

"Rescuing Our Natural Heritage"

The fourth annual Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council (SE-EPPC) Symposium was hosted by the Tennessee EPPC April 3-5 in Nashville. The focus of the symposium was "Rescuing Our Natural Heritage." Gordon Brown gave the keynote address on **Implementation of the National Management Plan**. Mr. Brown serves as liaison with the U.S. Department of Interior Bureaus and the National Invasive Species Council. He works with international, state and private partners to build support for local action. In his address, he described how policy is being developed to recognize and address the ways in which species alien to American ecosystems are harming our natural systems, economic enterprises, and human health.

In recounting the recent history of invasive plant policy development, Mr. Brown stated that scientists' letters to vice president Gore in 1998 spurred the 1999 Executive Order on Invasive Species. The Executive Order authorized a federal interagency task force that is continuing to develop and recommend actions regarding invasive species.

He further reported how invasive species are transforming the American landscape as native species are replaced with alien species. Ecological systems and cycles that we take for granted are shutting down. Financial and ecological damage is estimated at \$137 billion per year (Pimentel, Bioscience, Jan 2000). The greatest impacts to our natural areas have been ranked as habitat loss, alien species, pollution, over-harvesting, and disease (Wilcove, *Rebuilding the Ark*, 1996). Alien invasions are held to be the second greatest cause of endangered species listings. Brown held that bringing stakeholders together is crucial. The problem is bad and getting worse.

The Executive Order spurred existing Executive Office departments to examine their programs to determine whether their activities are contributing to this issue. The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) was created

from federal departments and was mandated to draft a management plan that will be updated every two years. The NISC is directed to provide leadership on these issues; promote actions at local, state, tribal and ecosystem levels; and to recommend measures to enhance international cooperation. Another goal is development of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines related to invasive species.

Among the finished management plan's recommendations are implementation of effective detection and rapid response, prevention, leadership and cooperation. Also, the Invasive Species Advisory Committee recommended creation of an invasive species "czar," a \$50 million fund for early detection and rapid response, and screenings for invasive species. The screening program is expected to be ready in two years and, like current security inspection, much of the screening will take place overseas before invasive species enter the US. Other goals include closing authorities gaps; establishing competitive grants programs; using public lands as models for stewardship; developing incentives for international help with invasive species management, including reviews of existing foreign assistance; increasing educational and information management programs; and establishing industry codes of conduct for invasive species.

Further information on the national invasive species initiatives can be found at: www.invasivespecies.gov.

Elsewhere during the three day symposium, field trips illustrated invasive species management programs in various settings, and other speakers reported on federal, state, and local invasive species management and research programs. Attendees successfully networked during an excellent evening social enhanced with live jazz accompaniment. Also, when the podium went dark, attendees enjoyed Nashville's spirited entertainment and nightlife.

Internodes—

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

First Latin-American Short-Course on Biological Control of Weeds, **June 24-28, 2002**. Montelimar, Nicaragua. Contact: Julio Medal, medal@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu.

Aquatic Plant Management Society 42nd Annual Meeting, **July 21-24, 2002**. Keystone Resort, Colorado. Contact: www.apms.org

Society for Ecological Restoration 14th Annual International Conference held jointly with the Ecological Society of America. **August 4-9, 2002**. Tucson, AZ. Contact: www.ser.org.

European Weed Research Society 11th International Meeting on Aquatic Weeds, **September 2-6, 2002**. Moliets, France. Contact: ewrs.2002@bordeaux.cemagref.fr.

2002 Natural Areas Conference, **October 2-5, 2002**. Renaissance Asheville, NC. Contact: Jeff DeBlieu, ideblieu@tnc.org, www.natareas.org, 252-441-2525.

The SE-EPPC board of directors modified the group's bylaws as follows: representation on the board of directors was changed to one representative from each active chapter; the SE-EPPC coordinator position was abolished; \$2,000 in funds left by the coordinator was dedicated for any member to attend future meetings representing SE-EPPC. Brian Bowen was elected president and Kristen Gounaris was elected secretary. The vice president and treasurer positions need nominations (which can be sent to president Bowen at bbowen@mail.state.tn.us).

Great efforts by the conference committee resulted in a highly informative and, hopefully, formative 4th symposium. All are to be commended for helping guide SE-EPPC into its future.

Mike Bodle
Roving Reporter