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[«--back to story](#)

Schumer says he'll seek more money to fight invasives

By NATHAN BROWN, Enterprise Staff Writer

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TUPPER LAKE - Although many of the more harmful invasive species, such as the emerald ash borer and the Asian longhorned beetle, haven't been found in the Adirondacks, they are believed to be spreading through the state.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer said on Thursday afternoon he will push for funding for his four-point plan to limit the spread of invasives and stop them before they get here.

"A stitch in time saves nine," Schumer said at The Wild Center.

Schumer said he will push to raise funding for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service by \$35 million to combat the Asian longhorned beetle and \$39.7 million for the ash borer. Schumer said federal help is needed to combat these pests, due to the limited resources of local governments and private groups to deal with them.

Schumer also said he would push for \$3.1 million in stimulus for the state Department of Environmental Conservation to fight the ash borer, and \$2.5 million more for the DEC to run educational programs to limit the spread of invasives.

"(Education) really stops these things," Schumer said. "People who love the outdoors care about it; they're willing to be educated."

These programs educate people on things such as not moving firewood from areas infected with these wood-boring pests.

Finally, Schumer said, funding for the Interagency Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, which coordinates federal responses to invasive aquatic pests, should be raised to \$20.3 million, from its current level of \$5.3 million.

"It costs literally pennies in the federal scheme of things, and it will save us millions," Schumer said of his plan.

Hilary Smith, of Saranac Lake, director of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, said invasive species are "on the rise and rapidly accelerating." She and Schumer mentioned several reasons for the faster spread, including the increase in commerce over farther distances and climate change, which allows invasives that need warmer climates to move farther north.

Smith said her program has more than 300 volunteers, who have surveyed more than 200 lakes for invasive plants, and she also spoke out about other efforts to map invasive species in the Adirondacks. For example, she said, volunteers have been tracking the spread of knotweed in the southwestern Adirondacks and garlic mustard in the Tri-Lakes area. They have also been working with anglers on the AuSable River so they clean their gear and waders and thus prevent the spread of invasive aquatic plants.

"We have the technology and information (to deal with invasives)," Smith said. "We just need the additional resources."

"She's our Paul Revere of invasive species," Schumer said.

Contact Nathan Brown at (518) 891-2600 ext. 26 or nbrown@adirondackdailyenterprise.com.

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Sen. Charles Schumer speaks Thursday at The Wild Center in Tupper Lake. (Enterprise photo — Nathan Brown)