

# CSSD Chronicle

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch  
Court Support Services Division  
Tuesday, August 21, 2012



## Community Service Workers Help Rid Farmington River Habitat of Invasive Plants

Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) is a non-native, invasive plant found throughout most of North America, including many areas of Connecticut. The pink-flowered plant multiplies quickly and threatens the ecology of important habitats.

In Connecticut, one important habitat that the plant has invaded is a 14-mile stretch of the upper Farmington River, part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Each summer, the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC)—comprised of representatives from five riverfront towns, state agencies, and other community groups—work with teams of professionals and volunteers to remove and destroy invasive



Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)

plant species which include Spotted knapweed. The fields of knapweed are cleared by pulling out the plants by hand to prevent regrowth and limit the use of toxic herbicides.

**To the rescue**—During three outings in July, participants from the Connecticut Judicial Branch Community Service Work Crew program assisted FRCC in removing the knapweed along the river. Each of the crews consisted of up to 20 participants from across the state.

Before a Community Service crew headed out into the fields, FRCC's resident botanist, Betsy Corrigan, showed the plant to workers, demonstrated how to pull it out of the ground completely, and how to properly dispose of it. The plant's surface is very irritating to unprotected skin so crew members wore long-sleeved shirts, heavy trousers, socks, boots, and gloves to pick the fields, despite the summer heat.

**Assistance Appreciated**—"I can't tell you how hot it was!" said Michael Aiello, CSSD Program Manager, who worked with one work group for several hours on a Saturday morning, pulling out the noxious plants. "But everyone enjoyed it—they understood the negative impact of this plant, and appreciated their role in protecting the environment. Of course, they also



hoped to see turtles near the river, but we didn't that day."

In an email to CSSD, after one of the work days, Hannah Beach, Invasive Species Management Coordinator for FRCC, expressed her gratitude to the Community Service crews for their help. "All in all, SMASHING how much work we've gotten done, and how cooperative and enthusiastic these crews are! We all had a great time and pulled 28 contractor bags of knapweed in about two and a half hours. Incredible!"



*(Left photo)* A field of Spotted knapweed along the Farmington River, before its removal



*(Right photo)* The same field along the Farmington River after Spotted knapweed was removed by AIC Community Service teams

Spotted knapweed isn't the only invasive plant being fought on the banks of the Farmington River. Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is also on the list of dozens of invasive plants that the FRCC works to keep in check. The growth of stiltgrass is at its peak in August, and FRCC is currently looking for volunteers from the local community, and beyond, to help identify areas of invasion and remove the grassy vegetation. The Judicial Branch Community Service Work Crew program will also be assisting that effort.

"Removing invasive, non-native plants is a never-ending battle, but one that is important to keep the upper Farmington as pristine and natural as possible," said Liz Lacy, FRCC Project Manager. We're grateful to CSSD, the statewide community work crews, and others who volunteer their time to help us."

For more information on FRCC, or to volunteer your time to the organization, visit their website at [www.farmingtonriver.org](http://www.farmingtonriver.org).

*The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to [Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov)*

