



# GA-EPPC 2008 Annual Meeting Informative and Productive

by Brian Arnold, Natures Landscape Services, Inc.

The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council (GA-EPPC) held their annual meeting at the Elachee Nature Science Center in Gainesville, Georgia on September 19. Over fifty people attended, including professionals involved in forestry and wildlife, natural resource management, and the horticulture industry. Presentations addressed the severity of the environmental damage caused by invasive plants, as well as current and promising methodologies of management. The Elachee Nature Science Center, an outdoor classroom used to teach environmental science to both youth and adults, was a fitting location as it has been pioneer-like in forging a cooperative effort with local government, utilities, and other prominent institutions.

Connie Gray, President of GA-EPPC, called the meeting to order.

Dr. Dave Moorhead, Professor of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia (UGA) Warnell School of Forestry Resources, and co-director of the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health (CISEH), discussed the latest findings in invasive plant establishment, spread and control. Dr. Moorhead also discussed the severity of spread of several species, reinforcing the Council's need to be active.

Thomas Farmer, Director of Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy in Georgia, discussed the current environment of governmental policy and some of the obstacles that are hindering progress relating to control of invasive plants.

James Johnson, Forest Health Coordinator with the Georgia Forestry Commission, provided an update on the management of cogongrass.

Chuck Barger, Information Technology Director at the UGA CISEH, showed how invasive species are being mapped and recorded and, most importantly, how attendees can contribute to this critical element of invasive plant management.

Nathan Klaus, Wildlife Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Non-Game Division, gave insight as to when fire is and isn't useful in controlling invasive plants and restoring habitat. Attendees

learned how simple disturbances of a natural environment predispose it to the establishment of invasive plants.

Marty Langmaid of Monrovia Nurseries, together with Rick Barnes of Nature Scapes, represented the Georgia Green Industry Association's Invasive Plant Task Force. Mr. Langmaid explained practices used by his company and others for controlling invasive plants, including an inventory system that prevents the sale of a given plant in areas where it has been identified as invasive.

A portion of the day was utilized to discuss how the Council should move forward in addressing governmental policy, communication and fundraising. Attendance at the annual meeting was encouraging but considering the impact that invasive plants are having in both rural and urban environments, greater involvement is needed. Recognizing this, Ms. Gray stressed the need to increase

general membership and their involvement in the Council.

Methods of educating the public to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the problems associated with invasive plants were addressed as well. Cynthia Taylor of the Elachee Nature Science Center shared her experience in educating youth to discuss how the Council's educational efforts can accomplish council goals as well as aid schools in achieving curriculum requirements. Ms. Taylor presented an overview of how the cooperative effort was forged.

The meeting concluded with a field session at the Center, led by Mr. Barger and Ms. Taylor.

Future functions are being planned, including a workshop to teach landowners methods of controlling invasive species in early 2009. Check the GA-EPPC website ([www.gaeppc.org](http://www.gaeppc.org)) for the date and location.

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