

Dear Middle School Science Students at The James and Grace Lee Boggs School,

My name is Jennie Braatz and I am a park ranger naturalist at the **Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge**. Detroit River IWR is an urban refuge because of how close we are to the city; there are a LOT of people who live close by. We are also the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America! That is because of how close we are to Canada and how closely we work with other conservationists across the border. It is always good to be friends with your neighbor isn't it? That way we can get more done together and learn from each other. We are not a very big refuge but we do have lots of small units of land that are close to the Detroit River and Lake Erie. Two of the most important things we do here are to protect small pockets of land that are special to wildlife and to connect people to nature.

Your teacher, Ms. Jacinda, has let me know that you are studying invasive species. She also let me know that you have visited areas near our refuge twice this year, once for a boat trip and again to observe migrating hawks. I am writing to ask for your help with one invasive species that we are struggling to control at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The species is called *Phragmites australis* but we often just call it phragmites. Phragmites is a tall reed that grows on our refuge. It grows very densely and the grasses can be very tall making it hard for other plants to get what they need to survive. A habitat with only Phragmites growing is also not suitable for many animals. Phragmites is hard to kill, too. Even if you pull it out or burn it, it will keep coming back. It often takes the application of chemicals called herbicides to really get rid of the plant.



The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is requesting your help with thinking of possible solutions to our problem with Phragmites. Your challenge is: research the species *Phragmites australis*, make a recommendation for the best way to get rid of it, and come up with a use for the reeds that are removed. The group with the best proposal will earn a special treat and a trip to the refuge.

I will be visiting the Boggs School on January 30th. On this day, I will listen to each group's proposal and give you feedback on your ideas. I will also select the winning proposal. I will be looking for proposals that show students researched the species and the issue. I will be paying close attention to the design solution your team creates. If the solution is realistic, affordable, and attractive to consumers, it might be selected!

Thank you for your help Boggs students!
Jennie Braatz