

# FLEPPC and SE-EPPC in 2004

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**O**n the final three days of April 2004, Pensacola Beach hosted the 19th Florida EPPC and 6th Southeast EPPC Symposia. The event brought together land managers, researchers, students, state and federal agents, fishing equipment and rental cars from throughout the southeastern U.S. When I say southeastern U.S., I mean Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Michigan, Tennessee, Bermuda, and more. Just under half of the 186 participants were attending their first EPPC symposium.

The keynote address by Phyllis Windle illustrated a timeline perspective of the accomplishments of the past decade, observing that our national policy is “A day late and a dollar short” (and several other accurate clichés), and the significance of the “Call to Action on Invasive Species” for remedying this policy shortcoming by creating law. She was followed by Randall Stocker, who gave an energetic, humorous, and statistically playful account of the significance of this symposium and Executive Order 13112 (1999), with a note that the political gains of Exotic Pest Plant Councils are not yet “Front Page News.”

A break was taken and coffee consumed. Some looked at presentation posters while others insured placement on a Friday field trip, while even more collected sample bottles of *Vinex*. The break ended and the rest of the symposium ensued. On this first day we focused on some of the bigger, badder issues of quelling exotic weed anarchy. A notable example of this would be the “Industry Influence on Exotic Pest Plant Policies,” as given by Barbara Lucas, who included some information on the status of our relationship and cooperation with various nursery and growers associations. Another talk was “Federal Noxious Weeds and Other Invasive Species Regulated by USDA APHIS.” We always want to know what is going on at the federal level and Arthur Miller brought that information to us. What a great guy! Another of my favorites was “Tag, Your It!” from Al Cofrancesco. This was described as biocontrol for dummies. It wasn’t just for people new to FLEPPC or SE-EPPC either. This day also contained some heartening biocontrol updates and critical herbicide information. The working part of the day wrapped up with the Florida EPPC business meeting, wherein Jim Burney stepped in as the new chair of FLEPPC and Mike Bodle stepped down. Outgoing board members Jim Burney, Jim Cuda, William Snyder and Andrea Van Loan were replaced by newly elected board members Roger Clark, Drew Leslie, Cressida Silvers and Jim Duquesnel. Kristina Serbesoff-King was awarded *FLEPPC Member of the Year 2004* for her hard work as Treasurer, and Tom Page was awarded *FLEPPC Advocate of the Year* for his many years of service assisting with aerial weed control operations.

When not in conference, what do weed people on the Florida coast do? They eat good seafood and they eat bad seafood. The

quality of the seafood increased with each step you could take away from the hotel. With a little thought, this may indicate that those who enjoyed their lunches were prone to a late return to the conference. The first day concluded with a delightful yet crowded social on the Clarion Suites patio where intelligent conversation, high roughage shrimp, high carbohydrate beverages, and lowbrow humor could be enjoyed. Many lingered at the social while young fishermen went to compete and old fishermen went to pretend to compete on a windy pier at the first ever EPPC fishing tourney.

Day two began with some sort of breakfast, I’m sure. I was much more concerned with where to get a better lunch. The more important thing was the conference. This day was not about the big issues of exotic weed anarchy, rather, the smaller factions of those exotic weed anarchists. Kathy Burks gave a great lesson on practical field taxonomy of legumes and was followed by Colin Hughes’ practical lab taxonomy of air potato as well as its African origins. Lunch was followed by what could simply be called “*Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Lygodium But Were Too Afraid To Ask About The Fern That May Eat the Vine That Ate The South.*” Actually, it wasn’t that grim. This series of sessions ended with some great news and applause about biocontrol and management strategies. An extended break was taken to view written and graphical information about some of these plants. This means that we got extra time to view many informative posters, meet the creators, talk a lot, and show up late to the next event.

Day two ended with a good meal, a small party, and a big sound. Actually, I hear that other guests of the Clarion enjoyed the music of *The Weeds* as well. We certainly enjoyed the dinner. Our buffet was set up in a slightly cramped hall, but it all seemed to work out quite well and, by the time I was hearing Stray Cat Strut, I wouldn’t have cared if dinner had been a disaster.

The following morning was rainy and probably adventurous for those who signed up for a field trip. I suspect that only the hardest core weed people ventured out on these wet excursions, which provided a chance to see all of the local beauties of the panhandle and lower Alabama being invaded by the exotic uglies. Some of these great locations included Eglin Air Force Base, the Pensacola Naval Air Station, and the Blackwater River State Forest.

This year’s conference of FLEPPC and SE-EPPC saw many new attendees and insured that they will return for more. The political, technological, and social advances that our colleagues have made and that we were exposed to at this conference are invaluable and deserving of mainstream attention. You would have to be consumed by *Lygodium* (or Kudzu, if *Lygodium* is not locally available) not to attend next year.

*Thanks to Thaddeus for his on site reporting. He’s never a day late. Ed.*