

Public Outreach

Public outreach concerning miconia awareness was addressed early with a color 'WANTED' flyer distributed throughout schools, communities, and garden shops. Public service announcements on TV successfully reached target audiences (Kauai's infestation was reported from a viewer seeing one of these during a University of Hawaii football game!). In 1996, Hawaii's governor called a state of emergency on this weed, officially launching the 'Operation Miconia' campaign statewide. Local TV, radio, and newspapers have covered stories related to the miconia battle, especially when volunteer work parties from the community take on removal efforts. For the electronically inclined, there is a miconia web site managed by the Hawaii Ecosystems At Risk (HEAR) project. For those wanting to know more about this plant and other Hawaiian weeds, <http://www.hear.org> is a great source of information.

Why make such an effort to contain one pest plant? The costs of coping with disruptions caused by weed pests are cumulative, whether they're based on protecting agriculture, watersheds, or biodiversity. Past experience indicates that early containment of many of our currently widespread weeds might have saved billions of dollars. Nature reserves in Hawaii spend over 75% of their resources battling invasive species. Responsibly managing watersheds is also extremely important for island communities. Fast-growing weeds like miconia also present agricultural, highway safety, and rights-of-way issues.

Many natural area managers in Hawaii feel the impact of this one plant could be devastating to the islands' delicate native ecosystems. Over 90% of Hawaiian biota is endemic, found nowhere else on earth. Evolutionary patterns in Hawaii are the subject of research worldwide (it's been suggested that Charles Darwin 'missed the boat' by studying the Galapagos instead). Hawaii's natural heritage is not just a valuable asset for its residents; besides containing the United State's only tropical rainforests, these islands are an important resource for Planet Earth.

The education reached through Operation Miconia has helped set the stage for raising awareness of the alien species dilemma in Hawaii, so that the general public might be able to view invasive plants as a form of biological pollution.

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The Newly Established

Southeast Exotic Pest PLANT COUNCIL

by Brian Bowen,
SE-EPPC Coordinator

SE-EPPC Becomes Established

The Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council (SE-EPPC) was formally established on March 20, 1999 at the first annual Southeast Exotic Pest Council Symposium hosted by the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The Council was officially formed by a motion from the floor that was approved by those attending the SE-EPPC roundtable discussion during the final session of the symposium.

Immediately following the TN-EPPC business meeting, the first SE-EPPC organizational meeting convened; approved organizational bylaws, and elected a provisional Board of Directors and Officers. The Board represents Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia. Florida was given an ex-officio position on the Board with opportunity for full participation open to future consideration. Other Southeast states not represented at this meeting will hopefully join and become Council members in the near future.

Organization Structure

SE-EPPC is established as an umbrella organization under which there are subunits. The proposed subunits consist of state chapters, affiliates, and individuals. The state chapter is the most functional unit with a board of directors to initiate action within each state's respective political boundaries. An affiliate occurs in the absence of a state chapter where activity on this issue is based in an existing organization, i.e., an invasive exotic pest plant committee of a state native plant society. In states where there is no organization, individuals are simply members of SE-EPPC.

Since the state chapter is the most functional unit, the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council will foster the development of state chapters within the Southeast. State chapters essentially operate autonomously but are required to ad-



SE-EPPC's Coordinator, Brian Bowen (above) is busy laying the groundwork for the regional organization.

here to the SE-EPPC mission goals. Chapters receive their non-profit status under SE-EPPC. Representation on the SE-EPPC board is respective to each state's involvement in SE-EPPC. SE-EPPC will promote full regional participation.

A Brief History

Since TN-EPPC's inception in 1994, there has been much discussion about whether TN-EPPC should become a regional organization or remain a state organization. It was decided by the TN-EPPC Board in 1997 to take measures to initiate the creation of SE-EPPC while maintaining its TN-EPPC identity. TN-EPPC has since become a conduit for establishing SE-EPPC. TN-EPPC's 1998 symposium in Chattanooga was promoted as a Southeast Regional meeting. There was sufficient interest at the symposium (it was well attended by folks from neighboring states) to take the next step towards forming the regional organization. In June of 1998 a pre-organizational meeting was held in the Smokies (GSMNP) with participants from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Since this June meeting, TN-EPPC has funded a part time SE-EPPC coordinator position to bring it all together and get the regional organization up and running. This entails developing a regional network of key individuals throughout the region, developing organizational structure proposals, and fostering the development of state chapters. The coordinator is responsible for securing the organization's non-profit status under the IRS group exemption rule. The coordinator facilitated the first board meeting on March 20.

Prior to establishing SE-EPPC on March 20, significant progress has been made. On February 27, a state organiza-



SE-EPPC is on the road to stopping exotic plants in the Southeast.

tional meeting was held at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill. This one day event included presentations and discussion which resulted in the formation of the North Carolina State Chapter of the SE-EPPC. A similar one-day event is being planned for Atlanta this fall. Kentucky is also expected to soon form a state chapter and has recently held an organizational meeting.

TN-EPPC continues to drive the process. It has since changed its quarterly newsletter to become the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council News. It will soon change its website to become the SE-EPPC website. All TN-EPPC information, as well as all other regional information, will be networked through both mediums. A purpose in creating SE-EPPC was to increase the resource pool and provide for more efficient and useful information exchange. Contributions to SE-EPPC News and the webpage will come from the region.

Another change for TN-EPPC is to discontinue hosting an annual symposium. The SE-EPPC Symposium will continue as an annual event but will be hosted by different SE-EPPC chapter states from year to year. In the absence of an annual TN-EPPC symposium, TN-EPPC will develop a modified meeting format that will be instituted to maintain state interest and its membership base. It is expected that all state chapters will participate in the annual SE-EPPC Symposium. The Oak Ridge, Tennessee Symposium was SE-EPPC's inaugural event. SE-EPPC's first full fledge board meeting is scheduled for July 17 in Asheville, NC.

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