

SYMPOSIA**INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT**

DEVELOPING A STATE INVASIVE SPECIES ALLIANCE FOR MISSISSIPPI. J.D. Madsen, J.D. Byrd, Jr., D.R. Shaw, and R.G. Westbrooks, Mississippi State University, GeoResources Institute, Mississippi State, MS 39762-9652 and U.S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Discipline, Whiteville, NC 28472

ABSTRACT

Invasive species are a multi-billion dollar problem in the mid-south states. While a number of federal, state, and local agencies have responded with small programs to manage these problems, cost-effective management requires early detection and management. The proliferation of programs lacks effective communication and coordination between states and agencies. Individual development of tracking new infestations and data sharing would be wasteful duplication of funds. We are developing a task force of federal, state, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and concerned citizens focused on the early detection and management of invasive noxious species in Mississippi, the Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance (MISA). The organization will be tiered, having an executive council of decision-makers from each state, a technical steering committee, and an advisory council composed of those interested in participating.

The invasion of a profusion of species impacting all aspects of our national ecosystem has generated considerable concern among natural resource managers and scientists, resulting in the formation of a number of groups focused on invasive species issues. Some focus on a given species, while others focus on resource types or habitats. Many of these groups have been effective in their targeted goals, others less so. Why do we need another group?

First, scientists or resource managers start most of these groups, for scientists and natural resource managers. They do not specifically include decision makers and people of influence, to enact their goals into policy. The Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance incorporates these state policymakers into an executive council, to include them in the process. Second, the very proliferation of these groups has created a new problem – these groups compete for attention and resources. While MISA does not seek to replace these groups in any way, it does seek to present a coordinated front to the public to minimize competition for resources. Third, most of these groups cannot devote the necessary resources to develop and maintain web-based databases and information resources on the invasive species problems in the state. We are seeking to provide this information node for invasive species groups and target species for the state.

The Mississippi Invasive Species Alliance will actively seek cooperation and collaboration with existing invasive species in the state and country. We will also provide information through a broader network on invasive species concerns. We will work with state and federal agencies to provide timely information on the locations of target invasive species through a web-based database. We will work with professionals and volunteers in training, education, and resources to find new locations of invasive species, and monitor their distribution.