



## INVASIVE PLANT ATLAS OF NEW ENGLAND

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March 16, 2012

We thank the Environment Committee for their past support of the **Connecticut Invasive Plants Council** (CT-IPC) and the recognition of the importance of the Invasive species problem in Connecticut.

Why are invasive species a problem of concern? The **economic costs associated with invasive species** and their control exceeds \$150 billion per year in the U.S. For invasive plants alone, the figure is an estimated \$35 billion annually – a figure that does not include negative impacts to natural ecosystems; if included, this would increase the cost by many times, according to experts. The control cost estimates for Connecticut run to millions of dollars per year. These invasive species constitute a major threat to the preservation of natural ecosystems and significantly affect local economies in Connecticut and across the country. Prevention is the most important step to solving of the problem. This is the function critically addressed by the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council.

By State Statute (CGS Sec. 22a-381) the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council: 1) develops and conducts programs to educate the general public and merchants and consumers of aquatic and land-based invasive plants; 2) makes recommendations to control and abate the spread of invasive plants; 3) makes information regarding invasive plants available to any person or group; 4) annually publishes and updates a list of plants considered to be invasive or potentially invasive; 5) supports those state agencies charged with protecting the environment in conducting research into the control of invasive plants; 6) conducts or recommends research on invasive plants; 7) makes recommendations on the prohibition of sales of listed invasive plants.

The Invasive Plants Council serves a vital forum for citizens and diverse interest groups to discuss, argue, and reach consensus on invasive plant issues, and put forth workable solutions, but the issues and discussions often involve volumes of scientific information and proceedings which must be compiled, reviewed, and tracked by a single staff person. This single **Invasive Plants Coordinator** leverages thousands of hours of work and expertise from hundreds of people concerned about the destructive impacts invasive plants are having on our lakes, forests, and rivers. Just last month the Council was called upon to make recommendations on an independently introduced Bill (House Raised bill 5122) regulating a particular suspected invasive species. Without the support of a single funded coordinator position, the ability of the Council to meet its goals would be severely compromised.

Other states in New England and across the country have committed to sustainably fund analogous entities at significantly higher levels. For example, the Center for Invasive Plant Management in Montana, which serves a similar function to CT-IPC, has a permanent staff of 5 and an operating budget many times higher.

Finally there are hundreds of concerned Connecticut residents across dozens of towns who have volunteered their time to monitor the occurrence and spread of invasive plants across the landscape and in our lakes and streams, and to help in their eradication. For example, IPANE has some 185 volunteer citizen-science just in Connecticut. It is essential that all such activities related to invasive species be organized and coordinated by an Invasive Plants Coordinator. We **urge full support of Raised Bill No. 5413**.

Sincerely,

Dr. John A. Silander, Jr.  
Director of the IPANE project