

Development and implementation of an educational workshop on control and spread prevention of invasive plants

Project Final Report (#09-018W)

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Project Outcomes

The intent of the project was to support the development and implementation of an educational workshop on control and spread prevention of invasive plants. The intended audience was landowners and land managers who are actually applying on-the-ground management for invasive plants. This workshop was designed to present information about how to identify the worst invasive plants in our region, which new invasive plants to look out for, how to control invasive plants while minimizing non-target effects, how to plan a successful invasive plant management program, and how to conduct such control methods.

Project Accomplishments

The workshop was held at the Dixon Springs Ag Center in Pope County with the field portion conducted on the grounds of the Ag Center as well. Invasive Plant Control, Inc., a for-profit company that specializes in the management of invasive plants, donated their time and equipment to help lead the program, giving several presentations and leading the field demonstration section of the workshop.

Over 55 people attended the workshop. Attendees ranged from private contractors and landowners to government and non-profit employees. Staff from IDNR (Wildlife, Natural Heritage, and Forestry), NRCS, Shawnee NF, Crab Orchard NWR, various Soil & Water Conservation Districts, The Nature Conservancy, and Illinois Sierra Club were in attendance.

All attendees were given a packet of supplemental information on invasive plants. That packet included:

- “Defending Favorite Places” DVD – This DVD, produced by the USDA Forest Service Invasive Species Program, focus on prevention techniques used to slow the spread of invasive plants
- “Taking Back Our Natural Areas: A guide for Southwestern Illinois Landowners Identifying and Controlling Invasive Plants” – This flyer was developed by the Southwestern Illinois RC&D and provides good information and images of local invasive plant species
- “Invasive Plants Threatening Illinois Habitats” – This informational series, developed by the Illinois CAPS program in cooperation with the River to River CWMA and Illinois Natural History Survey, combines a poster with four companion flyers to inform the people of Illinois about new invasive plant threatening four different habitats in Illinois (Forests, Grasslands, Wetlands, and Agricultural lands)

- “Why Should I Care About Invasive Plants?” – This booklet, produced by the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, gives detailed information about the threats invasive plants pose to our ecosystem, economy, and recreational opportunities.

Presentations topics at the workshop included:

- New invasive plants to Illinois
- Why be concerned about sensitive areas
- Techniques for controlling invasive plants in sensitive areas
- Specific control recommendations for different invasive plant species
- Writing prescriptions for invasive plant management

In addition, the field portion of the workshop allowed the audience to see and discuss different equipment and techniques used in invasive plant control as well as ask further questions about specific species.

After the workshop, an online evaluation form was sent to all attendees with 23 responding. Overall the results were extremely positive about the workshop with 22 out of 23 stating that they would be interested in attending similar workshop in the future. A full description of survey findings is attached to this final report.

Project Funds

The River to River CWMA found overwhelming support from its partners for this project. Many partners thought this was a much needed program and decided to support the workshop in such a way that no actual funds were needed from the WPF grant to implement this project. All costs and supplies were either donated or covered by another group.