



Connecticut Invasive Plants Council

79 Elm Street, 6th Floor, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Established by CT General Statute §22a-381

www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/ipc.html

To: Environment Committee

From: Connecticut Invasive Plants Council

Date: March 16, 2012

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee:

The Invasive Plants Council thanks you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Bill No. 5413, "An Act Concerning Invasive Plants". Invasive plants disrupt natural areas, invade minimally-managed habitats, and spread rapidly, displacing native plants. This loss of habitat impacts wildlife, and may even impact property values. Invasive plants can damage the value of aquatic and terrestrial systems and make recreational activities such as boating more difficult.

The Invasive Plants Council was created in 2003 pursuant to CGA §22a-381 as an advisory Council to the Environment Committee on the complex issue of invasive plants in Connecticut. The Invasive Plants Council is composed of nine members, including state agencies, the green industry, environmental groups, and academia. The group has met seven to twelve times per year since 2003 to discuss and act on this important issue.

The Council serves as a vital forum for citizens and different interest groups to discuss, reach consensus and implement workable solutions on a variety of invasive plant issues. These issues and discussions often involve scientific information and proceedings which must be compiled, reviewed, and tracked by a staff person. The invasive plants coordinator serves as the primary contact for all Council members, assists with meeting materials, research, annual reports, and enables the Council to effectively communicate and coordinate between its members, other national, regional, and state partners, municipalities throughout the state, and local organizations.

The coordinator also undertakes a variety of tasks relating to invasive plants. The coordinator is the main contact in the collaborative effort to control mile-a-minute vine, a highly invasive, fast-growing invasive vine spreading across the state. The coordinator conducts site visits and works with town staff and other groups, and assisted with the planning and implementation of invasive plant removal days in Sprague, where mile-a-minute vine was first found in 2010.

The coordinator hosted an all-day training workshop last June in Burlington for over 100 attendees, including municipal staff and conservation organizations. In the past year, the

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station • Connecticut Federation of Lakes • Connecticut Green Industries • Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association • Department of Agriculture
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection • Invasive Plant Atlas of New England • The Nature Conservancy • University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

coordinator worked in Bridgewater, Bristol, Greenwich, Fairfield, New Milford, Roxbury, Southbury, Westport, Woodbury, and other locations regarding mile-a-minute vine; Newtown, Oxford, Shelton, Seymour, Southbury and Woodbury while investigating bamboo; and Chaplin, Harwinton, Litchfield, Manchester and Newtown to present information at outreach events.

At the request of the Invasive Plants Council, the coordinator developed an invasive plant disposal guide for homeowners. This guide provides information about the best ways to dispose of plant materials so that disposal will not lead to the accidental spread of the plants through mulch, compost, or dumping in natural areas.

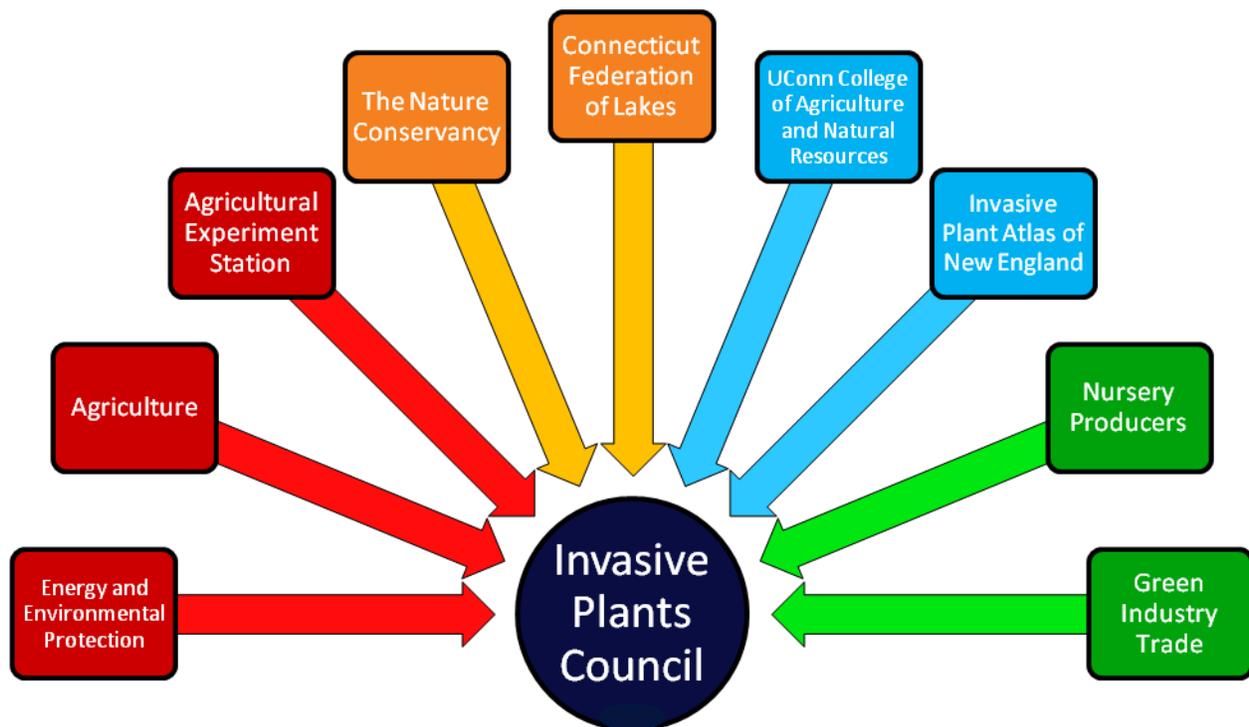
The Council greatly appreciates the initial funds provided by the legislature to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP; then DEP) that allowed for the hiring of the coordinator for two years beginning in fiscal year 2009. The Council also appreciates the short-term temporary funding support for the coordinator provided by DEEP when the legislative funds ended, as well as the continued management and oversight of the position provided by DEEP and the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources through a cooperative agreement.

Citizens throughout the state continue to report the negative impacts of established invasive species, from oriental bittersweet vines entangling trees and powerlines, to kudzu and Japanese knotweed outgrowing other plants along roadsides and in natural areas, to water chestnut, hydrilla and invasive milfoils harming boating, fishing and other aquatic recreation. Efforts are also needed to monitor for and prevent new invasive plants from establishing, and to reduce their impacts if they do arrive. There are many residents throughout the state who are willing to volunteer their time to address these issues and it is essential that these efforts be organized and coordinated at the state level by an invasive plants coordinator.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important environmental issue, and for your support of prior recommendations from the Invasive Plants Council.

Invasive plants: a growing concern

- Invasions of non-native foreign plants like mile-a-minute vine, kudzu, and Japanese knotweed, or aquatic plants like water chestnut and milfoil, harm the state's natural resources and decrease recreational value.
- The legislature created the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) in 2003 to address these concerns. The Council provides a vital forum for organizations to discuss and solve invasive plant issues. Private industry, academia, government and environmental groups work together in the decision-making process. This synergy increases the effectiveness of all parties!
- The **Invasive Plants Coordinator** is a critical part of the IPC. The coordinator serves as the primary contact for all Council members, national organizations, regional and state partners, municipalities and other groups.
- The coordinator assists partners and municipalities with planning and implementing invasive plant removal days, organizing volunteers, outreach, educational materials, site visits, and workshops.
- The Invasive Plants Coordinator is critical to the effective operation of the IPC. The work of the Coordinator helps ensure that our limited resources are used to their greatest efficiency in our battle against invasive plants!



Legend

■ State Agencies	■ Non-governmental Orgs.	■ Academia	■ Industry
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