

Invasive Species Management Tour: Lower Coastal Plain Habitat Restoration

Approximately 50 participants from federal, state, and local government agencies throughout the Southeast met to see and learn about invasive species management for restoration of lower coastal plain ecosystems in the mid-south. Activities took place over three days in October in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Hosted by the GeoResources Institute (GRI) of Mississippi State University (MSU), the tour was co-sponsored by the Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance, the Southern Weed Science Society, and BASF.

The tour began with an in-depth examination of Longleaf Pine restoration on the Judd Brooke's Plantation near Nacaise, Mississippi. Participants received an up-close view of the inter-relationship between land management, invasive species management, wildlife management and economics in the restoration of this significant community. Longleaf pine restoration and management involves a close working relationship between the private landowner and county, state, and federal agencies.

The next day focused on the importance of collaboration between university research, extension and outreach, and resource management agencies in the battle with invasive species. Cogongrass management research plots were the first stop, with a presentation by study director Dr. John Byrd of MSU. Herbicide application rates and product selections developed by research plots were used in interagency demonstrations near Pascagoula, a cooperative project of the Mississippi Department of Transportation (DOT), the MS Department of Environmental Quality, and MSU. Participants later viewed the MS DOT's efforts



to control Chinese privet along highway rights-of-way in southern Mississippi, and the joint tropical soda apple eradication efforts of USDA-APHIS and the MS Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Bureau of Plant Industry.

Participants returned to the Judd Brooke's Plantation to view local education and outreach efforts on cogongrass management and longleaf pine restoration. Over 100 landowners and local residents came to participate in the Forestry and Wildlife Field Day for management of private forests, an effort by Hancock County, MSU Extension Service, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and USDA Forest Service. Presenters included representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation

Service, Mississippi Forestry Commission, MSU and the MSU Extension Service, The Nature Conservancy, BASF, and private consultants. Field tour topics included cogongrass management, longleaf pine forest management, conversion of slash pine to longleaf pine forests, plant diversity and the importance of blanket bogs in the longleaf pine ecosystem, demonstrations of mechanical and chemical forestry management practices, and federal cost-share programs. This tour was followed by a catfish dinner and presentations on invasive species, wildlife management, and remote sensing.

On the final day of the tour, the Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance hosted a meeting to discuss the possible formation of a Mid-South Invasive Species Alliance. Twenty-two invited participants attended from state and federal agencies in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. Dr. David Shaw (GRI) and Dr. Randy Westbrook (US Geological Survey, Biological Resources Discipline) first discussed the need for a regional effort to cooperate and coordinate between all agencies and groups focused on invasive species efforts, followed by a state-by-state discussion of invasive species management activities. Attendees agreed to the need to cooperate and coordinate more fully between states, and outlined future steps to take towards a formal organization.



For information on the Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance, or to find out more about regional efforts and the formation of a Mid-South Invasive Species Alliance, contact Dr. John Madsen, GeoResources Institute, Box 9652, Mississippi State, MS 39762, 662/325-2428, or jmadsen@gri.msstate.edu. Visit the GeoResources Institute web site at www.gri.msstate.edu.