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Local news for Alaska's Emerald Isle

Weeds war is on in Kodiak

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If a certain weed has its way, Kodiak will turn orange before long.

Not if Blythe Brown, project coordinator, Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District has her way.

The weed is called orange hawkweed and it spreads fast, Brown said.

"I like to use the analogy of a wildfire when talking about orange hawkweed," Brown wrote in letter to the local media.

"Think of the city of Kodiak as the main body of the wildfire which sends out sparks to start new fires. We need to contain the main fire and put out the sparks before they get established. And we need to cool down the big fire so it stops sending out sparks," she said.

Alaska Gove. Sean Parnell got involved in the weed war too, declaring June 22-28 Invasive Weeds Awareness Week.



Peter J. Mladineo photo

Orange hawkweed grows in patches all over Kodiak and spread similarly to dandelions.

"Invasive weeds and agricultural pests spread aggressively and are easily transported on equipment and recreational vehicles not properly cleaned, contaminated forage and nursery stock. If not properly managed, weed infestations can result in agricultural crop

loss, clogged waterways, degraded salmon spawning habitat and displacing of migratory bird shelter and food sources," the Parnell proclamation said.

Part of stalling or stopping the growth of weeds requires knowledge of how the weed spreads.

The orange hawkweed "has dandelion-like seeds," Brown told the Mirror.

"All these pretty orange flowers are going to turn into fluffy seeds that will blow across the neighborhood," she said. "They'll stick to your boots. They'll stick to your dog. They'll

stick to your ATV. And you'll drive out the trail someplace and they'll fall off and become will become a new plant."

Hawkweed can turn a green meadow completely orange in a short order.

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Peter J. Mladineo photo

Blythe Brown of the Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District, a nonprofit, discusses removal of orange hawk-eye weeds from areas of Kodiak.

Weeds

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Brown said it's not too late to do something to stem its incursion into Kodiak.

She reports that while hawkweed has spread in Kodiak city, Port Lions and Ouzinkie, it has not spread in other places on the archipelago.

"We need to look at the places it is not — no hawkweed in Larsen Bay, no hawkweed in Akhiok, no

hawkweed in the wildflower meadow at Spruce Cape, no hawkweed on top of Pillar Mountain, no hawkweed at Saltery Cove," Brown wrote.

"I don't think we'll ever get rid of it completely here," she said, "but we do have the opportunity to contain it and control it."

Other weed-removal projects by KSWCD include Bohemian knotweed, oxeye

daisy, orange hawkweed and Canadian (or creeping) thistle.

Upcoming projects may target yellow toadflax and common tansy as well.

"For some of the species it's important to try to eradicate them now while we just have a few of the infestation locations," she said.

For instance, Canadian thistle is only present in

roughly 20 locations around the island and can be wiped out.

"If anybody finds any that they think may not be known by us, please contact us. We have the opportunity to become Canadian thistle-free in Kodiak, unlike down below in the Lower 48," Brown said.

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