

Invasive European bird cherry control project – Chester Greenbelt - Rogers Park 2015

Project background:

Also known as the Mayday tree, European bird cherry tree (*Prunus padus*) is an ornamental tree from northern Europe and Asia that has escaped cultivation and now dominates much of the forest along Chester and Campbell Creeks. The tree produces prolific seeds, which are spread to new areas by birds. The tree also spreads vegetatively (cut branches and roots will sprout) and trees that are cut down will actively sucker from their stumps and roots.

European bird cherry trees invade new forested areas and crowd out native shrubs and trees, such as willow and birch that moose and other animals depend on for food. Several areas of the Chester Creek greenbelt are dense, single species monocultures of bird cherry and this tree is rapidly spreading both in the Chester Creek greenbelt and to new areas of the Anchorage bowl.

Project Summary:

A 2010 ecological study by the UAA Natural Heritage Program titled “Bird cherry distribution, demography, and reproductive biology along the Chester and Campbell Creek Trails” recommended that the Municipality of Anchorage begin management with herbicide to control mature, fruit producing trees along the trail systems. Herbicide is necessary, because mere cutting stimulates additional growth and spread. The bird cherry seeds are only viable for 1-3 years, so if the mature trees are culled, we can slow and begin to reverse the rapid spread of this invasive tree.

Project Area:

Chester Creek Greenbelt in the Rogers Park neighborhood from the Seward Highway to Maplewood trail connector – forested areas south of the paved trail.

Project Timing:

(Mid-May to late July) while this section of the Chester Creek Trail is closed to the public for resurfacing.

Project Methods:

Mature, fruit producing European bird cherry trees will be treated via basal bark spray (lower portions of their bark will be sprayed with a backpack sprayer) with Garlon 4 Ultra. Trees will be left to die in place. Hazard and unsightly trees are planned for removal. Spruce and other native species will be planted in the fall (community volunteers needed).

Project Lead and Contact:

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Forested areas south of trail - Seward Hwy to Maplewood

