

# **Invasive Plant Species Removal Program Preserves Local Native American Historic Sites**

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**ILLINOIS** - As the National Resources Conservation Service works to clear out invasive plant species, there's no telling what they could find.

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, offers a conservation planning and funding program that allows them to remove invasive species from private properties. Their goal is to conserve the area and avoid disrupting nature or historic sites.

“That’s what their object is, to get some funding to help offset the cost of cleaning that out,” Andy Schlichting, who works with NRCS, said. “But you have to protect all the natural resources that we have. You have to make sure that we’re not going to destroy anything.”

Locally, the NRCS is mostly concerned with protecting Native American artifacts and burial sites. Sarah Fisher, Illinois’s State Cultural Resource Specialist for NRCS, explained that this part of Illinois can be a “hotspot” because it’s near Cahokia Mounds.

The Cahokia people were a Native American tribe that was a part of the Illini, or the Illinois Confederation. The Illini consisted of 12 or 13 tribes in the Mississippi River Valley. To learn more about the Cahokia, including their displacement, you can visit Cahokia Mounds or click [here](#).

It’s not uncommon for archeologists to find Native American artifacts throughout the Midwest. [The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966](#) outlines steps that must be taken to preserve historic sites like this. The primary goal is to avoid the site so that nothing is destroyed.

“We’re just making sure that we’re not disturbing anything and everything’s protected,” Fisher explained. “We consider all federal projects in Illinois for cultural resources to make sure we’re following federal law.”

For the removal of invasive species, it isn’t too difficult; NRCS will simply work around the site. Other projects might require a redesign. But the main goal is to preserve and respect these found objects.

If you want to get involved with the NRCS program to remove invasive species from private properties across Illinois, you can visit [their website](#). To learn more about Native American tribes that once lived in the Riverbend region, the [Cahokia Mounds Historic Site](#) is a great place to start.