NEW ENGLAND NOTE

LEPIDIUM LATIFOLIUM (BRASSICACEAE): INVASIVE PERENNIAL PEPPERWEED OBSERVED IN RHODE ISLAND

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Native to Eurasia and thought to have been introduced to the United States approximately a century ago as a contaminant of beet seed (Young et al. 1997), perennial pepperweed (Lepidium latifolium L.) is an herbaceous perennial of the mustard family that has been characterized for decades as an aggressive invasive species throughout the western US (Svejcar 1997). Although the first confirmed US record of L. latifolium was nearly a century ago in Peabody, MA (Morse 1924), the species was considered rare in New England until Orth et al. (2006) systematically documented its widespread presence in the region, particularly along the northeastern coast of Massachusetts.

In both the western US and now in New England, Lepidium latifolium has proved to be an extremely successful invader of wetland and coastal habitats due to its tolerance of both high salinity (Blank and Young 1997) and extended periods of submergence (Chen et al. 2002). In tidal marshes, perennial pepperweed displaces native salt marsh species (Orth et al. 2006), the result of which has been large-scale invasions in the Great Marsh of Essex County, MA; the Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area; and along coastal New Hampshire (Elliman 2013).

Perennial pepperweed has been documented in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire (Gleason and Cronquist 1991; Fernald 1950; Haines 2011; Magee and Ahles 1999) and recently the species has spread into southern Maine (Elliman 2013; Barbara Grunden, New England Wild Flower Society Plant Conservation Volunteer Program, pers. comm.). Mehrhoff et. al. (2003) reported Lepidium latifolium growing inland, away from coastal areas, along the