

Meet Elizabeth Spinney

Invasive Plant Coordinator

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

What is your job at the Agency?

I joined ANR in 2014 as the [Invasive Plant Coordinator](#) for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. I work with communities, organizations, and even with other state agencies to provide information about the impact of invasive terrestrial plants, and connect those people to resources to take action.

How did you get here?

My background is in environmental science, GIS, marine biology, and estuarine ecology. I studied in Maine for a B.S. and M.S., spending my summers knee deep in marshes along a river system in mid-coast Maine. After grad school, my partner and I moved to Vermont for employment. One spring morning shortly after moving here, I was walking through the woods and found a sea of white trillium gently bending under a breeze blowing off Lake Champlain. I fell for Vermont pretty hard!



What motivates you in your work at ANR?

My motivation is sharing my passion of the natural world with anyone who will listen. When I can have a conversation with someone, show them what inspires me about the woods and plants, and see them look beyond “all that green” and find a personal connection, I have a good day.

Do you have a career highlight you can share?

Before taking this position, I worked on the Habitat Restoration Crew out of the Rutland Office. In the two seasons I was involved in their outreach efforts, we saw 850 volunteers come to State Parks. The volunteers donated over 4,000 hours of time to learn about invasive plants and help remove them, protecting hundreds of acres of land. Many of these volunteers are learning about plant identification, conservation, and the importance of invasive plant control for the first time. I’m incredibly proud of the program and the people involved. They are truly doing great work.

If someone wanted to get into your field of work, what advice would you give them?

If there was something I wish I’d taken seriously sooner, it would be my writing and communication skills. Hard science and critical thinking are important components to conservation work. But I’ve found it essential to share that passion and knowledge, to enact change.

Of course, you're more than just your job title! Tell us what you "geek out" on when you're not preventing the spread of invasive species.

When I'm not woodcarving, crocheting, grant writing, birding, or exploring Vermont, you will probably find me learning new recipes or searching out new cuisines. This summer, I hope to explore sour dough breads, so if anyone has a mother starter, contact me!

It seems like everyone at ANR is enthusiastic about the environment. What's your favorite Vermont season and why?

I grew up in DownEast Maine, on an island, where an enveloping fog often embraces the granite coastline. Vermont is now my home, but I do enjoy moments that remind me of my island. In the early spring, just as the air gets warmer, and the ground is thawed but still cool, pockets of fog emerge. I now delight in these misty evenings by searching for our amphibian neighbors whose spring movement occurs around the same time.