



To facilitate efficient and effective management of invasive plants for the protection of the economic and natural resources of Oklahoma's private and public land and water.

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OkIPC Working to Educate All Stakeholders on Invasive Issues

Karen Hickman, President

I have heard several speakers make the statement, "We don't need any more vendors!" usually in reference to the formation of new organizations. In the case of OkIPC, I would strongly disagree! We have come together over the past couple of years to fill a niche that was left empty in Oklahoma.

OkIPC members are facilitating the spread of invasive species information among multiple agencies in Oklahoma — agencies which have responsibilities associated with non-native and often invasive plant species. Over the past several months OkIPC Officers have met with personnel from OK State Parks, OK Department of Wildlife

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First Citizen Science Training at Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference

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Annual Meeting Grows Like a Weed

Priscilla Crawford, OkIPC Secretary

Over 70 stakeholders representing a wide variety of concerns attended the 2nd Annual Meeting of the OkIPC on July 14th this year to become better informed about the problem of invasive species in Oklahoma.

Attendees represented agriculture and horticulture industry, universities, conservation districts, state legislature, state tourism, federal agencies, and many others. Speakers at the annual meeting addressed a broad-spectrum of invasive species topics including economical and ecological impacts. Key-note speaker, Everett Laney of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, detailed the invasive species

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First Citizen Science Training at Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference

Curtis Tackett, OkIPC Board Member & Aquatic Nuisance Species Biologist, ODWC

On November 6th, Chad Cox, OkIPC Citizen Science Committee Chair, and I attended the Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference in Oklahoma City to teach participants about aquatic invasive species. First, I presented historical information about aquatic invasives in Oklahoma including how invasive species travel from their native regions and thrive in new locations. We demonstrated how to identify several common aquatic invasives found in Oklahoma using photos and live plants. In addition to the exotic species, we discussed some of Oklahoma's native aquatic plants not only talking about what they look like, but also examining their important role in maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems.

By providing invasive species training to the volunteers we had an ulterior motive. Chad proposed that Blue Thumb volunteers become invasive species spotters. Who better than Blue Thumb volunteers, who are already monitoring many aquatic systems statewide, to report their observations of aquatic invasives? By training the Blue Thumb groups in invasive aquatic species identification, we can establish a year round, on the ground, early detection program for aquatic invasive species.

Chad outlined the council's mission, strategies, and future goals and explained how the proposed program could be implemented through a reporting system on the OkIPC web-site. The volunteers provided feedback during a lengthy discussion and our proposal was enthusiastically accepted. Additionally, we were invited to present to other Blue Thumb volunteer groups throughout Oklahoma to make this a comprehensive state-wide effort.

Being a pilot for our first Citizen Science program, there are a few issues that need to be addressed. The development of an Oklahoma specific aquatic invasive plant field guide would help to confirm proper plant identification. Also landowner privacy needs to be ensured. Blue Thumb volunteers, who work on private property, will need to obtain permission from the landowner to record invasive species as they conduct the water quality monitoring.

Chad and I look forward to working with more Blue Thumb groups in the future. We believe the information gathered by the volunteers will become very important as we try to tackle invasive species problems in Oklahoma. ■

Legislators to Learn More in Invasive Task Force

Priscilla Crawford, OkIPC Secretary

The state legislature's Invasive Species Task Force will meet on January 5, 2011 at the State Capitol from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Karen Hickman, OkIPC President, is expected to speak during the meeting on behalf of the OkIPC. The complete agenda had not been determined at publication time.

During the 52nd Legislature in 2010, Senator Mike Schulz, of Altus (District 38) introduced Bill 1330, an Act creating a Musk Thistle Task Force. After some urging by interested parties, including OkIPC, Schultz amended his bill to include all invasive species.

The Invasive Species Task Force will be composed of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. The chair of the task force will be the Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Ron Justice of Chickasha (District 23).

According to Bill 1330's amended text, "the purpose of the task force is to create a statewide plan for the eradication of invasive species." This lofty goal can only be addressed superficially during the course of a two hour meeting. The OkIPC is optimistic that the task force meeting is only the beginning of meaningful invasive species legislation in Oklahoma. The OkIPC plans to continue to educate the Invasive Species Task Force members and other members of the Legislature regarding invasive species issues in our state. ■

Stay informed on invasive plant issues in Oklahoma —

Join the OkIPC listserv!

See the membership page on our web-site:

ok-invasive-plant-council.org

President's Message, *continued from page 1*

Conservation, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, OK Department of Transportation, OK Farm Bureau, OK Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) with the goal of learning how each of these organizations deals with invasives, what their philosophy is toward invasive plants, and how OkIPC can help them in completing their tasks.

During our discussions, we found that many people were misinformed regarding invasive species. Here is an example of a touchy topic — musk thistle. Several groups believed that ODAFF, the agency tasked with enforcing the current Noxious Weed Law, was not doing enough to enforce the law as it pertains to musk thistle. Therefore, it was useless to report a violator. However, Jeanetta Cooper of ODAFF told us of the problems that exist with pursuing musk thistle violations.

All musk thistle reports need a complete set of the required documentation or she cannot send out an inspector to the site. And, according to Jeanetta, most reports submitted are, unfortunately, incomplete. Of those sites that were properly reported and inspected, many of the land owners/managers actually **were**



James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) is only one of a few invasive species regulated in Oklahoma.

in compliance: either the site had been mowed or sprayed prior to the inspection, or the musk thistle bio-control weevils were present in the flower heads.

Thus, during our meetings with stakeholders, we were able to “correct” misinformation and explain ODAFF’s activities, limitations, and frustrations. This is just one of the many items OkIPC has learned and been able to share with our membership and stakeholders. This is why Oklahoma needs a strong invasive plant council — to efficiently and effectively facilitate the sharing of information to professionals in our state about invasive species issues.

If your organization or agency is interested in meeting with us — feel free to give me a call to schedule a time! Hope to see you in OKC at our 2011 meeting! ■

Annual Meeting, *continued from page 1*

policy of his federal agency, including the overwhelming problem of zebra mussels in Corps managed lakes. Jeanetta Cooper of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry updated the attendees on the recent regulatory activities of her state agency including the new weed free hay certification program.

Jay Pruett, OkIPC President-Elect and Director of Conservation of The Nature Conservancy - Oklahoma Chapter, informed members of the recent activities of the OkIPC committees and Board of Directors. The draft of the ranked list of invasive plants of Oklahoma, ranked by their invasive qualities, was presented by Bruce Hoagland, Coordinator of the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory.

Ecologists presented recent research on the biological control of salt cedar, *Sericea lespedeza* invasion management, and early eradication efforts of yellow flag iris, and the potential future distribution of kudzu in Oklahoma. Wayne Herriman of Holman Seed in Collinsville presented the membership with information regarding the seed industry and regulation of weed seeds.

In addition to the formal presentations, State Senator Ron Justice, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, remarked on work in the legislature to promote the education of Oklahomans on invasive species issues. ■

Presentations are available for download from our [web-site](#).

Save the Date!

OkIPC Annual Meeting

July 12, 2011

Metro Tech, Oklahoma City

Invasive Species Spotlight

Tall Fescue

Schedonorus phoenix

Melissa Hinten, OkIPC student member

Tall fescue is a cool season, perennial, bunch grass with fibrous roots lacking rhizomes. The stems range from 2.25 to 4.5 feet in height. Tall fescue will grow on most soils, but grows best on soils with a high moisture holding capacity, like loam or clay. In Oklahoma, tall fescue has maximum growth during the spring followed by semi-dormancy during the hottest period in summer, with growth resuming in the fall.

Tall fescue was introduced to the United States from Europe in the late 1800's. Seed from a stand of tall fescue was collected in 1931 in Kentucky; this seed stock was subsequently released as "Kentucky 31" in 1943. Now, tall fescue occurs throughout the continental United States.

Several characteristics of tall fescue have led to its ubiquitous distribution. It has been widely planted for erosion control because of the sod forming quality, tough root system, and ability to grow well in drainage areas. These same characteristics make it a popular turf grass.

Tall fescue has been overseeded into native warm season pastures and hay meadows throughout Oklahoma. The cool season growth of tall fescue extends the forage-growing season of native grasslands. Native hay meadows that have been overseeded with tall fescue require fertilization in the early spring to maintain the stands of tall fescue. While this encourages the growth of tall fescue, it consequently reduces overall plant species diversity within the native prairie.

In natural areas, tall fescue has the ability to invade, out-compete, and displace native plant species. The Kentucky 31 variety of tall fescue has a mutualistic relationship with an endophytic fungus making the fescue more drought tolerant, grow more vigorously, and toxic to livestock and wildlife. In Oklahoma 85% of tall fescue is infected with this endophytic fungus.

Tall fescue can be controlled by planting competitors, applying herbicides, fertilizing in late spring to promote warm season grasses, and spring burning. ■

Melissa Hinten is a geography graduate student at the University of Oklahoma studying native hay meadows of northeastern Oklahoma.

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Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

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- Reduced annual meeting registration fee
- Knowing that you are helping to combat invasive species in Oklahoma!

Using a credit card, you may join online

www.ok-invasive-plant-council.org/joinus.html

To join with a check, use this form.

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I am interested in volunteering to combat invasive species in my area.

Please make check payable to **OkIPC** and send to the address below.

Choose one of the following membership levels:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership | \$10 |
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