



VIRGINIA INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK 2026 MOBILIZES STATEWIDE ACTION

As the cost of invasive species rises to more than \$1 billion annually, communities work to stop the spread and key legislation gains momentum.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA, UNITED STATES, February 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Virginia Invasive Species Awareness Week (VISAW) runs February 21–28, 2026, bringing statewide attention to the growing economic, environmental and public health damage invasive species cause. Those impacts exceed \$1 billion each year in the Commonwealth, according to the Virginia Invasive Species Working Group.

Virginia's theme for VISAW, "Defending Our Health by Stopping the Spread," highlights the direct connection between invasive species and human and environmental well-being. Invasive plants, animals and pathogens increasingly threaten public health, food security, recreation, infrastructure and ecosystems across Virginia.

"Invasive species impact every community," said Rowena Zimmermann, director of the [Virginia Invasive Plant Coalition](#). "This year's theme underscores a powerful truth: Protecting our environment is directly tied to protecting health. VISAW 2026 is a rallying point, bringing partners together to advance real solutions." More than 95 nonprofits, state and local agencies, private contractors, volunteer organizations and farmers collaborate in VIPC to address the spread of invasive plants.

A Critical Moment for Action

Many of the most powerful solutions — such as early detection, rapid response, behavior-based prevention and collaboration across organizations — receive limited attention outside the professional field. VISAW fills the gap by connecting leaders from state, regional and local agencies, Tribal nations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, academic institutions and community groups around a unified message: We all have a role in preventing the spread.

That's a message that the [Loudon Invasive Removal Alliance](#) has taken to heart. "LIRA's mission is to spark a shift in how Loudoun thinks about invasive plants, turning awareness into everyday action," said Mike Littman, LIRA president. "By partnering with residents, local government, businesses and nonprofits across the county, we're helping people make sustainable planting and landscaping choices. We're proud that LIRA communities will host five volunteer events in support of Virginia Invasive Species Awareness Week."

Policymakers are also critical in setting Virginia up for long-term success. Four bills designed to curb the harms of invasive plants recently passed the first vote in the General Assembly and have crossed over to the opposite chamber:

HB 88 — managing roadside invasive plants — passed the House 98-0.

HB 109 — removing the commercial viability loophole — passed the House 96-2.

HB 388/SB 89 — helping local jurisdictions control invasive plants — passed the House 90-8 and passed the Senate 38-0.

SB 163 — allowing volunteers to assist with invasive plant control on state lands — passed the Senate 38-0.

Statewide Events Encourage Public Engagement

Throughout the week, VISAW 2026 spotlights key issues of invasives, including:

- Public health impacts, such as allergens, toxins and disease vectors
- Agricultural and economic damages affecting food systems and rural communities
- Aquatic invasive species threatening drinking water systems and fisheries
- Forest pests and pathogens increasing wildfire risk and reducing carbon storage
- Best practices for prevention and control

During VISAW, Virginians are invited to attend free webinars, share educational posts on social media, participate in local workdays and trainings, and highlight community successes. See the [VISAW Events Calendar](#) for dates, locations and events across the state.

About Blue Ridge PRISM

Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) is a nonprofit environmental organization committed to improving the health of our natural world for future generations. Founded in 2014 as Virginia's first Cooperative Weed Management Area, PRISM is the statewide leader in education and training on invasive plants. Our programs help restore forests and watersheds, protect native wildlife and habitat, steward healthy landscapes, and sustain the work through coalition building and effective policy. Learn more at blueridgeprism.org.

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Diana Kightlinger

Blue Ridge PRISM

+1 503-720-9243

diana@blueridgeprism.org

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