

## **AN ACTION PROGRAM TO COMBAT INVASIVE SPECIES**

There is a consensus of opinion that the cumulative impacts of harmful invasive species are creating a growing burden for the country, yet the nation's current protection system is piecemeal, lacks adequate rigor and comprehensiveness. It is recognized that better environmental education and greater accountability for sectors that are responsible for the introduction of invasive species is needed. In addition, faster response and more adequate funding could limit the impact of invasive species that do enter the country. While agency coordination and regulatory reviews are needed at the federal level, a one size fits all strategy will not work to address the complexity and wide ranging agency and community needs to combat invasive species at the local level. **A nation-wide invasive species program, that is non-regulatory and incentive driven in nature, supports and builds capacity at the State level, and encourages voluntary cooperation of affected private entities is needed now.**

Management plans developed by coordinated efforts of relevant state agencies and affected local constituents would build the framework to begin larger scale regional strategies to combat wide ranging invasive species. Investments to support local, state, and regional partnerships who are prepared to take action now against known invasive species will provide valuable lessons for other regions and promote innovative and efficiencies in protection and public outreach strategies. By promoting their progress, these partnerships will in turn help identify the policy and legal obstacles to success, build a demand for coordinated information management, and build a constituency for quarantine improvements to keep more pests from entering the country.

Attached is a draft bill to achieve the above. It is based on models that already exist in United States Department of Agriculture (Forest Stewardship, Urban and Community Forestry) with modifications made from lessons learned from invasive species experiences and community partnerships programs in Hawaii. This could be an ideal program to consider for the 2002 re-authorization of the Farm Bill. A \$50,000,000 program could provide support for state-wide action plans, cost sharing grants to community partnerships, focused funding for demonstration pilot projects, a rapid response fund to deal with priority invasive species, and the development of

regional public outreach campaigns.