

Common Reed: *Phragmites Australis* (Cav.) Trin. Ex. Steud: Life History in the Mobile River Delta, Alabama

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ABSTRACT

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) is a non-native invasive perennial grass that creates a nuisance in aquatic and riparian environments across the United States. The ability of common reed to reproduce quickly combined with its ability to cycle nutrients has made it an aggressive invader of riparian and wetland ecosystems. Common reed often forms monotypic stands that displace native vegetation more desirable as wildlife food and cover than common reed. Common reed has been differentiated into multiple haplotypes, two haplotypes being native to North America, and a non-native, European haplotype. The European haplotype is of concern due to its ability to out compete native vegetation, alter hydrology, and change community structure of aquatic and riparian habitats. In order to help maintain native habitats and manage and populations of common reed in the United States, a complete understanding of its life cycle is needed. Twelve samples were taken from four sites in Mobile River Delta, AL from January 2006 until December 2006. Above ground biomass allocation is highest from July through September with a high of 2.9 kg/m². Below ground biomass allocation was highest from May through August with a high of 2.7 kg/m² in May. This understanding will provide insights into the relationships between common reed and the environment as well as to guide management strategies.

Keywords: Ecology, Invasive species, Phragmites, Wetlands