

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL
TWELFTH Annual Report
December 16, 2014

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 during 2014. This Council was established 2003 and operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381 through §22a-381d, and is responsible for developing programs and materials to educate the public as to the problems associated with invasive plants, developing recommendations for controlling and abating their spread, updating and publishing the invasive plant list, supporting agencies charged with conducting research into the control of invasive plant species, supporting the development of new non-invasive plant 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 (see attached *Summary of Activities and Accomplishments* for evidence of impacts associated with Connecticut IPC programs).

The legislature did not appropriate a specified funding line for the Coordinator in FY15 creating uncertainty for continued staffing. In the past, funding was appropriated to the DoAg or DEEP for the specific purpose of supporting essential operating expenses and the salary of the Coordinator at UConn. While a return to previous Invasive Plant Council funding levels (\$500K/yr prior to 2010) is unrealistic, we respectfully request a designated and identifiable line-item appropriation for FY16 totaling \$90,000 per year in support of the key "keep-alive" functions of the Coordinator. This funding 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 land holders and 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 and training, and that direct resources to targeted eradication campaigns. Prevention and early detection along with public education and training have proven critical to the most efficient, timely, and effective responses to emerging invasions and merit increased emphasis.

Over the past 12 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 the State Coordinator position remains our top priority for FY16. I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. A PDF version of the full report can be found at cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc-annual-reports/. Feel free to contact me at (860) 486-2925 if questions arise.

Sincerely,
Chairman
Richard McAvoy

Summary of Activities and Accomplishments

The Council, acting through the Invasive Plant Coordinator, had a very productive year in 2014. The following is a summary of the impacts associated with activities that were supported by the Invasive Plants Council, or the Coordinator in conjunction with partner groups and agencies including: Department of Agriculture (DoAg), Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), University of Connecticut (UConn) and the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR), The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG), Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association (CNLA), The Connecticut Federation of Lakes, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), local groups and municipalities, and land and lake alliance groups.

- Provided over **73,200** Connecticut business owners and citizens with information about invasive plants through educational outreach at industry trade conferences, public symposia, and community and municipality meetings. Outreach tables included tri-fold poster displays, live plant specimens, handouts, guides, and other resources. See Activities and Accomplishments, pages 42 – 45 for details.
- Provided over **30,000** citizens with invasive plant information via website presence, list serve posting, newsletter messaging, direct mailing, and in response to direct inquiries. See Activities and Accomplishments, page 45 for details.
- Provided or supported conferences and training workshops for **160** Department of Transportation (DOT) workers and over **1,800** Connecticut citizens, who received more than **5,000** hours of training through direct teaching and presentations on invasive plants. See Activities and Accomplishments, pages 45 – 49 for details.
- Supported programs that provided over **700** hours of volunteer and state agency efforts to control and mitigate invasive plants on CT public lands and waters. These programs were led by state and local organizations and land trust associations. See Activities and Accomplishments, page 49 for details.
- Assisted in the review and selection of proposals to be awarded **\$150,000** in DEEP grant funding for aquatic invasive plant management. The selected municipalities contributed over **\$185,000** in matching funds. See Activities and Accomplishments, pages 50 – 51 for details.
- Assisted and supported state agencies and municipalities by providing information about invasive plants and the associated laws, support on grant programs, and research collaboration. See Activities and Accomplishments, page 51 for details.
- Provided administrative support needed for the legislatively-appointed Invasive Plants Council (IPC) in executing the Council’s state mandated missions. See Activities and Accomplishments, page 52 for details.
- Assisted in the development of a forum hosted by the Environment Committee and sponsored by Senator Clark Chapin entitled “Aquatic Invasive Presentation and Panel Discussion” (January 28, Legislative Office Building, Hartford). See Activities and Accomplishments, pages 52 – 53 for details.