

Jumping Worm Presence Threatens Maine's Forests

In Maine, all earthworms are non-native. Our forests have developed without them since the time of glaciers, so when earthworms are present, negative outcomes can result. Some earthworms are considered helpful in managed places such as fields and gardens, but others are damaging even in those settings. Populations of the latter species, the invasive *Amyntas*, or jumping worms are expanding in the state's forests and there is now an effort to address this problem.

The Maine Forest Service and the Jumping Worm Work Group partners are seeking the help of woodland owners to identify locations of earthworms or signs of its damage. Earthworm activity can lead to faster nutrient cycling and eventual loss, depleting duff layers that hold nutrients and water and prevent soil erosion. The loss of forest duff also leads to fewer spring ephemeral plants in the understory and ruins the habitat needed for some salamanders, birds, and other wildlife species.

There are no proven management practices for reducing impacts of earthworms on forests once



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bait worms in the trash; monitoring tree nurseries for the presence of earthworms, and only using planting media sources known to be earthworm free.

Maine's Jumping Worm Work Group is led by Maine Bureau of Agriculture's State Horticulturist, Gary Fish, with members from the University of Maine. To learn more about jumping worms and to report any sighting of them or their impacts, visit the Maine jumping worm webpage. The link to the webpage is at www.mainewoodlandowners.org/forest-pests-disease.

they are introduced, so preventing the spread of all earthworms into forest settings is key to limiting their damage.

Prevention measures include cleaning soil from boots and equipment, including deeply treaded tires, before entering forested areas; disposing