



SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

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**IN SUPPORT OF BILL 790
AA IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL**

**Testimony of David Sutherland - Director of Government Relations
Before the Environment Committee – February 18, 2009**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy's 28,000 members, I am here today to express our strong support for bill 790 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Invasive Plants Council.

Bill 790 is comprised of important changes to the current invasive plants statutes which the Invasive Plants Council feels are crucial to 1) clarify those statutes, 2) give authority to the Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to inspect facilities, that they already inspect for other reasons, for illegal sales of banned plants, 3) remove one plant, that does not pose a threat, from the list of species banned for sale, and 4) so that there is a consistent approach statewide, prohibit municipalities for five years from acting individually to ban the sale of additional plants.

The Invasive Plants Council was established by the General Assembly in 2003. I have been privileged to serve on it by appointment of the Speaker.

What's the Problem with Invasive Plants?

Thousands of plants have been introduced to New England over the past few centuries from other regions or continents. Most of them do not present problems for natural habitats. Several dozen of these alien species, however, are a grave threat to forests and other natural areas, because they are able to aggressively out-compete native plants, and are not nearly as valuable for native animals which evolved with those native plants. Instead of a mosaic of many species of native plants and animals, our forests and wetlands become dominated by far fewer species of plants and animals, and therefore less healthy. Many lakes and rivers have become impenetrably clogged with aquatic invasive plants.

Unlike pollution, invasive plants, once introduced, continue to spread without further human assistance and do not degrade over time. Rare species appear to be particularly vulnerable to changes wrought by non-native invaders, but even relatively common native plants and animals can be driven to near extinction by some invasives.

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How are Invasive Plants Spread?

Invasive species are introduced and spread into new areas by many means, including landscaping and the sale of plants between countries and states; inadvertently through the transport of other products; seeds or plant fragments being transported on boats from one water body to another; and by wind, water, and birds.

What Can We Do?

Reducing the spread and impacts of invasive plants will require many different approaches, including physical removal, education of nursery consumers, rapid detection of response to invasions by new species, and restrictions on sale of certain plants. Many municipalities, land trusts, lake associations and other organizations are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to remove or control invasive plants.

This legislation would further Connecticut's efforts in implementing these various approaches to invasive plant control.