



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

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State forestry agencies join forces to combat cogongrass

Jackson, MS--The Mississippi Forestry Commission in cooperation with several other member states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina) of the Southern Group of State Foresters have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to organize and coordinate efforts to fight the spread of cogongrass, *Imperata cylindrica*.

Through this MOU, state forestry agencies will work with landowners and organizations in cogongrass management activities. This includes: developing and implementing control and suppression tactics; educating the public to recognize this invasive weed; helping to minimize its future spread, and reporting suspect cogongrass finds for verification and appropriate control measures.

“The spread of cogongrass does not stop at the state line, county line, or a landowner’s property line,” said Charlie Morgan, state forester of the Mississippi Forestry Commission. “Responsible action must be taken by all property owners and land managers to effectively stop the spread of cogongrass on private lands, state-owned lands, and federal lands.” In Mississippi, cogongrass has been found in 62 counties, with significant infestations in 28 counties.

The Forestry Commission is also a member of the newly formed Mississippi Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). The CWMA is a coalition of 38 organizations, agencies, and other groups who have agreed to establish a proactive, comprehensive and cohesive approach for public education, research, and control efforts of recognized invasive weeds impacting the farms and forests of Mississippi. The lead agency of the CWMA is the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce/Bureau of Plant Industry.

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(State forestry agencies . . . cogongrass, cont'd)

Native to Southeast Asia, cogongrass has infested more than 1.25 billion acres worldwide and is believed to have entered the United States in the early 1900s as a packing material. Today, infested areas of cogongrass are found on over one million acres throughout the southeastern U.S. It is a highly aggressive perennial that grows from two feet to more than four feet in height, in full sunlight to partial shade, and quickly forms large dense stands, choking out native plants and destroying wildlife habitat. It spreads both by wind-blown seeds – with a single plant producing up to 3,000 seeds – and by underground branching stems called rhizomes. Each rhizome, or fragment of rhizome, can start a new plant. Seeds or pieces of rhizomes transported to new areas in contaminated soil, hay, sod or on equipment can easily sprout and start new infestations.

In addition, cogongrass is a significant fire hazard. The roots and rhizomes of cogongrass are fire-tolerant, but leaves and flowers of the plant are extremely flammable creating a fire hazard for firefighters and citizens living in rural areas.

For more information on cogongrass, please visit the following Web sites: www.cogongrass.org and www.mfc.state.ms.us .

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The Southern Group of State Foresters is a non-profit organization consisting of State Foresters from [Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [North Carolina](#), [Oklahoma](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), [Texas](#), [Virginia](#), Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

It also includes ex-officio members - the SGSF Executive Director, the Regional Forester for the USFS [Southern Region](#) , Deputy Regional Forester for State and Private Forestry for the USFS Southern Region, the Director of the [Southern Research Station](#) , and the Director of the [International Institute of Tropical Forestry](#) of the [USDA Forest Service](#).