



STERLING HEIGHTS
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Teacher of the
Year

Page » A2



MEMPHIS
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Township officer
to take over police
department

Page » B1

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Communities receive grants of \$254,000 to control invasive species

By SEAN DELANEY

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As part of a statewide initiative to combat invasive species such as phragmites australis, Shelby Township and Washington Township were part of a group of government agencies awarded approximately \$254,000 by the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program.

As a founding member of the Lake St. Clair Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), Shelby Township and Washington Township are two of approximately 25 local, county, state, and federal government agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations, working to control invasive plant species in and around Lake St. Clair with a focus on protecting natural resources such as wetlands, woodlands, uplands and the St. Clair River delta.

“Phragmites is spreading throughout Shelby Township and is now pervasive along our trails and in township parks,” Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis said. “Shelby Township actively partners in the Lake St. Clair CISMA to be part of a regional response to reduce the spread of invasive species.

“These efforts include a team approach where all members contribute to a plan of attack to

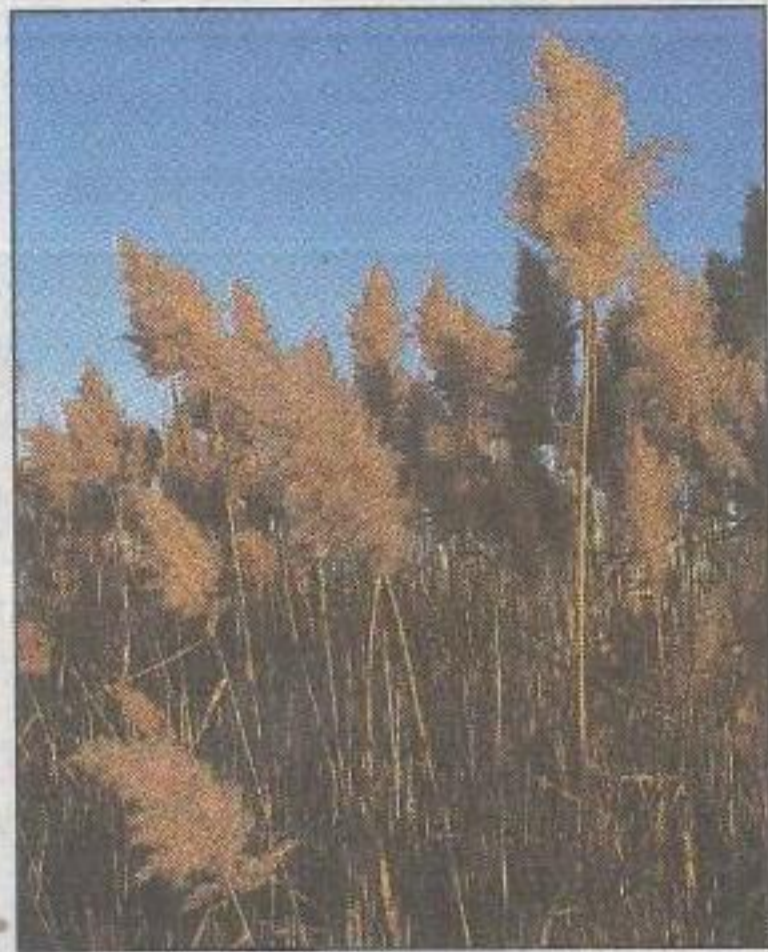


PHOTO COURTESY OF SHELBY TOWNSHIP

As part of a statewide initiative to combat invasive species such as phragmites australis, Shelby Township and Washington Township were part of a group of government agencies awarded approximately \$254,000 by the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program.

eradicate these invaders and restore the natural beauty of our township and community.”

Specifically, Shelby Township and Washington Township are targeted as “focused management areas” in the current Lake St. Clair CISMA management strategy. That entails having funding set aside for herbicidal treatments in the townships as well as the use of funds to help map other areas of need through a partnership with Oakland University.

“We have some of the best public parks in all of Michigan with

Grant

FROM PAGE A1

more than 1,300 acres of developed parkland," Shelby Township Parks, Recreation and Maintenance

Director Joe Youngblood said. "Unfortunately, some of that is being threatened by these invasive plants, so it is exciting to know we are getting some aid in this fight."

Shelby Township became involved with forming the

Lake St. Clair CISMA after township engineer Fazal Kahn and Associates worked with Brad Bates, deputy supervisor, to secure grant money for phragmites management in Gene Shepherd Park. Those efforts led to the realization

that larger cooperatives, such as the Lake St. Clair CISMA, were better suited to receive funding for invasive species management.

Next was partnering with the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments to formalize the

Lake St. Clair CISMA and begin efforts to obtain funding such as the most recent award from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program.

Overall, the Lake St. Clair CISMA management strategy will monitor, map,

and/or treat more than 950 acres across several "focused management areas."

"These areas strategically leverage efforts to create a noticeable decline in the invasive species population," Stathakis said. "The objective is to keep FMAs free and clear of invasive species, build community awareness of solutions, and then move out to other areas."

According to Shelby Township officials, the Lake St. Clair CISMA is one of 19 projects in Michigan that recently received a total of \$3.6 million through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, a cooperative effort of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

"Invasive species pose significant risk to Michigan's world-class natural resources, and funding from this program is vital to our continued fight against these invaders," DNR Director Bill Moritz said. "These important grant dollars will aid our partners in their efforts to battle invasive species. Their hard work will go a long way toward protecting our natural resources, as well as the many recreational and economic opportunities tied to Michigan's woods and waters."

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