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For immediate release

Invasive Species Beware!
New Funding Expands Programs to Control Invasives in the Lower Hudson Valley

The Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management (LH-PRISM) has awarded contracts totaling $130,000 to help fight invasive species in our area. Seven counties — The Bronx, Dutchess, Putnam, Orange, Rockland, Ulster and Westchester — will benefit from this coordinated effort to survey, monitor and contain invasive terrestrial and aquatic plants.

Key to this effort is the creation of a BlockBuster Survey of invasive species, which will provide scientists with a baseline and help them understand how these plants are spreading and how we can better prevent their entry into new areas.

“Understanding current distribution is a critical step forward in getting a handle on these unwelcome plants,” says Dr. Linda Rohleder, program coordinator for the Lower Hudson PRISM. “The Lower Hudson Valley is a gateway for movement of invasives into the rest of New York State, and it’s important that monitoring and containment take place here.”

The goal of the Lower Hudson PRISM is to manage invasive species in the seven counties bordering the Lower Hudson River. There are eight PRISMs in New York State, funded through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and

charged with helping to prevent or minimize the harm caused by invasive species. PRISMs recruit and train volunteers, provide education and outreach, establish early detection monitoring networks and implement eradication and control efforts. Membership is open to individuals and organizations interested in invasive species issues and management. For more information, go to http://lhprism.org.

The funding includes three awards to the **Cornell Cooperative Extension offices of Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Ulster counties**. The first project will promote the BlockBuster Survey. Throughout the summer and fall, the Extension offices will join forces to recruit and train potential Citizen Scientists to map the current distribution and abundance (or absence) of 38 targeted species, including 27 terrestrials such as mile-a-minute weed, black swallowwort, wineberry, Oriental bittersweet and Japanese barberry; and twelve aquatics, including purple loosestrife, hydrilla and yellow iris.

The Lower Hudson Valley counties have been divided into 5km by 5km (about 3 x 3 mile) blocks. Once volunteers are trained in field identification, GPS and other skills, they will visit selected blocks to estimate the extent or absence of targeted invasive species and note new occurrences.

A second award funds a major information-coordination effort that will create a "go-to" source for information on invasive species. The Extension offices will synthesize a vast amount of data from accredited sources, including Cornell's research labs, and create teaching materials honed for our region. Target audiences will be the general public as well as professional landscapers, land managers and municipalities, as needed in each area. The educational materials will include presentations, story boards, flyers and other materials that can be used at public and professional meetings, farmers' markets, 4-H and county fairs, Scouting events, and other gathering places.

A third contract will engage the Cooperative Extension Office in Rockland to help develop a social media presence for the Lower Hudson PRISM to share information about invasives and to keep the public up to date on new developments, such as the occurrence of new invasives.

As part of the BlockBuster Survey, **The Ecological Research Institute** in Kingston, NY has been awarded funds for a project to design user-friendly survey methods that will enable citizen scientists to conduct formal surveys for invasive plants that are newly emerging, and to contribute their records to a regional effort

to track these species so that they can be eradicated before they become more widely established.

Three additional contracts will go to **Trillium Invasive Species Management, Inc.** Some of the funds will be used for continued management of the the invasive vine known as hardy kiwi in the Brinton Brook Audubon Sanctuary in the Town of Cortlandt, where a number of significant infestations were discovered in 2014. The project has been supported by Hudson National Golf Course and Consolidated Edison, who have committed to mitigating hardy kiwi infestations on their neighboring properties. Trillium ISM will also begin management of hardy kiwi in the town of Bedford, with widespread support from the town of Bedford, its Conservation Board, and private groups. The goal is to remove these populations through a concerted effort by Trillium ISM with local volunteers. In addition, Bedford 2020, a nationally-recognized organization dedicated to reducing Bedford's carbon footprint, will provide volunteers with vine-cutting tools for removal of hardy kiwi as well as other invasive vines, with the goal of stopping the destruction of native trees along the town's streets and highways. Trillium ISM, located in Esopus, will also continue a project to control the mile-a-minute vine. In partnership with Scenic Hudson, Trillium ISM will work to suppress a large infestation of the vine in Esopus and minimize the spread of this plant in our area.

Another award goes to **Hudson Highlands Land Trust** in Philipstown, NY, and the **Orange County Land Trust**, to create a regional phenological calendar. Phenology is the study of plant and animal life cycles and how they are influenced by climate and habitat. This practical tool will feature entries designed to provide people with clear, timely identification information and/or removal recommendations for invasive species and suggestions for native plants that can replace them. The calendar will be organized as an open-share Google Calendar layer available to the pubic as well as to PRISM members.

Hudsonia, located in Annandale-on-Hudson, in collaboration with **Rockland County's Cornell Cooperative Extension**, has been awarded funds to compile "Best Management Practices" for selected species. This will provide guidance for land owners who wish to manage invasive plants on their own properties without using chemical herbicides.

The New York Botanical Garden in The Bronx has been awarded funds to document the spread of an invasive plant, incised fumewort (*Corydalis incisa*), along the Bronx River in Westchester County. This newly emerging invasive is

highly aggressive, is dispersing rapidly, and has the potential to become a serious pest in gardens, forests, and wetlands in the region. NYBG, in partnership with the Westchester County Parks Department and iMapInvasives, an online mapping system, will systematically sample the length of the river, documenting the plant where it occurs, and share the results with local communities, natural resource managers, and policy makers, enabling them to make rapid and strategic decisions to manage this invasive species.

The Lower Hudson PRISM is also supporting projects to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species. **Hudson River Sloop Clearwater** located in Beacon, NY has been awarded funds for a multi-faceted program that will teach clean boating practices to local boaters and fisherman, promote citizen-science through volunteer early detection surveying of aquatic invasive species, and educate the public about the impacts that aquatic invasive species have on the Hudson River and its surrounding waterbodies.

One high priority aquatic invasive species is hydrilla recently found in the Croton River. Hydrilla is an aggressive plant that crowds out native vegetation and has a negative impact on the ecology of bodies of water as well as on their recreational use. **SOLitude Lake Management**, in Hackettstown, NJ, has been awarded funding for a GPS-referenced survey of aquatic plants in the Croton River that will target hydrilla. SOLitude will also monitor for hydrilla's hardy tubers, which can remain in sediment and continue to proliferate even after the plant has been successfully treated.

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Photo: CSears

Recent recipients of funds from the Lower Hudson PRISM.
Left to right: Erik Kiviat (Hudsonia), Jonathan Rosenthal (Ecological Research Institute), Matt Decker (Hudson Highlands Land Trust), Joyce Tomaselli (CCE Dutchess), Annie Christian-Reuter (CCE Rockland), Samantha M. Wood (CCE Rockland), Samantha Epstein (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater), Daniel Atha (NY Botanical Garden), Thomas Lewis (Trillium Invasive Species Management, Inc.). Not pictured: Chris Doyle of SOLitude Lake Management.