



**Northwest**  
INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL



# NWIPC: The Big Pig 2013 Final Paper

Bringing Education and  
Awareness to the 6<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Big Pig Bike Fest

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## **The NWIPC Would Like to Thank the Following for their Contributions:**

- Spectra Energy
- Canadian Forest Products
- Janine Dougall from the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
- The Village of Burns Lake
- Ruckus
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Pig Bike Fest

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## Introduction

August 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the Northwest Invasive Plant Council traveled to Burns Lake, BC to participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Pig Bike Fest. This event attracts riders from all over the province to participate in 3 days of bike events including: kid's events, downhill, jump jam, pump track, a relay and a grueling 70 km cross country race dubbed Dante's Inferno. Bike riders of all ages, abilities and styles gather at Kager Lake for a weekend of fun on the awesome trails maintained by the Burns Lake Mountain Biking Association. Upon learning about the Big Pig the NWIPC approached the coordinators to see if there was an interest in having a display and wash station. The Big Pig eagerly invited the NWIPC to the event. The NWIPC contributed a bike washing station for riders to not only clean the mud and dirt off their bikes, but also any invasive plants or seeds they may have picked up on the trail.

## Goal

Recreationists of all types venture into new areas and ecosystems bringing with them the threat of introducing new invasive species. With increasing accessibility to the wilderness recreationists need to become aware of the hazards involved in the spread of invasive plants. Through education and awareness those venturing into the outdoors can learn to spot and prevent the spread of invasive species. The NWIPC's goal in participating in the Big Pig Bike Fest was to educate bike riders on how invasive plants can be spread through their activities and bring awareness to the impacts that invasive plants can have on the environment. The NWIPC set up a wash station to show riders firsthand how simple it is to prevent the spread of invasive plants and to teach riders about the importance of taking these easy steps to protect the environment they love exploring.

## The Big Pig

### The Wash Station



Figure 1: Frame and Catchment Pit

The first step in preparing for the Big Pig was to physically set up the wash station. The Village of Burns Lake kindly let the NWIPC borrow a 400 gallon tank of water on a trailer to haul to the event. This trailer was towed to Kager Lake, a 10 minute drive out of Burns Lake BC, where all the activities took place. The wash station was set up on a wooden frame and a catchment pit was dug around the frame to allow the water and possible plant material to drain into. The frame was previously built for washing quads and was originally quite large. The NWIPC hauled one section of the frame to Burns Lake which was the perfect size for bikes. The coordinators of the Big Pig selected a spot for the wash station directly beside the area where all the activities were to start and end. The wash station and NWIPC display were easily seen by everyone participating or watching the event. A pressure washer was connected to the

water tank and flagging was placed around the wash station to clearly mark it. At the end of the event the wooden frame and flagging were removed and the catchment pit filled in to burry any possible invasive plants picked up on the trails.

## Signage

Properly designed signs played a key factor in communicating the use of the wash station. It was important for dirty bikes to enter one way into the wash station and clean bikes to exit through the other to ensure that if any invasive plants had been picked up on the trails they were not being taken out of the wash station. “Enter” and “Exit” signs were made to clearly mark the way the station was to operate and arrows were printed showing riders what way to move through the station. All signs were laminated in an effort to make them not only durable (it rained for a good portion of the 3 day event), but also reusable.

Two larger signs were also made and laminated: one with directions on how to use the wash station and another with the heading “Why Wash?” telling users why it is so important to wash bikes before and after recreational activities. These two large signs were displayed on a sandwich board so people wanting to use the wash station could read them while they were waiting. A large poster was also made thanking the Big Pig, Ruckus, Spectra Energy and Canadian Forest Products for their donations.



Figure 2: Wash Station with Signs

# Bike Wash Station

## How To Use the Bike Wash Station:

1. Follow the signs to ENTER into the wash station
2. Use the pressure washer to wash bike making sure to :
  - Wash off all soil and organic matter
  - Check tire tread for plant material
  - Remove any plant matter stuck to bike parts (for example: twigs in the chain)
3. Once bike is clean follow signage to EXIT the wash station



# WHY WASH?

- **Bikes travel down trails through different ecosystems and terrain**
- **Invasive seeds and plants easily attach to bikes and are transported to new places sometimes hundreds of kilometers away**
- **Invasive plants can damage ecosystems and even become a barrier to recreationists (like bikers!)**
- **Washing bikes before and after use prevents the spread of invasive plants**





## The NWIPC Display

The NWIPC display was set up next to the wash station. Setting up the display directly beside the wash station meant the NWIPC was able to talk to people waiting in line to wash their bikes and engage family and friends spectating the event. The Big Pig is a very community based event and the NWIPC was fortunate to speak to everyone from children to seniors over the course of the weekend. An effort was made to connect the importance of bike washing to invasive plants so that the correlation was easily understood by the public.



Figure 3: NWIPC Display and Wash Station

## Prizes

The NWIPC asked David Strahl (an avid mountain biker and Industrial Forestry Services employee) to choose prizes that would be of value to the biking population. This brought people to the display and got them interacting with the NWIPC about invasive plants. Kneepads and gloves were purchased from Ruckus, a locally owned and operated ski, board and bike shop in Prince George, as a first place draw prize and handle bar grips for the second place draw. Ruckus also kindly donated 7 biking DVDs, Ruckus water bottles, and Ruckus stickers to give away. Each prize was wrapped in ribbon and attached to an info booklet about bikes and invasive plants with an NWIPC business card. In order to enter into the draw participants had to check the invasive plants off their ballot and not the native plants, which was a great way to talk to people about invasive species and have them interacting with the display. The prizes purchased were an excellent selection and riders were eager to get their name into the draw for a chance to win them.

## Budget

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Cost \$</b>
Pressure Washers	Previously Donated by Spectra Energy
Frame	Previously Donated by Canadian Forest Products
Prizes	\$199.92
Laminating	\$15.05
Flagging	\$2.81
Transportation @ \$0.47/km	\$260.66
Water Tank and Gas Pressure Washer	In Kind from the Village of Burns Lake
Accommodation and Meals	\$256.82
Fuel for the Pressure Washer	\$2.92
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$738.18</b>

## Challenges

### Organization

Organization was a challenge for preparing for the Big Pig. With multiple employees working on the event among other projects it was sometimes difficult to understand what did and did not have to be done. A work plan was made, however keeping it up to date between different people was not always easy due to everyone's busy schedules and some confusion did arise. In the end the organization of the event was left to one employee and this made things less complicated.

### Gaining Access to Water

One of the biggest challenges facing the NWIPC's participation at the Big Pig was access to water for the wash stations. Kager Lake was not going to be simple to pump out of due to: a short time frame to acquire permits, the location of the lake, and concerns over public opinion about using the lake water (there are quite a few camp sites on the lake and the pump may not have been kindly received). Fortunately in a last minute rush the Village of Burns Lake lent the NWIPC a 400 gallon water tank and a gas powered pressure washer on a trailer to take up to the event.

## The Pressure Washers

The NWIPC owns 2 electric pressure washers with low pressure specifically for the wash stations. The Big Pig provided access to a generator that they had on location that provided more than enough power for their purposes and to operate the pressure washers. Unfortunately, it was soon discovered that there was not enough top pressure from the water tank to push the water through the electric pressure washers and the pressure washers were only sucking in air. However, the Village of Burns Lake had provided a gas pressure washer with the water tank that contained a low pressure setting and nozzle attachment. This pressure washer was quite a bit louder, but ended up being an excellent alternative

## Volunteers

Volunteers were difficult to come by for the Big Pig. An email was sent out to all Burns Lake contacts before the event inviting them to volunteer, but the NWIPC only got one response. Most riders were able to wash their bikes themselves, but there were also a lot of children at the event who needed help washing their bikes so a few more volunteers would have been helpful. Fortunately the event was not overly busy so Shelby Longstaff and Austin Roberts (who volunteered for the event) were able to watch the booth and assist with the wash stations. There were also plenty of helping hands around the Big Pig to assist with placement of the washing frame and the filling in of the catchment pit (a Big Pig volunteer kindly offered to use his excavator the day after the bike fest to fill in the catchment pit saving a lot of time and shoveling).

## Timing

The Big Pig events were always extremely busy, with lots of riders participating in every race. However, this also meant there were almost no bikes to be washed during the events. On Sunday Dante's Inferno took place, a 70 km cross country race that started at 8 am. Overlapping with the second half of this event was the Whilbur's Wheelay relay event. Both of these events were the final rides of the weekend and ended quite near to each other. This meant that the wash station was fairly slow while everyone was biking (other than washing a downhill biker here or there) and then received a giant rush after the race just before everyone was packing up to head home. Nonetheless, everyone was very patient and was so happy to have access to the wash station that the giant line up turned into a giant gathering of talking, laughing cyclists.

## The Weather

The last challenge that the NWIPC faced was the weather. It was rainy and windy for a majority of the weekend. There were tents flying (thankfully not the NWIPC one!) and the rain came pouring down. The NWIPC display kept being blown over and the rain was blowing so sideways that everything was completely soaked. A majority of the brochures had to be packed up because they were wet and flying all over the venue, which unfortunately meant a less informative display. People coming to take shelter under the NWIPC tent did get a chance to talk about invasive plants with volunteers and learn about the transportation of invasive plants through recreation so there was a slight plus side to the terrible storm.

## Suggestions

The Big Pig required a lot of coordination and planning to ensure that everything ran smoothly. The following suggestions would help to make the process simpler:

- If possible have one person in charge of planning for the event. That person would develop a work plan and maintain it. The individual in charge of the event could then source out the portions they need help with and would ensure that those portions are being completed. This can be difficult due to everyone's busy schedules, but would hopefully reduce confusion overall.
- The search for water played a key role in preparing for this event. Before anything else this factor needed to be completed. Thankfully due to Andrea Eastham's connections water was found last minute, but in the future this is one of the first things that must to be completed to have a wash station.
- Purchasing a more permanent type of flagging and posts would be reusable and make set up easier. The ground was quite hard and rocky so putting stakes into the ground to hold the flagging for the wash station was difficult and they often fell over. Posts that stand on their own would be excellent. Getting NWIPC flagging made would also add an extra visual component to the station (Shelby Longstaff is currently awaiting a quote on custom NWIPC flagging).
- Try to contact volunteers in several different ways: email, phone, and via social media. Encourage them to come out and help even for a short amount of time.
- Use social media to its full potential. In the weeks leading up to the event post and tweet about it, get people excited! Encourage people to "share" and "retweet" the event. Call for volunteers using social media.

## Outcomes and Conclusion

Despite some challenges the NWIPC's participation in the Big Pig Bike Fest was a huge success. The wash station went through 350 gallons of water and washed over 100 bikes. The NWIPC was able to talk to so many different people and countless individuals were shocked to learn about the impact that bikes can have in the transportation of invasive plants. There was interest from several different riders to have the bike wash station brought to their future events that would be excellent for spreading the word and not the weeds. The coordinators of the Big Pig and members of the Burns Lake Mountain Biking Association liked the bike wash so much that they asked if they could keep it! The bike wash unfortunately had to be brought back to Prince George, and sent off with the Caribou Regional District for the BC Annual Quad Jamboree, but the Big Pig coordinators expressed interests in having the NWIPC wash station as a feature in future bike fests. The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Pig Bike Fest was a superb use of the wash stations and a great promotion of the NWIPC. It educated the public on the importance of preventing the spread of invasive plants and brought awareness to many different types of riders.

## Pictures from the Big Pig 2013



The Truck and Tank all Loaded



Shelby Longstaff Digging the Cathment Pit.



Downhill Riders Washing the Mud Off.



Austin Roberts Hard At Work Washing Bikes.



Having Fun Washing Bikes.



Austin Roberts and Coeey Taking Care of the Display.