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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Help Requested To Reduce Non-Native Plants

Bedford, IN – April 23, 2004. "Throughout southern Indiana, our native woodlands are threatened with plants from other parts of the world that are not only aggressive, but have few natural enemies," says Kirk Larson, Forest Botanist on the Hoosier National Forest. "Eventually these plants may crowd out many of the forest wildflowers and plants we value like ginseng and goldenseal."

These non-native plants may quickly take over and out-compete natural species. One of those invasive species is garlic mustard. "Right now, garlic mustard is blooming so it really stands out as easy to spot and seems to be everywhere," notes Larson. The plant can be seen in patches along many roads in the area.

Larson explains this plant is native to Europe but is now showing up first on roadsides then invades forests and fields. "The plant is capable of dominating the ground layer to the exclusion of any other species," he says. "The good news is, if people are persistent, its fairly easy to control if you eliminate the patch before it begins to spread," says Larson. He added the plant has a slender taproot but is

easy to hand pull if the soil is moist. Bag the pulled plants since the seeds will continue to mature if they are just pulled and left on the site.

He explains, "On the Hoosier, we've pulled garlic mustard in our special areas for the past several years and seen the population of the plant drop and the native species rebound."

The plant is now flowering, and is easily recognized with a tall slender stalk, heart-shaped leaves and small white flowers that form a cluster at the top of the stem. All parts of the plants smell like garlic.

"If anyone sees these plants along roadsides near their home or on their property, I'd encourage you to pull them," suggests Larson. "We can all make a difference in our own little corner of the world."

He notes the small white flowers may seem pretty and harmless, but if left to go to seed, the populations will quickly expand and control will be much more difficult.

For more information on garlic mustard or other invasive plants call the Hoosier National Forest at 812.275.5987.

(Photo of garlic mustard)