



## Media Release

July 7, 2011

P.O. Box 1065  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
(434) 971-1553  
www.wildvirginia.org

**Contact:** David Hannah, 434-971-1553, [dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto:dhannah@wildvirginia.org)  
Chris Bowlen, 540-289-6801

### **Non-Native Invasive Plants are a Large Presence in Local Wilderness Area**

New study documents invasive plants in the Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area of the George Washington National Forest

**Charlottesville, VA** – Wild Virginia recently released the results of a study conducted in 2010 to determine the presence of non-native invasive plants (NNIP) in the Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area of the George Washington National Forest (GWNF).

NNIP are a threat to biological diversity, capable of displacing native plants, altering natural communities, degrading or eliminating some types of wildlife habitat, and sometimes posing a threat to rare plants. "Many people feel that remote sites like wilderness areas are not prone to invasion by non-native plants" states Wild Virginia's Conservation Director, David Hannah. "Our survey shows that is not always the case though. Non-native invasive plants are so pervasive across the landscape, and many of them are transported so easily, that they can show up almost anywhere."

Very few areas in the GWNF, and none of the six wilderness areas, had been formally surveyed for the presence of NNIP prior to this project. Roughly 29 miles of trails and streams in the wilderness area were surveyed during the growing season of 2010. Five NNIP were observed in Ramsey's Draft. In order of abundance, they are: Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), and autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*).

Several other NNIP were observed at three other areas surveyed in or near the wilderness area - Mountain House picnic area, Confederate Breastworks, and Sexton Cabin. The NNIP include garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), spotted knapweed (*Centaurea biebersteinii*), wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*), crown vetch (*Coronilla varia*), ladysthumb (*Polygonum persicaria*), and motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*). It is likely that other NNIP occur in the area as well but were not observed during the survey. The southern section of Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area, nearest the Mountain House picnic area and US Route 250, was the most heavily impacted area.

A work day was conducted in March of 2011, with tremendous volunteer assistance from the Green Team at Mary Baldwin College. Chris Bowlen, a member of Wild Virginia's Board of Directors, organized and supervised the efforts. She appreciated the energy and enthusiasm the students displayed in removing a small patch of garlic mustard. "The garlic mustard pull was very targeted because no garlic mustard was found in the wilderness area during the survey. That it was found along the trail of the southern boundary of the wilderness made it a good candidate for removal, as it was only a matter of time before it spread into the wilderness area."

**Protecting Your Favorite Wild Places**

*Printed on 100% Post Consumer Recycled Paper*

A project report and general information brochure about NNIP are available on the Wild Virginia website, [www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org). Wild Virginia collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service in planning the project, and is very grateful to the National Forest Foundation, the Agua Fund, and an anonymous foundation for funding the work.

Wild Virginia is a grassroots non-profit organization that works to ensure the ecological integrity of Virginia's National Forests and believes that their highest benefit is to provide a source and a legacy of clean drinking water, clean air, biological diversity, wilderness, and recreational opportunities. For more information on Wild Virginia, contact David Hannah at 434-971-1553, [dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto:dhannah@wildvirginia.org), or visit the Wild Virginia website at [www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org).

###