

# IPINAMS and EMAPI 7 Conference - A Report

by Thaddeus Hunt, UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic & Invasive Plants

## The Conference

When 700 (plus) of the world's scientists, land managers, policy makers, teachers and students congregate in Ft. Lauderdale for the sharing of data, information, and ideas on exotic, invasive plants, you would expect to learn a few new things and to meet a few new people. At the **IPINAMS** (Invasive Plants in Natural and Managed Systems) and **EMAPI** (Ecology and Management of Plant Invasions) joint conference, you also got to witness synergy and the creation of history. Participants from the United States, China, India, New Zealand, Portugal, Italy, South Africa, South Korea, etc., representing a majority of the world's exotic weed specialists, coalesced at the Wyndam Bonaventure Resort on November 3, 2003 and remained until November 7th, completing almost a week of intellectual, practical, and social interactions to help close the race between exotic weed management and exotic weed anarchy.

## The Plan

Nelroy Jackson opened and set the tone for the conference with a reminder for us to extend ourselves to those with whom we are not familiar, to broaden our realms of influence, and to attend sessions where we were not experts and had little background on the topic of discussion. We were reminded of how fortunate it is to have such an international conference and the benefits available through it. The morning sessions served to focus our thoughts each day by discussing broad themes including prevention, early detection, rapid response, management linkages to science, and policy. Many other themes were also resident during the conference including public outreach, planning for the future, the marketplace, and enough others that to continue listing them would violate some rule, which I am sure exists, against long lists, wasted paper, and contextual relevance. They can be condensed, however, to "Ya want it or need it; we got it."

## The Setup

At the resort, 10 rooms had been allocated for concurrent sessions, one room allocated to house a large and illuminating poster session, and one very long and high traffic hallway allocated for the purpose of housing buffet tables and coffee dispensers. Away from the resort, buses were allocated for the transportation of guests and bag lunches to various gardens, parks, reserves, labs, and beaches so that they might experience Florida through the conference field trips.

## The Action

The typical day started with snacks in the hall followed by three theme speakers in the grand ballroom, after which you had the option of eating a continental breakfast or not eating a continental breakfast. Either way you inevitably found your way to a symposium, workshop, or moderation of oral contributed papers in concurrent status. If you were lucky and from Florida, you did not have to sit under an A/C vent during any of these sessions. These events, by the way, had a variety of topics such as predicting invasions and preventing entry, mapping, vulnerability of communities, effects on soil, and much more. If you wanted it, they had it. This was promptly succeeded by lunch, which gave way to more symposia, oral con-



*Dr. Paul Pratt of the Invasive Plant Research Laboratory (USDA/ARS) in Fort Lauderdale shows the effects of biological control agents on melaleuca to attendees of the IPINAMS/EMAPI conference.*

tributions, workshops, and hooky. At 5 p.m. everyone was set loose to relax and to imbibe the intellectual contributions of the poster session. These contributions came from a diversity of sources with equally varied topics. You might read about distribution in South Korea, take two steps, read about community participation, have an *hors d'ouvres*, then get embroiled in a conversation about nickel hyper accumulators. If, after all this, you found yourself in command of your faculties, you could indulge in roundtable discussions on topics related either directly or philosophically to exotic weeds.

The less typical day put you on a bus to some remote location of South Florida where you would subsequently consume gourmet visions of Florida and a bagged lunch for dessert. Symposium junkies could start the conference a day early at the Information and Data Sharing Workshop.

## The Results

If you are a professional teacher, paid for one day of the conference, and attended on your most relevant day, then you were finished with the conference on Monday evening after witnessing weed control professionals shower you with Styrofoam fragments and imagination. You also hopefully brought many wonderful lessons to your students on Tuesday. All other attendees completed each day with new understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current weed controls, the values of the incoming exotic plant specialists, and the global scale and attention given to these plants, refined goals, as well as new friends and associates. The field trips brought guests who originated from almost anywhere on the planet to experience south Florida weeds, natives, and spot showers. If you were a wannabe graduate student, you left with a new education and your first contact with possible graduate professors.

If you didn't make it to this conference, you should be encouraged to attend the next **EMAPI** in Poland in 2005. If you want it, they will have it. This **EMAPI** and **IPINAMS** conference was an exciting and productive event, illustrating the global attention that exotic plants/weeds have obtained as well as the minds and policies that undertake the responsibility for proper management of these plants for the preservation of all natural resources.