

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL
Nineteenth Annual Report
December 22, 2021

The Honorable Christine Cohen
State of Connecticut Senate
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Joseph P Gresko
State of Connecticut House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Environment Committee Co-Chairs Senator Cohen and Representative Gresko, and members of the Environment Committee:

As Invasive Plants Council Chair acting on behalf of the Council, we respectfully submit this report for activities conducted in 2021.

The lack of funding for the Coordinator position has negatively impacted the activities and public outreach of the Invasive Plants Council* since 2014, Fortunately a mechanism is now in place to fund the Coordinator via Public Act 19-190 "The Invasive Species Sticker" which requires an Invasive Species Stamp for the Operation of a Motorboat on the Waters of the State. Combined with federal funding for control of aquatic invasive species, the DEEP is expected on provide funding for the Coordinator in 2022. As a consequence of the source funding for the Coordinator, the focus of the Coordinator in 2022 will be primarily on aquatic invasive plant species.

The Council added five new members in 2021, filling vacancies some of which represented appointments unfilled for over a year and which hindered the Councils ability attain a quorum and conduct business at regularly scheduled meetings. We are happy to report that the Council is finally up to full membership.

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. Nationally, the annual cost of controlling aquatic invasive plants alone is estimated at \$100 million. In Connecticut, invasive plants continue to cause environmental and economic injury to our communities, our lands and lakes, and commercial agricultural industries. The Council is particularly concerned with emerging challenges, as follows:

- The rapidly expanding spread of *hydrilla* throughout the Connecticut river and other waterways and the need to prevent spread to additional waters of the state ([Invading the CT River – The Spread of Hydrilla - YouTube](#)).
- The increasing spread of water chestnut and the loss of resources for control
- The emergence of toxic algal blooms in many CT lakes
- The loss of state-wide capacity to address the spread of *phragmites*
- The invasive barberry-deer tick-Lyme disease relationship and its impacts on public health

In 2021 following renewed evaluation of Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) for invasive characteristics, the Council now recommends that Porcelainberry be placed on the prohibited list. This plant has been on a watch list for many years but is now of significant enough concern that the council moved to make this recommendation. We note that the species is no longer of economic importance to the commercial plant industry in Connecticut.

As environmental and economic damage continues to mount, requests from communities, businesses, private landowners, and public land managers for advice and solutions for managing these problematic, non-native species continues to accelerate. Since removal of invasive species from natural areas is extremely costly, the state is best served by programs that prevent future invasions through education, training, and the targeting of resources toward 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 and legislative financial support, not passive neglect.

Over the past 19 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. Ongoing loss of critical staff positions has dramatically limited the ability of these agencies to process invasive plant management permits and control invasive species. The activities of the Connecticut Invasive Plants Coordinator remain the only proven mechanism for effective and timely environmental impact through public outreach, education and training. We look forward to finalizing the MOU with the DEEP and filling this position in 2022. I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. Please contact me via email at richard.mcavoy@uconn.edu if questions arise.

As a reminder, the statute prohibiting individual municipalities from adopting an ordinance regarding the trade in invasive plants has expired. It is important that this prohibition, maintaining jurisdiction at the state level, be reinstated 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*].

See <http://cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc/> for the complete 2021 report from the IPC and affiliated groups.

Sincerely,



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Connecticut Invasive Plants Council Chair
Dept. of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture
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William Moorhead
CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

Mr. Darryl Newman
Planters' Choice Nursery
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Ms. Constance L. Trolle
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Commissioner of Inland Wetlands, Morris CT

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* As established in 2003, the Council 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 the dissemination of invasive species, updating and publishing a list of invasive plants, supporting agencies charged with conducting research on invasive plant control, supporting the development of non-invasive varieties, and making recommendations to the General Assembly for the prohibition of any plant determined to be invasive.