

OUR PARTNERS IN HABITAT RESTORATION



Minister's Award for **Environmental Excellence**

Honourable Mention for Environmental Achievement, 2013

In 2009, members of the Port Franks Beach Homeowners Association and the Windsor Park Association became concerned when monoculture stands of non-native invasive *Phragmites australis* (European Common Reed) appeared on the Port Franks beach and in the watersheds flowing to Lake Huron (Ausable River and Mud Creek). The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group (LSPCG) was created as a result of this concern.

A group of dedicated volunteers, LSPCG is committed to working together with other organizations and private landowners to restore wetland habitat and beaches and control invasive *Phragmites*. As of October 2014, control efforts have been initiated on over 200 acres in Lambton Shores.

Members of Council for the Municipality of Lambton Shores and staff have supported our efforts, including our request to hire a wetland ecologist to create a Management Plan for the Municipality and have provided partial funding for our remediation projects and other initiatives.

The Management Plan can be viewed at: www.lambtonshores.ca.

For further information, visit
<http://www.opwg.ca/>
or contact
lspcg2014@gmail.com

INVASIVE

Phragmites australis

(European Common Reed)



LAMBTON SHORES
PHRAGMITES
COMMUNITY GROUP



Effects of Invasive *Phragmites australis*

Loss of biodiversity and species richness:

Phragmites causes a decrease in biodiversity by developing into monoculture stands which crowd out native vegetation and wildlife.

Loss of habitat:

Monoculture stands result in a decrease in available natural habitat and food supply for various wildlife species, which may include Species at Risk. *Phragmites* stalks are rigid and tough, and do not allow for wildlife or humans to easily navigate through a stand.

Changes in hydrology:

Phragmites produces a substantial amount of dead stocks which accumulate with time. This slowly decomposing material can interrupt surface and shallow groundwater flows in coastal areas, favouring its growth.

Changes in nutrient cycling:

Phragmites stalks are made of a very inflexible structural material which breaks down very slowly, leaving a high proportion of recalcitrant biomass (carbon) in the standing dead stalks.

Increased fire hazards:

The high percentage of dead stalks within a stand are dry and combustible, increasing the risk of fires.

Economic and social impacts:

Phragmites can have many negative effects on economic and social issues. Effects on agriculture and crops can lead to economic losses, while monoculture stands can affect property values, recreation and raise aesthetic concerns.

***Phragmites* has no natural predator but control can be accomplished with a well-planned approach.**

Ongoing Projects in Lambton Shores:

- Port Franks • Grand Bend • Ipperwash
- Lake Valley Grove/Sunnidale • Pine Tree Estates
- A Provincially Significant Coastal Meadow Wetland
 - Municipal and County Roadsides

Phragmites australis (frag-MY-teez) is an alien, invasive plant with origins in Europe and Asia. *Phragmites* has recently found its way to some of Lake Huron's beaches raising much concern over its potential effects on the coastal environment.

Invasive *Phragmites* creates tall, dense stands of grass which degrade coastal areas and wetlands by crowding out native plants and animals, blocking shoreline views, reducing access for swimming, fishing and hunting and, in addition, can create fire hazards from the build-up of dry plant material. *Phragmites* typically grows on coastal beaches and wetlands, roadside ditches and other low, wet areas, although occasionally it has been found to grow in dry areas.

Phragmites typically colonizes a new area from seeds or small fragments of rhizomes (underground stems), dispersed by water, animals, machinery and humans. Once established, new stems grow from the underground rhizomes and the plant begins to spread. During the growing season, rhizomes spread horizontally in all directions and, when fragmented, readily develop into new plants.

Seeds – as well as rhizomes broken by natural actions such as waves, or human actions such as dredging, tilling or operating motorized vehicles along beaches – quickly spread and take root in new locations. Rapid expansion is promoted by disturbances that give this invasive plant a competitive edge, including soil disturbance and the clearing of vegetation.