

Cogongrass Awareness in Georgia

by Dave Moorhead, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health, University of Georgia

This spring, partners in Georgia's state-wide Cogongrass Cooperative Weed Management Area will begin highlighting the impacts and threats that cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) poses in the state. Spearheaded by the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Cogongrass CWMA was formed in May of 2008 and is comprised of 22 state, federal and NGO partners in Georgia. Utilizing the spring bloom period as a means to identify infestations, training programs and public service announcements will be used throughout the state to help identify new populations and inform residents on ways to prevent introductions and spread. Building public awareness and finding infestations when they are small is critical as the Georgia Forestry Commission is treating all cogongrass infestations at no charge to the landowner. This innovative program is helping to stem the spread of this invasive grass.

Spread along highways and rights-of-way has been shown to be a factor in the movement of cogongrass. In past years, the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) along with the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia (Center) have provided training to state highway crews as part of an early detection program and to establish protocols to prevent spread from mowing, grading and other routine maintenance activities along the state's major highways. County road crews also are receiving this training. With 159 counties in the state, this can be a time-consuming task. Working with County Extension Agents and county GFC Rangers, the Center will be conducting county training sessions again this spring. Many of the counties in the southwestern portion of Georgia, where cogongrass pressure is greatest, received road crew training last spring. Resources including a narrated presentation and a PowerPoint™ presentation are available on www.cogongrass.org for Agents and Rangers to conduct the

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program in their counties as well. This program is supported in part by Stripling Inc. from Camilla, GA.

Another important development in Georgia is the explicit ban by the Georgia Department of Agriculture on importing any *Imperata* varieties that were being sold in the ornamental market. The new regulations are specified in the update of the National Plant Board www.nationalplantboard.org/docs/georgia.doc. Now all plants listed on the Federal Nox-

ious Weed List are prohibited from sale or distribution in Georgia. This includes varieties of *Imperata cylindrica* (e.g. 'Japanese Bloodgrass,' 'Red Baron').

For more details on Georgia's cogongrass efforts visit www.cogongrass.org.

Dave Moorhead, Ph.D., Professor – Silviculture, Co-Director, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health, Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources, University of Georgia, Tifton, GA 31793, (229)386-3298, moorhead@uga.edu

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