

AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE ON AGENCY LANDS

I. Purpose:

This document establishes Agency policy and procedure for approving biological control methods involving the release of beetles to control infestations of purple loosestrife on Agency lands.

II. Background:

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an invasive plant that threatens to overwhelm North American wetlands. The negative impacts of purple loosestrife on wetland functions and values are well documented. Purple loosestrife is spreading rapidly in Vermont and is now prevalent in most towns throughout the state. In 1996, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Wetlands Office initiated the Vermont Purple Loosestrife Biological Control Program with the goal of reducing purple loosestrife in Vermont. The program has three primary components: (1) biological control of purple loosestrife through controlled release of loosestrife-eating beetles (*Galerucella* spp); (2) monitoring and mapping; and (3) public education and outreach.

Biological control through the release of exotic beetles has been shown to be a cost-effective and appropriate means of controlling purple loosestrife infestations in Vermont, and in many other states. However, while there is ample research documenting the effect of controlled beetle release on purple loosestrife, broader research regarding the overall ecological impacts of releasing beetles is lacking. Also, certain Agency lands, due to conservation easement restrictions, or other management concerns, may not be appropriate sites for releasing beetles. For these reasons, the Agency must establish a deliberate, coordinated approach for identifying and approving sites for the controlled release of beetles on ANR lands.

III. Policy:

"The Agency of Natural Resources supports the controlled release of beetles (*Galerucella* spp) to control purple loosestrife at approved sites on Agency lands. The Agency also supports and will work to facilitate supplemental monitoring and research on the ecological ramifications of introducing these insects through the Vermont Monitoring Cooperative, the University of Vermont, and other means as may be appropriate."

IV. Procedure:

Potential beetle release sites on Agency lands will be identified through the Water Quality Division's Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Program and will be submitted to the ANR State Lands Stewardship Team on an annual basis for its review and approval. In identifying potential release sites on state lands, the Water Quality Division will work closely with district lands stewardship staff to ensure consistency compatibility with long-range management planning objectives. The Chair of the ANR State Lands Stewardship Team shall notify district staff of ANR sites approved for the controlled release of beetles.

8/7/01
Effective Date

/s/
Scott Johnstone, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources