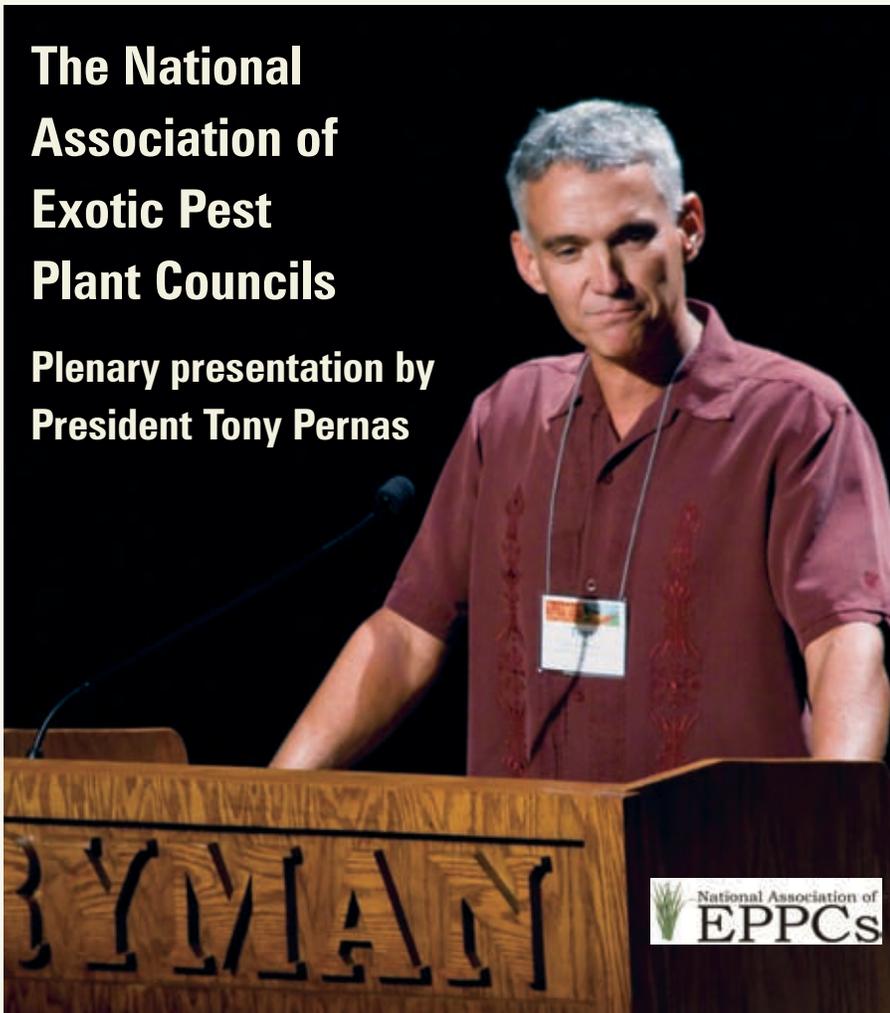


# The National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils

Plenary presentation by President Tony Pernas



The National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils (NAEPPC) is honored to be able to have our first national conference here in Nashville jointly with the Natural Areas Association. We would like to express our appreciation to the conference committees and sponsors for making this event possible.

Both of our organizations are distinct in that our primary focus is the protection and management of natural areas. Even though this is the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils' first national conference, exotic pest plant councils have been playing a valuable role for many years in bringing together people from across the country that are concerned with invasive plants and their effects on natural areas.

Prior to creation of the first Exotic Pest Plant Council (EPPC) in 1982, there was no organized effort to address exotic pest

plant problems in natural areas. There was little, if any, communication or coordination among land managers, a definite lack of recognition of the problem, and practically no funding for any control efforts.

In Florida in the early 1980's, invasive plants were rampant throughout the state, infesting both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Despite the extent of the terrestrial invasive plant problem, there were no organized efforts in addressing them. The Florida Department of Natural Resources had efforts directed at aquatic plants but none for terrestrial plants. In South Florida, land managers and biologists were becoming increasingly frustrated as they saw Brazilian pepper, Melaleuca, Australian pine and a host of other invasive plants rapidly expanding across the Everglades.

South Florida land managers and biologists saw a need for people involved in

invasive plant management to meet and exchange ideas in order to begin to address the burgeoning invasive plant problem. Individuals at first came together in small informal meetings. These ad-hoc meetings eventually led to a series of exotic woody plant workshops. The interest in these meetings was so strong that it was decided the group should formalize and the Exotic Pest Plant Council was born. The newly created EPPC was different from existing weed and vegetation management societies in that the focus was on exotic plants in natural areas and not on agricultural weeds.

The creation of the first EPPC was not easy — not because members could not agree on goals, but because they could not agree on a name. It took a few years, there was arguing about whether it should be an association or a society, or whether they should be called non-indigenous plants, alien plants or exotic plants. Ultimately the group decided to call the organization the Exotic Pest Plant Council. Many of you are probably asking why not “invasive plant council?” Interestingly enough, the word “invasive,” which is so common today, would not even come into vogue until the late 1980s, when it was first coined by Don Schmitz, a well-respected Florida biologist.

The new EPPC was extremely successful and by 1990, the group had a significant membership and was distributing newsletters chock-full of invasive plant management information. In the following years, a few members left Florida and relocated to other parts of the United States. These members began to spread the word about the EPPC and what like-minded individuals united in a common cause could accomplish. Through their efforts, the California Invasive Plant Council (IPC) and the Pacific Northwest IPC were created.

The EPPC movement was beginning to spread as folks saw the value of organization. In Tennessee, Brian Bowen was instrumental in forming the Tennessee EPPC. TN-EPPC began hosting a series of symposiums that brought individuals together from across the state who were interested in the invasive plant issue.

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In 1995, the four EPPCs that had been formed came together and established the National Association of EPPCs. NAEPPC was established because the EPPCs recognized the value of cooperation through a national association of like organizations that share common goals. The preamble of the Memorandum of Understanding that established National EPPC states that there is power in organization, strength in numbers, and that some problems are national in scope and are most appropriately addressed by a national organization.

By 1999, news of the TN-EPPC symposiums had spread and they were being attended by individuals from throughout the southeastern states who were hungry for information on invasive plants. Members of the TN-EPPC saw a regional need and, through their efforts, the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council (SE-EPPC) was created. In the years that followed, SE-EPPC would help foster the creation of state EPPCs including North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama and South Carolina.

In the Mid-Atlantic states, a Mid-Atlantic EPPC was formed that would include Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia.

In the northeast, New York IPC was formed as well as the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE).

Further west, the Ohio IPC, Michigan EPPC, Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin, the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, which includes Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, the Texas IPPC, Oklahoma IPC and the Rocky Mountain IPC, which includes Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and parts of Canada were formed.

NAEPPC represents all of these organizations at the national level on issues of national importance. The National Association of EPPCs is open to the participation of all non-profit organizations whose primary mission addresses issues of invasive exotic pest plants in natural areas and wildlands, regardless of the name of the organization.

These organizations throughout the country perform many functions such as:

- assessing the impacts of invasive plants through the creation of state or regional invasive plant lists;
- providing group and individual training on invasive plants through symposiums, workshops, online courses and reference materials;
- the development of species specific management plans that can serve as a framework for those managing or seeking to protect natural areas;
- improving invasive plant policy;
- working with nurseries and gardeners to address the ornamental introduction of invasive plants;
- enhancing dialogue between researchers and land managers on invasive plant biology, ecology and management, including climate models;
- the development of weed risk assessments;
- the advancement of invasive plant biological control programs;
- the early detection and rapid response to new plant infestations such as SE-EPPC's online Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS)

EPPCs have become a powerful network of researchers and land managers working together on one of this nation's greatest threats to biological integrity. This

## FLEPPC Receives Outstanding Achievement Award

The outstanding achievement award is given to the EPPC chapter that embodies the NAEPPC's mission of national heightened awareness of invasive plant species that results in positive changes throughout the United States.

Through its own mission of supporting the management of invasive exotic plants in natural areas by providing a forum for the exchange of scientific, educational and technical information, this chapter has truly facilitated the national mission and goals. The award this year goes to the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council for Extraordinary Service in Furthering the Goals of the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils.

week's joint conference will undoubtedly contribute to the exchange of ideas that will continue to lead to effective solutions for invasive plant management.

*Tony's presentation, and others at the NAA/NA-EPPC plenary session, are available as audio/visual files at: <http://www.naeppc.org/08conference/>*

**Help protect *your* natural areas from exotic pest plants – join an Exotic Pest Plant Council in your state!**

**[www.se-eppc.org](http://www.se-eppc.org)**

