



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner

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November 16, 2011

Mr. William Hyatt, Chair, Invasive Plants Council
Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources
Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Input for Invasive Plants Council 2011 Annual Report

Dear Chairman Hyatt:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) 2011 Annual Report.

The activities of the IPC and its collaborators help to sustain attention to, raise awareness of, educate about, and identify, control and abate invasive plants in our state which benefits Connecticut farmers by maintaining or improving the quality and integrity of our natural resources and ecosystems on which we all depend. This may help lower the cost of inputs and level of effort on management activities, and improve productivity and profitability for the average Connecticut farmer (e.g. helps keep farmland usable, reduces labor required to maintain fields, minimizes cropland lost to invasives, etc.) Also, this may provide the opportunity for the Connecticut greenhouse/nursery industry to grow and promote native, non-invasive plant species and have some level of predictability in the regulation of plants. My agency's participation in the IPC benefits the agency by access to the best scientific information brought to bear by other IPC members and collaborators, as well as having a seat at the table in discussions and decisions regarding the regulation of invasive plants and its impact on Connecticut agriculture.

The following general activities of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture may be reported for the 2011 calendar year.

- The Commissioner of Agriculture, or his designee within Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg), is a member of, and attends, the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) meetings.
- A DoAg representative of the Bureau of Regulation and Inspection is a member of, and attends, the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group (CIPWG) meetings. A DoAg representative typically attends the CIPWG Symposium when held.

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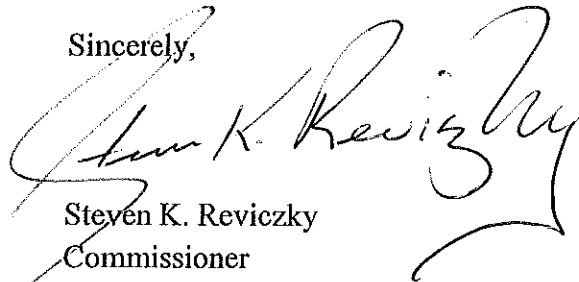
- The Commissioner of Agriculture, or his designee within Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg), is a member of, and attends, the Invasive Plants Council (IPC) meetings.
- A DoAg representative of the Bureau of Regulation and Inspection is a member of, and attends, the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group (CIPWG) meetings. A DoAg representative typically attends the CIPWG Symposium when held.
- DoAg handles a number of information inquiries from farmers and the general public each year; generally, invasive plant issues may be referred to the DoAg representative to the IPWG and/or referred to staff, websites and/or published materials of the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS), the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System (UConn CES) or College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UConn CANR), CIPWG, Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) and/or U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS). The CAPS Program is managed by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ).
- DoAg Animal Control Officers have been instructed during routine inspections at DoAg licensed facilities to survey for prohibited aquatic invasive plants. No reports of prohibited aquatic invasive plants have been made during this year's inspections.
- DoAg publishes announcements about USDA-NRCS conservation cost-share programs in the *Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report*. Control of invasive plants is one of their more common conservation practices for these programs. Grants, workshops and other educational opportunities are also reported.
- DoAg acquired development rights to approximately 2,000 acres of farmland through the Farmland Preservation Program in 2011. Preserved farms have conservation plans in accordance with USDA-NRCS, and some also have forest management plans in cooperation with requirements of the Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program, our federal partner in farmland preservation. Such plans may address invasive plants. For agricultural producers, invasive plant control is part of restoring productive pasture and hay land.

- DoAg leases the state-owned Lebanon Agricultural Reserve (LAR) for agricultural production. It is occupied by a dairy farmer who applied to USDA-NRCS for cost-share via the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP). The farmer has a conservation plan with practices to control invasive plants as part of their grazing system at LAR for their 2011 EQIP contract.
- At the Governor's initiative, the Farmland Restoration Program was adopted in the 2011 Jobs Special Session; the target of this new program is to restore land to active farmland status, which may involve eradication of invasive plants.

For your information and relating to Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS), DoAg is collaborating with USDA-NRCS and Connecticut Sea Grant to develop conservation cost share practices and payments for control and removal of invasive tunicates impacting oyster cage culture in eastern Long Island Sound.

If you have any questions, please contact Katherine Winslow of my staff at 860.713.2589 or katherine.winslow@ct.gov.

Sincerely,



Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner

cc: Nancy Murray, DEEP
Logan Senack, CT Invasive Plant Coordinator