

## Blue Ridge PRISM Spring Quarterly Meeting: Restoration

Thursday, April 19, 2018

More than 35 people attended Blue Ridge PRISM's Spring Quarterly Meeting to discuss invasive plant control and native restoration on properties ranging from small one-acre backyards to large agricultural and timber operations. Invasive species continue to be a widespread threat, no matter the habitat: some attendees were concerned with restoring forest understory, while others were interested in treating meadows and riparian systems.

The keynote speaker, **Rod Simmons** (Natural Resource Manager and Plant Ecologist, City of Alexandria, Virginia), highlighted successful and not-so-successful attempts to control invasive species in varying landscapes under variable land uses. Despite geographic differences, many of the restoration failures could be attributed to the same problems: soil disturbance, white-tailed deer browse, and lack of knowledge and funding for post-treatment. Simmons suggested that landowners mimic natural processes and minimize disturbance. Highly disturbed environments typically have unhealthier soil and lower nutrient availability, which allows invasive plant species to flourish and degrade wildlife habitat quality. Furthermore, he encouraged landowners to educate themselves on property and management history, which is necessary for developing an effective restoration plan.



Next, **Charles Smith** (Branch Chief, Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division) further emphasized minimizing disturbance to the land, which reduces habitat quality and can give invasive species ample opportunity to enter and dominate the system. Smith also offered helpful tips for starting restoration on your own property: take an inventory of plants on your property and map them, manage the land with ecosystem function in mind (and not to promote specific species), preserve the best local resources already available, document all your management efforts, and keep up-to-date with the best evidence-based practices. Very rarely is there a single management practice that will solve all of your invasive plant problems, but both speakers provided plenty of valuable advice for landowners.

To wrap up the Quarterly Meeting, a panel of experts (**Rod Simmons, Charles Smith, and Jim Hurley**) fielded questions from the audience, most of which were specific to eradicating specific invasive species (Johnsongrass, Japanese Stiltgrass, etc.) on their own properties.

*The battle against invasive plant species is constantly evolving. Many landowners have knowledge about and experiences with controlling invasives. We can learn so much from each other. Platforms like this meeting are necessary to advance and improve conservation science.*

*Be on the lookout for more events on our [events page](#) and [Blue Ridge PRISM's website](#)!*



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