

Laura Van Riper

Terrestrial Invasive Species Program Coordinator
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Laura Van Riper is the Terrestrial Invasive Species Program Coordinator for the Invasive Species Program at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). At the DNR, she leads internal efforts to increase invasive species prevention and management among DNR staff. She works on invasive species prevention, early detection and rapid response, and management both within the DNR and with outside organizations. Recently, as more information has become available about the potential impacts of jumping worms (*Amyntas* and *Metaphire* species) in Minnesota, she has taken on a leadership role in outreach, research coordination, and policy development on these species.

Laura had the opportunity to be involved in the initial development and implementation of the *PlayCleanGo: Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks* outreach campaign. This campaign provides consistent messaging and resources for invasive species outreach. This program has grown from initial development in Minnesota and now includes hundreds of partner organizations covering both the US and Canada.

In her position at the DNR, Laura has been involved with outside organizations. She has worked with the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) since 2010 and has served in a variety of leadership positions. Their mission is to provide leadership to prevent the spread and reduce the harmful impacts of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species to Minnesota. MISAC pulls together people from agencies, nonprofits, industry, and more. Laura worked with the Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN) which is an important organization for coordination among Midwestern states, especially on issues such as sharing information on plant risk assessment processes and outcomes.

Before working for the DNR, Laura earned a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Minnesota. Her research focused on the impacts of invasive yellow sweetclover on two habitat types at Badlands National Park in South Dakota. As a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Minnesota, she focused on garlic mustard ecology in preparation for the possible release of biological control insects for this species.