



***55 Church Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06457
203-568-6297***

**TO URGE FUNDING FOR THE INVASIVE PLANTS COORDINATOR
POSITION CURRENTLY AT UCONN**

**RE: H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

**Testimony of David Sutherland - Director of Government Relations
Before the Environment Committee – March 2nd, 2015**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I am here today to express our appreciation for the support that this committee has given to the issue of invasive plants over the past several years, and urge you to include \$90,000 in the University of Connecticut's budget to continue the employment of the state's Invasive Plants Coordinator. The final budget passed last year directed UConn to fund the position, but did not actually include a line item for that funding. As a result, DEEP, the Department of Agriculture, and UConn have cobbled together small amounts of funding with some federal funding for this current year, but such funding is not available for next year.

The coordinator has played a vital role in coordinating the efforts of scores of volunteers who have worked to eradicate or control outbreaks of various invasive plants. He has conducted trainings for municipal officials and produced a guide for the proper disposal of problematic plants. The coordinator has also served as staff person for the Invasive Plants Council, which has been an important venue for citizens and often-conflicting interest groups to discuss, reach consensus on, 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.

Most of the thousands of non-native plants, which have been introduced to New England from other regions over the past few centuries, 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.

Modest funding of \$90,000 would leverage thousands of hours of volunteer time. By helping to identify and eliminate new outbreaks of plants, this funding would help avoid much larger expenditures by the state and municipalities to eradicate populations in the future once they have become well-established.