



Photo by Stephanie Gapud

Many Alabama landowners are aware that cogon-grass (*Imperata cylindrical*) is a serious threat to the natural ecosystem. Cogongrass is considered one of the world's most invasive weeds, adversely affecting millions of acres worldwide. In Alabama, this aggressive weed has steadily spread from its original point of infestation in Mobile and is pushing rapidly north and east across the South. A new tool to help inform the public as to where this threat exists can now be found on the Alabama Forestry Commission's website at www.forestry.alabama.gov; select "Invasive Species" listed under the "Insect, Disease & Invasive Species" menu.

The State Task Force on Cogongrass, a group of 30 agencies, organizations, and businesses continues to work diligently on the cogongrass threat. With encouragement from the State Task Force and funding provided by a US Forest Service grant, the Alabama Forestry Commission has developed a process to precisely locate and map infestations across the state. According to Assistant State Forester Bill Baisden, "The only way we can begin the process of effectively stopping cogongrass is by knowing exactly where infestations are located. The new webpage

gives viewers a real perspective of the full extent of the situation. While the detection and mapping phase has really just begun, the reality of the threat of cogongrass is graphically illustrated. We encourage all landowners to use the webpage as a tool to become more knowledgeable about cogongrass and see if current infestations represent a threat to their property." Baisden also advises that as detection and mapping continue in the future, landowners should reference the AFC webpage often to get updated information. Baisden further stated, "There are so many spots in the Southwest part of Alabama that it will take hundreds of man-hours to get a true assessment of the infestation in that part of the state."

An additional effort of the State Task Force on Cogongrass is to educate the public on recognizing and controlling this weed. In 2009, several workshops across the state will be held that are open to the public. For a list of workshops, please visit the Commission website at www.forestry.alabama.gov and select "Workshops" listed under the "Information & Educational Resources" menu or contact your local Alabama Forestry Commission Office. ☎