

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) Program at Auburn University, FY2008



The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) program funds allocated to Auburn University are administered through the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. During FY2008, the program was primarily focused on the RREA Strategic Issue of Invasive Plant Species. Some accomplishments are listed below.

Educational activities for forest landowners, professionals, and practitioners enhanced their knowledge about exotic invasive species and control methods, and included maintenance of dedicated web sites within the Alabama Cooperative Extension System domain and the invasive.org web site. During FY2008, 58,207 hits were recorded on these web sites with specific information and images developed by university faculty.

Participation in 18 workshops, field days, and conferences provided information to more than 1500 landowners. A major effort was the Regional Cogongrass Conference held at the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center in Mobile, AL. The conference, "Confronting the Cogongrass Crisis Across the South," was organized because of deep concerns expressed by many stakeholders about the unrelenting invasion of this bold, unwanted, and hard-to-control grass. Cogongrass is of grave concern because it is spreading rapidly across the Southeast, reducing forest and pasture productivity, destroying wildlife habitat, impacting rights of ways, and presenting an extreme fire hazard. The conference purpose was to convey the latest knowledge for restoring lands, managing, controlling, and eradicating cogongrass, and

to explore existing and needed networks for coordinating strategies for successful cogongrass management.



The nearly 350 people from 10 southeastern states attending the conference represented federal and state agencies, county and local governments, universities, extension, forest industry, forestry consultants, herbicide applicators and consultants, other land managers, and private citizens. Fifteen expert speakers from across the Southeast shared their knowledge of cogongrass and provided written summaries of their presentations for the conference proceedings. These proceedings, "A Cogongrass Management Guide," were given to each meeting participant. The Guide and powerpoint presentations are posted online: <http://www.cogongrass.org/>. A key outcome of this conference is an energized state and regional cooperative effort to effectively combat cogongrass. This new cooperative effort is significantly reflected by the initiation of a cogongrass task force for the state of Alabama, spearheaded by the Alabama Forestry Commission.

"Please know how much we appreciate all of your hard work in putting the conference together. It has helped Linda Casey [State Forester, Alabama] and me a great deal in crystallizing what needs to be done by the AFC on this critical issue." Bill Baisden, Assistant State Forester, Alabama

Auburn University RREA contact: Paul Mask, Asst. Director, AFNR, 114 Duncan Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-5635; telephone: 334- 844-5490; e-mail: maskpau@auburn.edu