

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL  
NINTH Annual Report  
December 13, 2011

The Honorable Edward Meyer  
State of Connecticut Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Richard Roy  
State of Connecticut  
House of Representatives  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3201  
Hartford, CT 06106

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

As Chairman of the Invasive Plants Council, I respectfully submit this letter and attachments for activities conducted during 2011. This Council was established and operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 22a-381 through 22a-381d, and is responsible for the following: developing and conducting initiatives to educate the public about the problems created by invasive plants in lakes, forests and other natural habitats; recommending ways of controlling their spread; making information available; annually publishing and updating research into invasive plant control, including the development of new non-invasive plant varieties and methods for controlling existing species.

### **The Council**

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of two of our most prominent and dedicated Council members, Drs. Leslie J. Mehrhoff and Mary Musgrave. Les and Mary were both long time members who have been instrumental to the Council's success. Their leadership, technical expertise, humor and spirit will be deeply missed (see attachment 1- In Memoriam).

The Council consists of nine members representing government, the nursery industry, scientists, and environmental groups (see attachment 2). The Council, especially since it has had the professional assistance of the State's Invasive Plant Coordinator, has repeatedly demonstrated that it can find solutions to problems and work constructively. The Council has met 8 times since the eighth annual report dated December 14, 2010. See attachment 3 for the approved minutes for 8 meetings, including those for the December 14, 2010 meeting. The minutes for the December 13, 2011 meeting are not yet approved, and so will appear in next year's report.

One very important benefit of the Council is that it provides the well structured, legislatively authorized forum needed to forge and implement a cohesive invasive plant management strategy. With representation from the State's key plant related agencies, educational institutions, plant businesses and non-profit organizations, the Council has been able to develop the consensus strategies and the unity needed to begin addressing the many problems posed by invasive plants.

I am Bureau Chief of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Bureau of Natural Resources, and serve as Chairman of the Invasive Plants Council. Louis Magnarelli, Director of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) serves as Vice Chairman. Changes in membership since last year's report include the addition of Dr. John Silander of the University of Connecticut and the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE; replacing Les Mehrhoff), Dr. Richard McAvoy also of the University of Connecticut (replacing Mary Musgrave and representing the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources), and Steven Reviczky, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture (replacing former Commissioner Philip Prelli).

The Council acknowledges the cooperation of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture for providing conference room space for this year's meetings. Mr. Logan Senack, the state's Invasive Plant Coordinator, is thanked for taking care of the various necessary administrative duties that make it possible for the Council to meet and follow through on its initiatives. Through the end of this fiscal year, state funds provided by the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) allowed for the hiring of Mr. Senack through a cooperative agreement with the University of Connecticut. This support for the Coordinator position and operating expenses has been invaluable to the Council and to our efforts to combat the introduction and spread of invasive plants.

### **Council Activities**

We are very pleased with the work done by Connecticut's Invasive Plant Coordinator, Logan Senack, who was hired in December 2008 through a DEEP project agreement with the University of Connecticut and continued in that role this year. This position is jointly supervised by Nancy Murray of DEEP and Donna Ellis of the University of Connecticut (UConn) Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture. The Coordinator position is absolutely critical to the success of Connecticut's response to invasive plants. The Coordinator oversees these programs, further developing early detection and rapid response procedures for emerging problems and coordinating the implementation of a comprehensive State invasive plant control and prevention program. In addition, the Coordinator is responsible for organizing and overseeing volunteer efforts to remove invasive plants in communities throughout the state. With the Coordinator in place, the Council continues to serve as an advisory body to DEEP as it moved these programs forward. The following is a summary of Council activities and accomplishments during 2011.

A report entitled "Guidelines for the Disposal of Terrestrial Invasive Plants" was prepared by the Invasive Plant Coordinator in collaboration with staff from DEEP and UConn Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture. This report provides information which will help prevent the unintentional spread of invasive plants during the disposal of plant material. These guidelines are available to the public in hardcopy and through the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group Website (<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/>).

The Invasive Plants Council and DEEP hosted an all-day workshop on "Invasive Plants & Habitat Improvement" on June 1 at the DEEP Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington, CT. The workshop focused on conducting invasive plant control with limited

resources and the selective use of native plants to improve wildlife habitat. The target audience was municipal staff and members of conservation organizations. Attendance was over 100 and included representatives from more than 20 municipalities.

A letter has been drafted for distribution to companies active in the internet sale of plants. The intent of the letter is to inform internet sellers on CT's invasive plant laws. During 2012, the Council will attempt to develop a list of out-of-state retailers who sell directly to CT residents. Letters will be sent by DEEP once the list is compiled.

A list of retailers and wholesalers who have previously been identified by the CAES, DEEP or the Department of Agriculture as selling invasive plants is being compiled. The intent is to better direct the collective information, education, and monitoring efforts of each agency.

A subcommittee on cultivars has been established in response to guidance provided by the Office of the Attorney General in 2008. This subcommittee has been tasked with providing scientifically sound recommendations regarding the regulation of cultivars of plant species currently prohibited by Connecticut law. A cultivar is a plant type that has been intentionally bred or selected for certain characteristics that distinguish it from others of the same species. There is currently no consensus among science and industry representatives on how to best proceed with regulating these plants. It is hoped that information provided by this subcommittee will enable the Council to make progress on the cultivar issue during 2012.

Early detection and rapid response efforts to limit the distribution and impacts of mile-a-minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*) on the Connecticut landscape are ongoing. During 2011 the Invasive Plant Coordinator and others continued outreach efforts to inform the public and to gather information on new infestations. As a result of information gathered, removal efforts were undertaken in many Connecticut municipalities, including New Milford, Newtown, Sprague, Bridgewater, and Roxbury.

### **Suggested Plant Regulation Changes**

As requested by members of the public, legislators, and the Attorney General, the Council has considered changes proposed to the list of invasive and potentially invasive plants in Connecticut. Requestors often fail to understand the nuances of the "LISTS" that the Council is charged with maintaining, and the list in the legislation that has banned certain plants determined by scientific criteria to be invasive by the Council.

During 2011 the Council initiated a review of the status of golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*) and yellow groove bamboo (*Phyllostachys aureosulcata*) in CT in response to a 2010 request from the Attorney General's Office and multiple calls and letters from a concerned landowner in Seymour. Site visits by CAES, DEEP, UConn, IPANE and the Invasive Plant Coordinator have been conducted in areas around the state where bamboo has been reported. The purpose of the site visits, coupled with a review of the technical literature on bamboo, is to determine the extent to which the species might qualify as invasive or potentially invasive under the requirements of CGS 22a-381b. A final determination by the Council is expected in December 2011, and will be included in our 2012 report.

## Overview of Current Activities and Needs in Connecticut

Invasive plants continue to cause obvious environmental problems, and public concern about them continues to grow. During 2011, the Council continued to receive requests from land holders who want relief from the problems of invasive plants. Removal of invasives from minimally managed areas is a costly proposition, and the State would be well served by a program that prevents future invasions and provides educational and financial resources to implement eradication campaigns.

As mentioned in last year's report, the reduction in funding for the comprehensive state invasive plant program from \$500K/year to \$0 in 2010 was devastating. **We realize that budgetary times are difficult, but respectfully request support for key "keep-alive" functions, such as the Coordinator's salary and operating expenses. These total approximately \$90,000 per year and are absolutely essential if the state is going to be able to address the invasive plants problem.** This request is particularly critical for the coming fiscal year given the recent reductions in Agency funding and staffing.

In its nine years of operation, the Council has worked to refine the initial invasive plants legislation so that the mechanisms for inspection and enforcement are now in place for both terrestrial and aquatic problem plants. We have envisioned what a comprehensive invasive plants program would look like in Connecticut, and with the initial funding for the program, DEEP was able to move forward to create a Coordinator position and begin to implement this vision (attachment 6). Staff in DEEP have taken up the charge of responding to the invasive plants problem, and have utilized the resources and network that the Council provides. When state finances improve and funding for invasive plants is restored, this infrastructure is ready to fulfill the goals initially enunciated by the legislation that formed the Council in 2002. That said, the near term funding for the State Coordinator's position remains our top concern.

I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. Feel free to contact me at (860) 424-3010 if questions arise.

Sincerely,



William A. Hyatt  
Chairman

### Attachments:

1. In Memoriam
2. Council members
3. Minutes of meetings
4. 2011 Revised Invasive Plant List
5. Running bamboo status update
6. DEEP Invasive Plant Program 2011 accomplishments
7. CAES Invasive Aquatic Plant Program
8. Green Industry update
9. Department of Agriculture
10. CT Invasive Plant Working Group
11. UConn Plant Science and Landscape Architecture
12. CT Sea Grant
  - a. Attachment 1
  - b. Attachment 2