

The Southeast EPPC INVASIVE PLANT MAPPING PROJECT

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Invasive species are a serious problem in the Southeast, and addressing them is an integral part of any land management or restoration plan in our region. Ask most managers and researchers and they could tell you where they have seen invasive species and which ones occur in their area. Occurrence/distribution data also is available from research projects, inventories and surveys that have been conducted by graduate students, university researchers, and conservationists. However, this data is not organized for easy access in a central location for the Southeast.

In response, the Southeast EPPC is introducing its invasive plant mapping project. The project provides a single location to compile existing data about the distribution of invasive plants across the Southeast and to collect new data using volunteers. This project will improve our understanding of the range of the major invasive species, and aid in a rapid response to early detections of new species. As the data becomes more complete, it can be used by state EPPC chapters to review and adjust their state lists of invasive species.

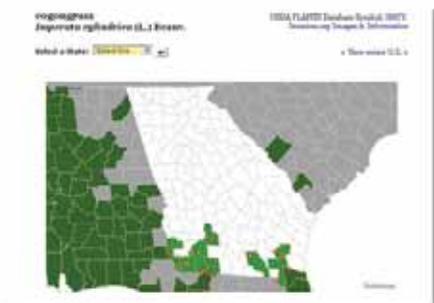
Private landowners, managers, researchers and other interested individuals (whether EPPC members or not) can easily contribute to this database via an online report form developed by the University of Georgia's Bugwood Network. The form allows space to report descriptive information about the infestation, such as the size of the infested area and canopy cover, and location information.

A question that often arises when using volunteer-collected data is "how can we be sure the species is accurately identified?" This mapping project hopes to verify the validity of volunteer-collected data by allowing users to upload photographs with their data forms. These photos will be reviewed by invasive species experts throughout the Southeast for identification accuracy. Additionally, the collection and submission of voucher specimens to a local herbarium is strongly encouraged. Only reports that include a reviewed photo or a voucher specimen will be labeled as "verified."

The project uses the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) mapping standards, which means that existing data can be easily incorporated into the database and shared with other projects. Many invasive species management projects store their data in a format that complies with these standards to facilitate data compilation and sharing (including any project using The Nature Conservancy Weed Information Management System (WIMS) program).

Even though the Southeast EPPC mapping project is just getting underway, a broad background of data already has been compiled. County-level distribution data from the NRCS PLANTS database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>) has been included for over 400 invasive species. While this data is not yet complete, it does provide a start. Most importantly, it allows users to see where data needs to be collected. Additionally, for the federally listed noxious weeds, county-level data from the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program, administered by USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), also have been included. Plans are underway to add several more large data sets to the project database.

Viewing the data online is easy and intuitive. Distribution data is graphically displayed as point-data or on county-level maps. The project uses a Flash-based mapping server for county-level maps that is fast loading and easy to use. Google Maps web services are incorporated to allow users to overlay the point data with road maps, satellite images, and topographic maps.



To learn more about the project, view current maps, or enter data, visit the Southeast EPPC's website at www.se-eppc.org or contact Chris Evans at cevans@uga.edu