

Staff Report

Devens
Enterprise
Commission

Date: September 12, 2025

To: Devens Enterprise Commission

From: Neil Angus, Director

RE: Invasive Species Treatment Program Negative Determination

Owner: US Fish and Wildlife Service

Applicant: Friends of Woodlands and Waters

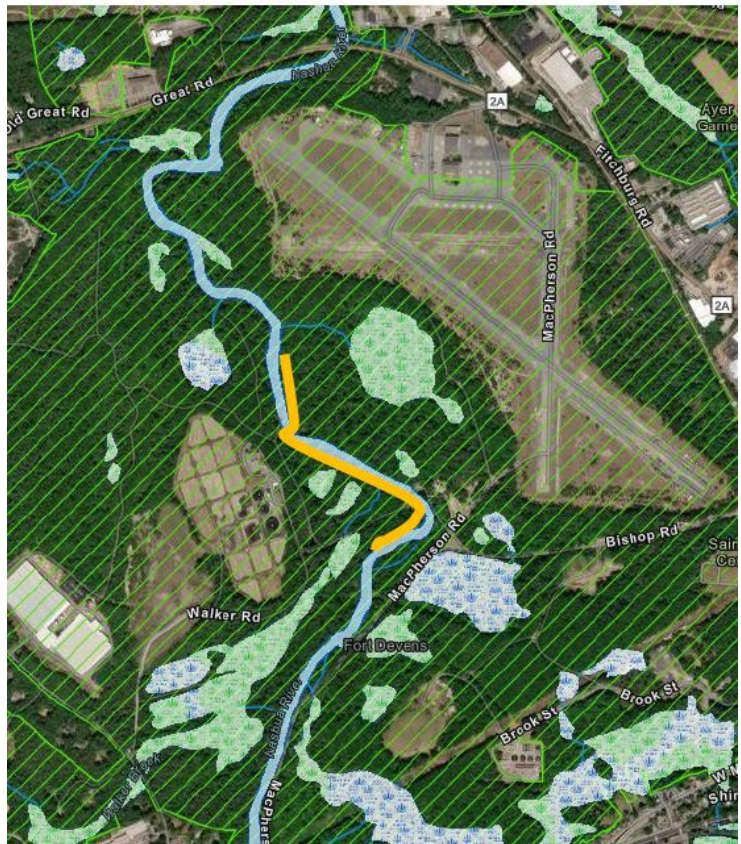
Location: Off of MacPherson Road along portions of Nashua River (Parcel ID 035.0-0399-0500.0)

Zoning: Open Space and Recreation, Aquifer Water Resources Protection Overlay District.

1. Premises and Proposed Project: The Applicant is proposing a chemical herbicide treatment program to address an invasive plant species that is overtaking the native vegetation along the bank of the Nashua River and threatening to destabilize the riverbank. The Friends of Woodlands and Waters is partnering with the USFWS, and Water & Wetland (professional consultants company) to treat Japanese Knotweed. The project will improve the habitat in the riparian zones in Devens on both the Ayer and Shirley sides of the Nashua River by managing invasive Japanese Knotweed with herbicide. This project is part of a regional effort led by other local conservation organizations north and south of the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge

USFWS are familiar with the work of Water and Wetlands and have used them for treatment of invasive plants in aquatic ecosystems. Following the proposed treatment, a summary will be provided by Water and Wetland including photos, notes, and recommendations specific to the treatment site. The area will be monitored to ensure that erosion does not become a problem. In time, once the Knotweed has been controlled, native plants will be installed to restore habitat and stabilize riverbanks.

The licensed applicator biologists will utilize both foliar application and hand wiping as appropriate based on the specific size and density of each stand, as well as non-target natives present. In the future cutting of Knotweed in June and / or direct stem injection may be potential alternative treatments. Foliar application methodology will utilize Rodeo, AquaPro, or AquaNeat (glyphosate), appropriate for aquatic areas, and will be paired with a non-ionic surfactant which acts as a sticking agent and increases uptake and penetration throughout the target invasive species. Selective application with low-volume backpack sprayers will ensure target species are properly treated. All plant material will be left in place. In low density areas near native species, they will hand wipe the herbicide to avoid impacting the native plants. Hand-wiping utilizes a hand-held weed wiping tool/sponge. Herbicide is applied directly to the surface of the leaves. In the future, stem injection, a process by which herbicide is directly injected into a plant's hollow cane, may be used since transfer of herbicide into the plant's root system is increased and there is less risk of non-target



plants being impacted. In 2025 this is not feasible with the current density of the stands, difficulty accessing the site, and resources available. This is a Limited Project that will be executed along the river bank and within wetland buffers but will not disturb the soils and only target Japanese Knotweed. The area is within Estimated Habitat for Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species and coordination with NHESP is underway. A Habitat Management Plan is being developed and submitted for review and approval by NHESP.

This work is very similar to work approved by the Groton Conservation Commission for a stretch of the Nashua just north of the proposed area. With the professional oversight, coupled with the partners involved (USFWS, Friends Group, Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council), Staff has no concerns with issuing a conditional Negative Determination of Applicability for this project.



2. Application and Process: The Applicant submitted a Level I Permit application package, including the application, Request for Determination of Applicability, project description and plan on September 5, 2025. The DEC Director reviewed the submittal and made a preliminary negative determination subject to the conditions listed in Section 4 of this report. In accordance with 974 CMR 4.06(6)(c), any determination by the Director is valid only upon ratification by the DEC at a public meeting. Legal notice of this meeting was published in the Lowell Sun of September 9, 2025. No comments have been received.

3. Recommended Action: Once all issues have been discussed by the applicant, commission members, staff and the public, if the Commission is confident that the proposed activities will not negatively impact the adjacent wetland resource areas, the Commission should ratify the DEC Director's decision to issue a Negative Determination of Applicability subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the commencement of any activity, the Applicant shall submit a Habitat Management Plan to Natural Heritage for review and approval under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.
2. This approval is valid for 3 years. The Applicant will provide a report to the DEC after the first year summarizing the treatment efforts and effectiveness and provide any updates/adjustments for years 2 and 3. If there are substantial changes, the Applicant may need to submit a new RDA or NOI.
3. No ground disturbance is permitted as part of this approval. No fuels or fueling shall occur within 100 feet of the river or adjacent wetland areas.
4. All herbicides shall be applied by an MA licensed applicator. Chemicals shall be properly contained throughout the application process and no mixing or uncontained storage shall occur within 100 feet of wetland or watercourses. Herbicide concentration should be the lowest possible for effective treatment.
5. Precautions including standard best management practices for cleaning boats, equipment, and clothing, shall occur prior to arriving at the site. Spill and containment kits shall be available, especially when the motor and chemicals are used in and near water.

These conditions will ensure the proposed activity has no negative impact to the adjacent river and nearby wetland resource areas and minimal impact to endangered species habitat.

Attachments: Complete Application Package: https://www.devensec.com/meetings/RDA_Combined_Oxbow_Knotweed_Sept_2025.pdf