



Connecticut Invasive Plants Council

Established by CT General Statute §22a-381

www.cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc/

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Connecticut Invasive Plants Council

Date: March 2, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding **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 (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection)**

The Connecticut Invasive Plants Council was established 2003 and operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381 through §22a-381d. The Council, as conceived in statute, is comprised of representatives from the key state agencies, higher educational and research institutions, environmental groups and industry. Included among the many functions charged to the Council are the responsibilities of making recommendations to the General Assembly for the prohibition of plant species determined to be invasive, developing recommendations for controlling and abating their spread, supporting agencies charged with conducting research into the control of invasive plant species, and developing materials to educate the public as to the problems associated with invasive plants.

The Connecticut Invasive Plants Council respectfully requests that this Committee and the Connecticut Legislature recognize the critical importance of continuing the Invasive Plant Coordinator position and appropriate a specified funding line through the DEEP or other appropriate agency. A line-item appropriation for FY16 totaling \$90,000 per year is sufficient to support the key “keep-alive” functions of the Coordinator. This funding is absolutely essential if the State wishes to actively address the complex environmental and public policy issues associated with invasive plants. Funding a Coordinator is by far the most cost-effective way to make meaningful progress on invasive plant concerns. This is achieved through the Coordinator’s main function of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of existing resources located across different agencies and institutions.

In the twelve years since the statute has been enacted, the leadership and activities of the Council, as executed through the activities of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Coordinator, have had well-documented and dramatic impacts on both public awareness and early intervention efforts to combat the spread of invasive plant species in the state.

Crucial to any plan or campaign to control the spread of invasive species is the physical ability to actually do work, the on-the-ground real-time commitment required for training, educating, conducting on-site eradication efforts, and coordinating the efforts of volunteer and community groups in executing management plans. The position of the Invasive Plant Coordinator represents this vital function.

The Coordinator conducts critical outreach education and training, manages prevention and control initiatives, and provides the essential administrative support that enables the Council to meet its mandated responsibilities. These activities make it possible for communities and agencies across Connecticut to leverage limited resources and coordinate significant volunteer efforts to address invasive plant problems that threaten the environmental health and use of both public and private lands.

The Council serves as a vital forum for citizens and different interest groups to voice opinions, 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 Plant 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 is the main contact in the collaborative effort to control invasive plants.

In the U.S. total annual costs directly attributed to control of or loss and damage from invasive plants exceeded \$34 billion (Pimentel et al., Ecological Economics 2005), with another \$43.7 billion linked to plant-specific invasive pests and microbes. In Connecticut, invasive plants continue to cause environmental damage, raising evermore requests from land holders and managers for advice and solutions for controlling these problematic, non-native species. Since removal of invasive species from natural areas is so costly, the state is best served by a Coordinator preventing future invasions through education and training, and directing resources to targeted eradication campaigns.

Thank you for your interest in this important environmental issue, and for the opportunity to present testimony for the Invasive Plants Council. If you should require any additional information, please contact Richard McAvoy, Invasive Plants Council Chair at 860-486-2925 or Richard.McAvoy@uconn.edu.

