

River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area

Benefits From Cooperative Management Plan for Invasive Plants

The Challenge

The impact of invasive plant species is a relatively new and increasingly important threat to the health, diversity and productivity of forested woodlands. Invasive plant introduction and proliferation across eastern forests presents a unique challenge for land managers because of the ease in which these plants can spread and the typically large number of diverse forest land owners in a given area. Increasingly, good forest management is dependant not only upon the choices a landowner makes, but also on whether his neighbor chooses to manage the invasive plants on his property.

The Solution

Forward thinking land managers quickly realized that cooperation among landowners is critical to the effective management of invasive plants. Taking a cue from the Cooperative Weed Management Area concept from the western United States, eastern land managers wondered whether such a concept could work in the east in spite of the abundance and diversity of forest landowners there. In 2004, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources proposed an invasive plant management project to control invasive plants in and around Giant City State Park in southern Illinois. The project called for the formation of a “cooperative partnership” to increase the effectiveness of their control efforts. With initial NA Invasive Plant Program funding, these early efforts at cooperative management were the catalyst for a groundswell of interest in both the issue of invasive plants as well the utility of cooperative management. This resulted in the official formation of the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area in southern Illinois in 2006. Resulting Benefits

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The River to River CWMA encompasses the 11 southern-most counties in Illinois. Twelve official members make

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Eleven counties formed the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area in partnership with state, federal and non-profit organizations.

up the CWMA including federal partners Shawnee National Forest, Crab Orchard and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuges, NRCS and APHIS. State partners include Illinois Departments of Natural Resources, Transportation and Agriculture. Other partners include University of Illinois Extension, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, the Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area and the Nature Conservancy. The cooperative efforts of these partners earned the project a National Wildlife Institute “Pulling Together Initiative” grant in 2007. Past activities included building “bootbrush” stations at public hiking trails and the development of a local invasive plant guide. Additional funding approved in 2007 will enable the development of an exotic plant strike team to provide rapid response control of newly detected invaders.

Sharing Success

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are a novel concept that is gaining interest in the east. Similarly interested groups can look to the River to River CWMA as an example of an effective cooperative program. Resources are available for those interested in forming a CWMA, required reading includes the “CWMA Cookbook: A Recipe for Success” (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/nnis/cwma/docs/MIPN-Cookbook.pdf>).



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