

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL  
THIRTEENTH Annual Report  
December 31, 2015

The Honorable Ted Kennedy, Jr.  
State of Connecticut Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable James Albis  
State of Connecticut House of Representatives  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and members of the Environment Committee:

As Invasive Plants Council Chairman, I respectfully submit this report for activities conducted in 2015. This Council as established in 2003, operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381 through §22a-381d and is responsible for developing programs and materials to educate the public on issues related to invasive plants, developing recommendations for controlling and abating dissemination, updating and publishing a list of invasive plants, supporting agencies charged with conducting research on controlling invasive plant species, supporting the development of non-invasive varieties, and making recommendations to the General Assembly for the prohibition of any plant determined to be invasive.

The position of Invasive Plant Coordinator is vital to the mission of the Council. The Coordinator conducts critical outreach education and training, manages prevention and control initiatives, and provides the essential administrative support that enables the Council to meet its mandated responsibilities. These activities make it possible for communities and agencies across Connecticut to leverage limited resources and coordinate significant volunteer efforts to address invasive plant problems that threaten the environmental health and use of both public and private lands including lakes, rivers, and forests.

For FY2016, the legislature acknowledged the importance of the Coordinator to the function of the Council and appropriated \$57,000 to support the transfer of the Coordinator from UConn into a new position in DEEP. However, approval to fill the position has been stalled at OPM effectively rendering the Coordinator position vacant since July 2015. The inability of the state to effect the transfer of the IPC Coordinator position from UConn to DEEP has greatly diminished the effectiveness of the Council. We respectfully request the state and legislature not only appropriate the necessary funding to support the essential functions of the Coordinator for FY17 but also match the appropriation with action as intended by filling the position at DEEP. This funding, matched with action to effect a transfer, is absolutely essential if the State wishes to actively address the complex environmental and public policy issues associated with invasive plants.

In the U.S. total annual costs directly attributed to control of or loss and damage from invasive plants exceeded \$34 billion (Pimentel et al., Ecological Economics 2005), with another \$43.7 billion linked to plant-specific invasive pests and microbes. In Connecticut, invasive plants continue to cause environmental damage, raising evermore requests from communities, land holders and public land managers for advice and solutions for controlling these problematic, non-native species. Since removal of invasive species from natural areas is so costly, the state is best served by programs that prevent future invasions through education, training, and the targeting of resources to early detection and eradication campaigns. Prevention and early detection coupled with public education and training represent the most efficient, timely, and effective responses to emerging invasions and merit increased emphasis not passive neglect.

Over the past 13 years, the DEEP, CAES and DoAg have taken up the charge of responding to invasive plant issues by utilizing the resources and networks that the Council provides. That said, funding and filling the State Coordinator position remains our top priority for FY17. I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. Feel free to contact me at (860) 486-2925 if questions arise.

As a reminder, the statute prohibiting individual municipalities from adopting ordinance regarding the trade in invasive plants has expired. It is important to reinstate this prohibition in order to avoid confusion among municipalities and nursery and landscape businesses. [see Sec. 22a-381d. *Prohibited actions re certain invasive plants. Exceptions. Municipal ordinances prohibited. Penalty. (e) From July 1, 2009, until October 1, 2014, no municipality shall adopt any ordinance regarding the retail sale or purchase of any invasive plant.*].

Sincerely,

  
Richard McAvoy  
Invasive Plants Council Chairman