



University of
Connecticut



To: Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

From: Mary E. Musgrave

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Written testimony RE: **DEP budget – “keep-alive” for Invasive Plants Program, \$100,000**

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Mary Musgrave, speaking to you today on behalf of the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council. This Council was formed in 2003 pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 22a-381 through 22a-381d, as advisory to the Environment Committee on the complex issue of invasive plants in Connecticut. Non-native invasive plants threaten Connecticut's natural areas, including recreational waterways, diminishing quality of life as well as property values.

The Invasive Plants Council, which I chair, is comprised of 9 members representing the nursery industry, public and private environmental protection organizations, the Department of Agriculture, the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UConn. The Council has met 8-10 times a year for 7 years, providing guidance on the state's invasive plant issues. We applaud the \$500,000 appropriation that was previously made for DEP to implement an educational outreach, inspection, and regulatory compliance program for the state.

The Council understands the gravity of the State's financial situation. Until the state budget improves enough to re-institute the full program, we advocate a “keep-alive” annual budget of \$100,000, to preserve the outreach, inspection and regulatory structure that has been developed at DEP for addressing the Invasive Plant problem. An annual budget of \$100,000 would allow retention of the Invasive Plant Coordinator as well as funding the necessary inspections at the state's pet shops (Department of Agriculture) and nurseries (CT Agricultural Experiment Station). These core functions are vital to the environmental and economic interests of the State. At DEP, the Invasive Plant Program Coordinator coordinates the work of agency staff and hundreds of volunteers across the state who are working to control the spread of invasive plants that are devastating natural habitats. In the absence of this core program funding, there would be no mechanism to enforce of the plant bans that are in effect in the state. Therefore the CT Invasive Plants Council respectfully requests that the committee reinstate a minimum of \$100,000 to DEP's budget, for continuation of the core functions of the Invasive Plant Program.

I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for its past support, its continued interest in invasive plants as one of many important environmental concerns, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony.