



What You Need to Know About Invasive Species Removal

Keep your environment, community, and organization safe

Invasive species, both plants and animals, can change or severely disrupt the environments they inhabit. Sometimes invasive species move to new environments on their own, but more often, invasive organisms are transferred to new locations by humans, either intentionally or through careless action. While non-native species don't always survive their new environments, some do and thus "invade," wreaking havoc on the existing ecosystem. Today, we will focus on invasive plants, which can crowd out native growth, in turn affecting wildlife by limiting their food source and space to live. Invasive species may also bring secondary problems such as disease that accelerate the damage they are causing to their new surroundings.

Land trusts and conservancies may take action to remove invasive species either manually or using chemical applications. Regardless of method, the process of removing invasive species carries risks and exposures for your organization.

Chemical Application Risks

Herbicide sprays are a common choice to combat invasive plants. Some species may require multiple chemicals or a variety of techniques to inhibit regrowth. Spot treatments and backpack spraying are common, but more widespread problems may require larger scale solutions.

Depending on the specific method, type, and amount of chemical being stored, transported, or deployed, a conservancy could have pollution liability exposure—risks related to spillage and leaks requiring soil remediation, overspray causing harm to neighboring properties and unintended plant/tree targets, or even bodily injury to third parties due to contact with the chemicals, resulting in skin or eye irritation, allergic reactions, or other types of illness.

Manual Removal Risks

Manual invasive plant removal does not carry the pollution risk associated with herbicide/pesticide application. However, there are other exposures to consider. Workers may use their hands to pull new growth out by the roots, or they may use small hand tools to cut vines at the bases of trees or destroy seedlings and other small plants. Other times, there may be more extensive labor involving chainsaws or other power tools to girdle invasive trees, for example.

As with any other type of outdoor work, there are varying degrees of risk for workers that are tied to several factors, including how strenuous the job is, the age of the worker, the type of equipment involved, and the conditions under which they are working (including terrain and weather conditions). Staff and volunteers can suffer cuts and bruises, dermatological reactions, strained/pulled muscles, tick bites, or any of the other injuries common to outdoor manual labor.

Contractor Risks

If a land trust doesn't have a properly trained employee or volunteer, they can hire independent contractors for either manual invasive removal work or chemical application. The non-profit, however, must ensure the contractor has proper licensure (where applicable or required) and should always ask for proof of insurance, with the non-profit named as an additional insured. If the contractor is not properly insured, the non-profit is potentially liable in the event of an accident.

Insurance Solutions

For any land trust or conservancy engaged in chemical application, pollution liability should be a priority conversation. Pollution exclusions are standard on most general liability policies, so the possibility of causing property damage or bodily injury to third parties should be assessed and separate pollution liability coverage purchased if necessary.

For manual removal, the exposures are more easily covered by general liability (risk of harming others) and workers' compensation or volunteer accident insurance (risk of injury to your staff and volunteers).

Let Conserve-A-Nation® help you put a plan in place to ensure your conservancy is protected.

About Conserve-A-Nation

Founded in 1994, Alliant's Conserve-A-Nation Insurance Program is the leading insurance solution for land trusts and other 501(c)3 conservation organizations nationwide. Conserve-A-Nation is proud to be the endorsed insurance partner of the Land Trust Alliance. We work with 1,500 local, regional, and national non-profits across the country. Our team's sole focus lies on understanding and protecting our conservation mission. We are dedicated to understanding relevant and applicable liability protection statutes, we stay current on conservation industry trends, and we have deep experience with common risks and exposures that land trusts and other conservation non-profits face every day.

About Alliant Insurance Services

Alliant Insurance Services is one of the nation's leading and fastest growing distributors of diversified insurance products and services. In the face of increasing complexity, our approach is simple: bring on the best people and invest more deeply in the industries and clients we serve. We operate through a network of specialized national platforms and regional offices to offer a comprehensive portfolio of services to our clients. Our goal is to ensure that they get the most innovative products—and innovative thinking—in the industry.

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CONTACT

Meghan Mullee
Vice President

(703) 547-6292

MMullee@alliant.com

John Muha
Executive Vice President

(703) 623-2665

JMuha@alliant.com