

June 29, 2012

Yellow flag iris sent packing

After two days of hard physical labour, patches of invasive yellow flag iris have been removed from Baikie Island Nature Reserve – but there's more to do to remove this pushy plant taking root in the Campbell River estuary.

A joint effort between City of Campbell River, Greenways Land Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada and , Coastal Invasive Plant Council staff was a first step to curb the spread of the plant, which had taken root on the west side of Baikie Island and was spreading rapidly.

Yellow flag iris is an aquatic plant that can grow in both saltwater and freshwater, spreading by seed and by underground rhizomes. It is listed as a noxious weed under the BC Weed Control Act.

“The invasive plant’s ability to form dense thickets displaces the natural variety of plants,” explains Lynn Wark, the City’s parks project supervisor. *“Whenever plant diversity in an area is reduced, the surrounding animal diversity dependent on those species is also reduced, so it’s very important to keep invasive species out of our newest nature reserve.”*

Over June 25 and 26, all of the yellow flag iris blooms were removed to prevent the next set of seeds and as many plants as possible were dug up by hand and removed from the estuary for proper disposal.

“The two-day collaborative effort included a discussion about how best to remove the remaining yellow flag iris infestation,” Wark adds.

Maintenance efforts at Baikie Island (which recently underwent a dramatic transformation from a previously industrialized site to a nature reserve) are ongoing to ensure new plantings are thriving and to remove invasive species threatening to overtake native vegetation.

Yellow flag iris was introduced to North America a century ago as an ornamental plant for its showy yellow blooms. It has spread into natural waterways across the continent. Residents are encouraged to refrain from planting yellow flag iris in yards and gardens to prevent the plant from spreading

City staff will continue to work with Greenways Land Trust, the Coastal Invasive Plant Council and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to address concerns around invasive species throughout the community.

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Photos:

Irvin Banman, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ernie Sellentin, project coordinator for the Coastal Invasive Plant Committee, discuss how to remove yellow flag iris from Baikie Island.

Ernie Sellentin, project coordinator for the Coastal Invasive Plant Committee, shows thick rhizomes that make the plant difficult to remove once established.