

# Executive Summary

## *Invasive Species*



### Summary

A leadership team was formed in August 2004 and met periodically to develop an outline for the conference session. We identified key issues for which the conference provided the best opportunity to engage a broad set of stakeholders and secure commitments to action. The leadership team included: Fred Clark, Clark Forestry, Inc.; John Exo, UW-Extension; Jane Cummings-Carlson, WDNR-DOF; Peter Murray, Wisconsin Lakes Assoc.; Miles Falck, GLIFWC; Dan Bohlin, woodland owner; Gene Roark, W.W.O.A., I.P.A.W.; and Nancy Berlin, USDA Forest Service Region 9. Staff support was also provided by Darrell Zastrow of D.O.F. and Kelly Kearns of WDNR-Bureau of Endangered Resources.

The leadership team reviewed the 9 issues and 22 strategies / recommendations developed by Council on Forestry's Invasive Species Task Group in their draft report to the Forestry Council in September 2004. The leadership team selected 4 issues from that report for focus during the conference. The issues were selected based on the team's consensus of their importance, and the suitability of the conference format for developing strategies for them.

Sixty-seven people participated in the 4-hour session. Participants included local, state and federal agency staff, Non-Governmental Organizations, academics and private landowners.

Introductory sessions included presentations detailing the current status and extent of invasive plant and forest pest issues in Wisconsin, emerging threats, efforts in place for monitoring and control, and resources needed.

Following the introductory sessions we broke into sub-theme sessions to discuss the 4 issues selected by the leadership team. The results of those sessions follow.

## **Governors Conference on Forestry - Invasive Species Session Summary of the 4 Issues, Conclusions and Key Strategies**

### **I. Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species**

The conference participants had a clear consensus on the need for voluntary forestry / invasive species BMP's and a commitment to a partnership-based process for creating them.

**Goal:** Create Partnerships and Process for Development of Forestry BMP's for Invasive Species.

### **II. Forestry / Invasives Research, Survey and Monitoring Needs**

Conference participants felt that a lack of consistent and standardized data was one barrier to setting research agendas and effectively allocating resources toward invasives research and management.

**Goal:** Create a central repository for collecting and sharing standardized survey data on the presence and severity of invasive species.

### **III. Landowner/Manager Partnerships and Co-operative Management**

Lack of co-ordination between agencies, neighboring landowners and managers of highway and utility rights-of-way were identified as a significant barrier to effective management of emerging invasives issues.

**Goal:** Provide incentives and facilitate development of local weed councils or Weed Management Areas (WMA's) throughout Wisconsin.

### **IV. Information, Education and Outreach**

There is a consistent need to improve outreach and education efforts around invasives, particularly for private landowners. Participants identified the need for a clearinghouse for providing information and links to resources for invasives identification, detection and management. A related secondary need was to help modify behaviors of recreational users to limit spread of invasives.

**Goal:** Create an information clearinghouse pilot project to more effectively deliver information and resources about invasive species to private landowners.

## **Actions Requested from the Council on Forestry**

The Invasive Species Leadership Team met on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004 to review the results of the conference and identify critical next steps. We also reviewed the key recommendations of the draft report from the Invasive Species Task Force that was delivered to the Forestry Council on 9/04. The Leadership Team recognizes a need for their own continued involvement in the issue to help represent the range of interests and skills needed to advance the strategies selected during the conference and in the Task Force Report.

At this time the Leadership Team requests action and specific approval of the Council on three key issues:

- Endorsement of the Department of Natural Resources budget request to fund an invasive species program. Resources for the Division of Forestry (D.O.F.) to develop an effective invasive plants program is embedded within the DNR's overall budget request, has been reviewed by the Forestry Council and approved by the Natural Resources Board. The Council's specific endorsement of this component of the budget will help raise awareness of the needs being met by the current request during review by DOA and the State Senate and Assembly.
- Recognition of the need for revision of state statutes and related administrative rules to develop comprehensive invasive species laws. Wisconsin's current laws regulating invasive species are outdated and the state needs a broad and robust regulatory framework for the protection of natural resources from invasive species. The Governor's Invasive Species Council (GISC) should be the advisory body to lead this effort. The Forestry Council should direct the D.O.F. to co-operate with GISC, other Divisions within DNR, and other state agencies to begin developing proposed rules and draft legislation for this effort. The Council on Forestry endorses the need for this legislation and the Invasive Species Council's role in leading the effort to find political support.
- Request for staff support from Division of Forestry to continue the co-ordination and leadership efforts needed to advance the strategies identified through the conference. An immediate focus of this effort would be to begin work on all of the four initiatives described above, including kicking-off the process of developing state-wide BMP's for invasive species, and to continue the work of the leadership team in engaging a broad array of stakeholders around forestry/invasive species issues.