as garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed and purple loosestrife in the Adirondack Park.

APIPP is one of New York's regional partnerships focused on the problem of invasive species, which have proliferated throughout the state's waterways, forests and farmlands. Because they typically come from other parts of the world, invasive species such as zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil often don't face natural ecological checks and balances and, therefore, reproduce and spread at alarming rates. Their negative impact is increasing largely due to the rise in global trade and travel.

A national- and state-award winning program, APIPP over the years has made presentations, developed public-service publications, produced videos and undertaken other efforts to spread awareness about the ecological damage caused by non-native plants. Volunteers have served as monitors for hundreds of lakes, ponds, rivers and forests and have ripped out tons of invasive plants from Adirondack roadsides. Currently, more than 30 invasive species including Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard, giant hogweed, swallowwort, Eurasian milfoil have been found in the Adirondack region. With this new contract in place (\$1.36 million through the state Environmental Protection Fund), APIPP plans on expanding its working boundaries and broadening its mission beyond plants.

APIPP's principal partners are The Nature Conservancy (TNC), DEC, Adirondack Park Agency (APA), and State Department of Transportation (DOT). TNC hosts the program at its Keene Valley office and coordinates volunteer efforts.

"Invasive species compete with, prey upon and substantially alter the environment of our native species of plants, fish and wildlife, and they have a devastating effect, not only on the environment, but also on the economy," Commissioner Grannis said. "The challenges they pose are so varied across New York's diverse landscape that a regional approach allows for the necessary commitment from stakeholders and the tailoring of programs to local needs. APIPP has served as a model for how to do just that."

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“Non-native invasive species are a serious threat to New York State’s biodiversity. Invasive plants and animals disrupt natural cycles, crowd out native species and result in property damage and lost economic and recreational opportunity,” said APA Chairman Curtis F. Stiles. “APIPP’s success has demonstrated without question the effectiveness of regional partnerships as well as the urgent need to address invasive species within the Adirondack Park and at the statewide level. Now, with the support of Governor Paterson, and Commissioner Grannis, the state has enabled the process ability to launch a real counterattack on invasive species.”

“With Governor Paterson's support, the State Department of Transportation will continue to work closely with our partners to control invasive species along transportation corridors throughout the Adirondack Park,” said State Transportation Commissioner Astrid C. Glynn. “With this new contract, we are renewing our commitment to collaborative, strategic initiatives that will protect native species, helping to preserve the beauty of the landscape and ecology of the park for generations to come.”

“APIPP is so effective because of its innovative partnership and ability to reach so many Adirondack stakeholders — from fisherman to foresters, boaters to hikers, town supervisors to lakeshore owners,” said Michael Carr, Executive Director of the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. “The five-year contract announced today is a stamp of approval for the good work being done to safeguard our natural resources and local communities against the negative effects of invasive species.”

Invasive species are one the state’s fastest growing environmental threats. Recent invasions in New York include the siren wood wasp, Chinese mitten crab, snakehead fish, Rock Snot, and Asian long horn beetle. Other invasive species such as the Emerald ash borer are on the horizon.

Last year, Commissioner Grannis announced the formation of DEC’s new Office of Invasive Species (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/40816.html>). Its mission is to bring together biologists and foresters to develop ways to combat the problem, and work with universities, other state agencies and non-profit organizations to support research and raise public awareness.

Legislation enacted in 2003 called for a multi-interest (state agencies, conservation organizations and trade) team lead by DEC and state Agriculture and Markets to explore the invasive species issue and to provide recommendations to the state.

Among those recommendations was the funding of demonstration projects, including supporting administrative costs for Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) across New York State. APIPP, now celebrating its 10th year, was the first regional cooperative effort among citizens and organizations of the Adirondacks to protect the park from the negative impacts of nonnative invasive plants. APIPP has twice won national awards for its work and, in 2007, won the state Environmental Excellence award.

More information on PRISMs, including a map with PRISM boundaries and contacts, can be found on the Invasive Species Task Force page on DEC’s website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6989.html>.

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