

## **Governor Daniels Creates Invasive Species Council for Indiana Council Will Help Battle Expensive Invasive Species Problem**



INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Using a pen made from the invasive grass phragmites, **Governor Mitch Daniels** signed into law legislation creating the state **Invasive Species Council**. The council was the primary recommendation of a task force established by a joint House and Senate committee. They charged the task force with studying the environmental and economic impacts of invasive species in Indiana and then to report their findings and recommendations back to the committee. As a result, **Representative Bob Bischoff** (D-Greendale) and **Senator Ryan Mishler** (R-Bremen) authored House Bill 1203.

***Invasive species are costing Hoosiers millions of dollars each year.*** Further, as the rate of invasion increases, the need for better communication and coordination is critical. The Council will be key to honing coordination and communication between agencies and various stakeholder groups and landowners around the state.

Several members of the task force, including staff from The Nature Conservancy, were on hand to witness the signing. “Establishing an Invasive Species Council will allow all of us - regulators, other state and federal entities, researchers, industry, and conservation groups - to discuss this issue and provide focus and direction on the most cost-effective and important strategies to deal with prevention, early detection and control and management,” said Ellen Jacquart, director of stewardship for the Conservancy. “The sooner we act the more effective and less costly our efforts will be.”

Indiana's distinction as a hub of transportation and commerce means Indiana has more than its share of invasive species. Invasive species enter Indiana through both transportation and commerce, and the rate at which invasive species are entering Indiana is increasing rapidly.

***Invasive species harm our economy, environment, and human health in many ways.*** Just one invasive insect, the Asian soybean aphid, has significantly decreased soybean productivity in the United States. In 2003 an estimated 300 million bushels were lost to this pest. There are dozens of other examples of invasive plant diseases, plants, aquatic species, insects, terrestrial animals, and animal diseases that threaten Indiana.



For instance, **Asian bush honeysuckle** (*left*) has invaded forests in every county in the state, significantly decreasing native tree regeneration and growth. Hydrilla has invaded one of our natural lakes in Fulton County, Lake Manitou. If eradication efforts are not successful this very aggressive plant could spread to other water resulting in reduced aquatic biodiversity, recreational opportunities, and fish populations. Emerald Ash Borer is killing ash trees in northern and central Indiana, and was found in the vast forests of southern Indiana last summer of 2008.

The Council will be housed in the Purdue College of Agriculture. In addition to coordination and communication to enhance consistency and effectiveness in prevention, early detection and rapid response and management of invasive species, the council will be recommending project priorities and funding, as well as recommending lead state agency to develop invasive species inventories and data management systems. Another role of the Council will be to convene or support an invasive species meeting at least once per biennium to provide information on best practices and pertinent research findings.

Said Jacquart, "Battling invasive species is difficult, to say the least. It's all about response time. One thing we know is that invasive species don't just sit there! Left untreated, they continue to grow, spread, reproduce, and disperse. And the costs for controlling them increase exponentially as time goes on. Responding quickly is crucial."

A survey of about 30 land managers in Indiana in 2007 found that they were spending **\$4.5 million** on invasive plant management. Some of this is spent by state agencies, but many local land trusts and other small groups are taking on this challenge and spending significant sums to deal with invasive plants. Managers recognize that the costs are increasing, and improved coordination and communication across the state is needed to better address this issue.

For more information about the threat of invasive species in Indiana, visit [www.nature.org/indiana](http://www.nature.org/indiana).

**TOP PHOTO: Governor Mitch Daniels signs into law House Bill No. 1203. From left to right (seated): Governor Daniels, Representative Bob Bischoff, (D-Greendale). Standing: John Miller (Oak Heritage Conservancy), Steve Yaninek (Chair of Purdue University's Entomology Dept.), Mary McConnell (State Director, The Nature Conservancy), Ellen Jacquart (The Nature Conservancy), Lynn Dennis (The Nature Conservancy). Photo courtesy Steve Yaninek**

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org).

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