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Southeastern State Forestry Agencies Join Forces to Combat Cogongrass

The Alabama Forestry Commission in cooperation with several other member states (Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina) of the Southern Group of State Foresters have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to organize and coordinate efforts to fight the spread of cogongrass, *Imperata cylindrica*.

Through this MOU, state forestry agencies will work with landowners and organizations in cogongrass management activities. This includes: developing and implementing control and suppression tactics; educating the public to recognize this invasive weed; helping to minimize its future spread, and reporting suspect cogongrass finds for verification and appropriate control measures.

According to Alabama State Forester Linda Casey, “Cogongrass is not going away on its own! It will continue to destroy land productivity, wildlife habitats, and ecosystems unless we aggressively work to stop it. This agreement will help us leverage local, state and federal resources, not only to battle this destructive weed but also help educate landowners and citizens about the impact and spread of cogongrass.”

Native to Southeast Asia, this noxious weed has infested more than 1.25 billion acres worldwide and is believed to have entered the United States in the early 1900s as a packing material. Today, infested areas of cogongrass are found throughout the southeastern U.S. It is a highly aggressive perennial that grows from two feet to more than four feet in height, in full sunlight to partial shade, and quickly forms large dense stands, choking out native plants and destroying wildlife habitat. It spreads both by wind-blown seeds – with a single plant producing up to 3,000 seeds – and by underground branching rhizomes. Each rhizome, or fragment of rhizome, can start a new plant. Seeds or pieces of rhizomes transported to new areas in contaminated soil, hay, sod or on equipment can easily sprout and start new infestations.

In addition, cogongrass is a significant fire hazard. The roots and rhizomes of cogongrass are fire-tolerant, but leaves and flowers of the plant are extremely flammable creating a fire hazard for firefighters and citizens living in rural areas.

This MOU will remain in effect through June 30, 2013, at which time state foresters will have the option of renewing the agreement.

For more information on cogongrass, please visit the following web site:
<http://www.forestry.alabama.gov/Cogongrass.aspx> or contact your local state forestry office.

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The SGSF is a non-profit organization consisting of State Foresters from [Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [North Carolina](#), [Oklahoma](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), [Texas](#), [Virginia](#), Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

It also includes ex-officio members - the SGSF Executive Director, the Regional Forester for the USFS [Southern Region](#), Deputy Regional Forester for State and Private Forestry for the USFS Southern Region, the Director of the [Southern Research Station](#), and the Director of the [International Institute of Tropical Forestry](#) of the [USDA Forest Service](#).

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