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The mission of the National Association of State Foresters is to represent state and territorial forester interests by influencing forest policy and leading efforts to promote healthy and sustainable trees and forests.

ABOUT USFS

The U.S. Forest Service mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

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Protecting Forests from Harm with Mississippi's Cogongrass Suppression Program



With support from the Forest Health Protection program of the USDA Forest Service, the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is achieving goals outlined in its Forest Action Plan.

The program has enabled Mississippi to expand its efforts to combat its spread of cogongrass, an invasive grass that threatens the survival of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

MFC has conducted five successful cogongrass suppression seasons, serving 1,844 landowners, and treating 27,268 spots of cogongrass; and a large public education campaign with radio PSAs and presentations. The MFC cooperates closely on this project with various state and federal agencies and universities.

Cogongrass is an invasive, non-native grass, which occurs in the southeastern United States. A pest in 73 countries and considered to be one of the "Top 10 Worst Weeds in the World", cogongrass affects forest productivity, native species survival, wildlife habitat, recreation, native plants, fire behavior, site management costs to name a few. Cogongrass has become a serious problem for landowners and managers in Mississippi. Cogongrass has proven a tough antagonist for forest managers and in many cases multiple yearly herbicide applications are necessary for total control.

Most forest landowners are aware of the threats from cogongrass but often lack the financial resources to combat the plant. In 2009, Mississippi instituted a Cogongrass Suppression Program made possible by USDA Forest Service American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The original ARRA program covered 19 of the 62 known infested Mississippi counties along the leading edge of the state's Cogongrass infestation and ended in 2011.

In 2012, the fight was continued in those counties with FY2011 USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forest Health funds in the form of follow-up treatments where necessary. In 2013, FY 2012 USDA Forest Service Redesign Grant funds were used to open the suppression program to two new counties in 2013 thereby increasing the advancing front battle to 22 of 62 counties.

"The Mississippi Forestry Commission appreciates our partnership with the USDA Forest Service. Our relationship is one that is truly working to help the citizens of our state by providing increased forest protection and improving forest health," said Charlie Morgan, State Forester.

In 2014, using FY2013 Redesign Grant funds, the two new counties opened in 2013 were re-treated and new applications were added and also treated. As the program moves south into the native range of Longleaf Pine it becomes even more relevant. The range-wide goal of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative may be severely impaired if cogongrass is not effectively managed by partnerships such as the Mississippi Cogongrass Suppression Program.

2010 to 2014 by the numbers: Six full-time employees; 27 public education presentations; 12 print and 12 radio PSAs aired; seven newspaper interviews published; three radio interviews; four television interviews; 21,000 copies of educational materials shared with landowners in the state.

Photo credit: Leslie Robertson; Invasive.org