

DECEMBER 2007

NEWSLETTER OF THE INVASIVE SPECIES TASK FORCE

Created by the Natural Resources Study Committee, October 2007



What is the Invasive Species Task Force?

During the 2007 legislative session, Representative Clyde Kersey introduced House Bill 1087 to study the eradication and containment of bush honeysuckle and to make recommendations to the Natural Resources Study Committee. He filed this bill because his local parks were struggling to eradicate Amur bush honeysuckle (pictured above), which threatens much of the Vigo County Parks' landholdings.

The Nature Conservancy met with Representative Kersey to discuss his bill and to suggest that possibly he expand that to include the breadth of invasive species. While Amur bush honeysuckle may be one of the worst plant invaders, there are many other species of great concern to landowners, including aquatic invasive species (like hydrilla), invasive insects and plant diseases (like emerald ash borer), invasive vertebrate animals (like feral hogs), and invasive animal diseases (like Chronic Wasting Disease in deer), each with its own costs.

In addition to the existing invasive species in Indiana, there is also the important issue of preventing further invasions and detecting new invasions quickly and responding. As an example, we are all familiar with kudzu pictured to the left. While there are currently relatively few sites of this nasty vine in the state, it has the potential to cover



many acres if left unchecked. Not only can it strangle out native vegetation, kudzu also serves as an alternate host for a new invasive plant disease moving into Indiana – Asian soybean rust. The economic implications to farmers are clear, and the state has responded by working to eradicate kudzu from Indiana. Representative Kersey agreed to the expansion recognizing that bush honeysuckle would be in good company as invasive species are addressed.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ *Economic Impacts* \$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Did you know?

- Invading alien species in the United States cause major environmental damages and losses adding up to almost \$120 billion per year (Pimental *et al.*, 2005)
- The establishment of one exotic fungus in the U.S. – Asian soybean rust – is expected to cause annual losses averaging between \$240 million and \$2.0 billion to farmers. This rust was found in Indiana for the first time in 2006.
- It is estimated that if the emerald ash borer (EAB), an insect that has already killed millions of ash trees in the Midwest, is not contained or eradicated it will cost state and local governments \$7 billion over the next 25 years to remove and replace dying ash trees. EAB invaded Indiana in 2004; there are now 16 infested counties in northern and central Indiana.

Senator Landske was then contacted about being a Senate Sponsor, to which she agreed. Her district has not only been impacted by terrestrial plant invaders, but by invasive aquatic plants. Since Representative Kersey's bill was not heard in committee, both Representative Kersey and Senator Landske introduced concurrent resolutions. As a result, the Legislative Study Committee assigned this topic to the Natural Resources Study Committee.

The Natural Resources Study Committee's Assignment.

The Study Committee determined a Task Force would be valuable and that as the resolutions suggested, a group of technical experts would be the best to provide them with information. The Task Force was appointed and asked to study the economic and environmental impacts of invasive species in Indiana and provide findings and recommendations on strategies for prevention, early detection, control and management of invasive species to minimize these impacts. The Task force is made up of individuals representing a diversity of interests, including aquatic and terrestrial, animals and insects, and pathogens (a list is attached.)

First Meeting of the Task Force – November 15.

At the first meeting, the task force members discussed what some of their expectations were or possible outcomes they would like to see from the work of the Task Force. Several hoped to see better oversight relative to invasive species and were open to a council and/or agreements addressed in statute or in rule.

Members also felt there exists a need for the ability to assess and respond to invasive species issues in a science-based, thoughtful way aimed at minimizing the economic and ecological impact of invasive species in Indiana.

Possible invasive species management models were discussed, including the "Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread" program, which is a multi-agency, multi-state group, formed into a Foundation that has efficiently used federal and state resources to slow the spread of gypsy moth. Also suggested was the work of the New York Invasive Species Task Force.

Others wanted to be involved to keep their groups and clients informed. Assisting landowners, possibly with a cost share program, was suggested and concern for the impacts to humans from possible exotic animals and animal diseases.

The program of work.

A time line for the groups work was developed, which includes the presentations on the various taxa to inform and update the entire group on the status of invasive species and control/eradication efforts. The taxa include: invasive insects and plant diseases; terrestrial invasive plants, aquatic invasives, and invasive terrestrial vertebrates, and animal diseases. Two taxa were presented at the first meeting: Invasive insects and plant diseases (pathogens) and terrestrial invasive plants.

Stakeholders were identified with whom the Task Force should be contacting and communicating throughout the process.

It was also decided that following most meetings, the entire group would visit the site of an invasive issue to get a better handle on some of the issues within each taxa.

Here is a picture of the Task Force at Fort Harrison State Park. Pictured is Keith Ruble discussing his work in Vigo County, where he is assisting Extension Forester Ron Rathfon in research on Asian bush honeysuckle control.

Did you know?

- Asian bush honeysuckle is an invasive shrub found in every Indiana county
- When this shrub invades forests, it can decrease tree growth by more than 50%! For woodlot owners in Indiana, this is a significant decrease in the revenue they can expect from managing their forest.
- It can also almost stop tree regeneration, eliminating the next generation of forest



Members of the Invasive Species Task Force

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For more information on the work of the Task Force, please feel free to contact any member of the Task Force. You may also contact Lynn Dennis, who is staffing the Task Force, at The Nature Conservancy, (317) 951-8818 or by cell phone at (317) 490-3010.