



## Alabama Invasive Plant Council / Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance Haines Island Park Project

By Gena Todia

**H**aines Island Park is comprised of 480 acres of land located on the Alabama River in Monroe County. It is owned and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) as part of the Alabama River Lakes Water Resources Development Project. The park is situated in the Southern Red Hills region of the East Gulf Coastal Plain and is home to some rare plant and animal species, including the Red Hills salamander, a federally-listed species.

Botanically and otherwise, the park is a very rich and interesting place. A few species that occur in the park and general vicinity include Piedmont rhododendron (*Rhododendron minus*), Alabama azalea (*R. alabamense*), Red Hills azalea (*R. colemanii*), bottlebrush buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), eastern green violet (*Hybanthus concolor*), northern spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), cucumber-tree (*Magnolia acuminata*), bigleaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*), Carolina holly (*Ilex ambigua*), eastern leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*), trilliums, and many more.

In 2009, the Alabama Invasive Plant Council (ALIPC) and the Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance (APCA) decided to partner on a project to accomplish several goals toward preserving the ecological integrity within the park, including the following:

- Schedule a series of work days for locating and removing invasive exotic plants from the park.
- Conduct a comprehensive plant survey within the park and provide the list to the Corps and others who may find it useful.
- Make recommendations to the Corps on addressing issues that are exacerbating the exotics problem.

Invasive exotic plants are in the early stages of becoming established in a few areas of the park. Exotics include silktree (*Albizia julibrissin*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), thorny olive (*Elaeagnus pungens*), Japanese climb-

ing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), and Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*).

After coordination with Corps of Engineers Resource Manager, Jason Haynes, a joint APCA/ALIPC work day was held to kill invasive exotics. Although the group of participants was small, a lot of work was accomplished. However, it became obvious that additional, on-going efforts would be required to control invasive exotic species in the park.

Several months later, a group of 10 ALIPC and APCA members and Corps Park Ranger Jason Ledbetter participated in a second very productive work day. Participants were Dr. Harry Larsen, Fred Nation, Michael Jordan, Dee Smith, Patrick Thompson, Graves Lovell, Dana McReynolds, Bobby Green, Dr. Bob Boyd, and Gena Todia. Invasive plant species control efforts concentrated primarily on silktree, Chinese privet and thorny olive. With the assistance of Fred and Patrick, Dr. Larsen began compiling a list of plant species that occur in the park. This list will be expanded on subsequent trips as this project continues.

The following summer, eight hard-working, enthusiast folks affiliated with ALIPC and/or APCA returned to the park to continue invasive exotic plant control efforts. Participants were Dr. Bob Boyd, Dee Smith, Patrick Thompson, Fred Nation, Michael Jordan, Luis Cruz-Arroyo, William Bodiford, and Gena Todia. Species targeted were primarily Chinese privet and thorny olive. The group moved beyond areas previously cleared of exotics into new areas along the Alabama River. Excellent progress was made.

ALIPC and APCA thank Jimmie Cobb and Dow Agro-Sciences for donating herbicide for this project. Plans are to return for another work day next spring when exotics control work will continue along with work on the plant inventory.

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