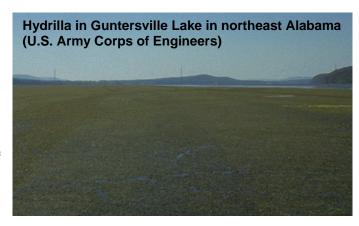
#### **INVASIVE SPECIES IN ALABAMA**

## What is an invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, or other organisms that are introduced to a given area outside their original range and cause harm in their new home. Because they have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction, they usually spread rampantly. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health.



• The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at \$120 billion annually.

# **Invasive Species in Alabama: A Quick Look**

Alabama has been invaded by a number of harmful exotic plants and animals. Here is a quick look at some of the worst current and potential invaders:

Name	Туре	Origin	Extent	Damage
Zebra	Mollusk	Caspian Sea region of	Found along	Voracious filter feeders that out-
mussel		Asia; accidentally released	most of the	compete native animals; fouls
		into Lake St. Clair in 1988	length of the	boats & clogs intake pipes at
		in ship ballast water	Tennessee	power plants and municipal
			River in AL	water sources
Chestnut	Fungus	China; probably introduced	By 1926, the	Chestnut once comprised one-
blight		on nursery stock in the	disease had	fourth to one-half of eastern
		1890s. It was first detected	devastated	U.S. forests, and was prized for
		in New York city in 1904.	chestnuts from	its durable wood, and as a food
			Maine to	for humans, livestock and
			Alabama	wildlife. Today, only stump-
				sprouts from killed trees remain.
Dutch	Fungus	Asia; one strain of the	American elm	Elms were once the nation's
elm		disease arrived in the	originally	most popular urban street tree,
disease		1930s in Cleveland, OH on	ranged in all	have now largely disappeared
		infected elm logs from	states east of	from both urban and forested
		Europe; a more virulent	Rockies- most	landscapes. It is estimated that
		strain arrived in 1940s	of this area is	"Dutch" elm disease has killed
			infested	over 100 million trees.
Fire Ant	Insect	South America;	300 million	Aggressive, multiple biter with
		accidentally introduced to	acres of	painful venom and chance of
		Alabama in 1930s	Southern U.S.,	allergy; may also damage fruits,
			including all	berries and young crops; also
			of Alabama	damage electric boxes; ant
				mounds are a hazard to farm
				equipment.
Kudzu	Vine	Japan, China; promoted in	7 million acres	Grows up to one foot per day!
		U.S in 1920s and 30s for	of the South	Overgrows and shades out trees,
		forage and erosion control	are infested.	covers houses, barns, road signs.

Name	Туре	Origin	Extent	Damage
Cogongrass	Grass	Southeast Asia;	500,000 to 1	Displaces native plants; little
		introduced in 1920s	million acres of	food value for wildlife;
		and '30s for forage and	AL, FL & MS	creates severe fire hazards
		soil stabilization		
Hydrilla	Aquatic	Africa & Southeast	Tennessee, Black	Clogs waterways, restricting
	plant	Asia; introduced in	Warrior,	recreation; kills other aquatic
		Tampa area as an	Tombigbee &	life by blocking sunlight and
		ornamental in 1950s	Chattahoochee	using oxygen; promotes
			Rivers, Mobile Bay	mosquito breeding

# **What Congress Can Do:**

# A. Make Prevention Our Top Priority

- Reverse current U.S. policy on the intentional import of live plants and animals, that is, switch from a "dirty" to a "clean" list approach that requires screening for invasiveness before import and which keeps out or limits import of species so as to prevent harm to native species or ecosystems and make the legislative changes to do so.
- Substantially cut the unintentional introduction of aquatic invaders by overseeing federal standard-setting on the discharge of ballast water in the United States, supporting the development of technology to meet these standards; ensuring that agencies monitor and enforce compliance; and reauthorizing the 1996 National Invasive Species Act in the strongest and most comprehensive form.
- When considering, reviewing, or approving trade agreements, rigorously address invasive species, e.g., by allowing for restriction of imports of non-native species that are invasive elsewhere and by identifying pathways by which inadvertent introductions travel so that they may be interrupted.

#### B. Make Federal Agencies More Effective

- Use oversight authority to ensure that all federal agencies immediately and strongly implement that part of Executive Order 13112 that asks them to identify and reduce actions that introduce or spread invasive species in the United States or elsewhere.
- Appropriate adequate funds so that federal agencies have the resources to address invasive species problems promptly and comprehensively over the long-term.
- Strengthen the structure and leadership of the National Invasive Species Council and prompt more aggressive implementation of its National Management Plan.
- Oversee the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure that the agency and its Administrator are committed to protecting biological diversity as well as agriculture.
- Evaluate the serious problems with border inspection for pests, weeds, and pathogens, e.g., in staffing and cross-department coordination, exacerbated by moving these functions into the Department of Homeland Security and amend its authorizing legislation if needed.

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