Eastern Invasives Management Network
Salt River-Rolling Fork Conservation Area

Threat Abatement Priorities

Our priorities have so far been focused on reintroducing fire to fire-dependent grassland/barrens/glade systems and converting Fescue dominated grasslands to native warm season grasslands. Fire can be a valuable tool in invasive species management, especially when used in conjunction with herbicides. We have done a bit of this, though not much- the conservation area is still in it's very beginning stages and we are forming new partnerships and more fully establishing ourselves in the community everyday.

To be perfectly honest, we know what invasive species to expect in which areas, but truly have no idea about the scope or extent of these populations. We see them on the roadsides, but do not have a database of mapped populations within the project area. We hope to expand our capacity enough to be able to do this eventually, but currently we have only one staff member working within the conservation area. To date, our invasives related focus has been on Fescue eradication and the removal of Johnsongrass and crown vetch. Past work has been done with white and yellow sweetclovers.

Our priority focus areas have been grasslands where a key ecological factor is fire and to a lesser degree, grazing by large ungulates (bison). These systems need the periodic disturbances created by these factors, as do some of the invasives we are trying to protect the areas from. We have learned that much can be accomplished in the removal of several invasives with well-timed burns. Follow up herbicide treatments may be necessary in some cases, but burning has been instrumental in promoting the growth of native species and eradicating invasives.

Current Invasives Priorities:

1. Festuca arundinacea
1. Lespedeza cuneata
2. Coronilla varia
3. Sorghum halapense
4. Lonicera japonica and Lonicera spp. (mostly mackii)
5. Centaurea biebersteinii- invading the general area very quickly. Definitely one to watch. Also a plant that people seem to know little about regarding management/ control.
6. Melilotus alba, M. officinalis- have dropped in rank a bit. If not established, this plant can be fairly easily controlled with well-timed burns
7. Alliaria petiolata- low in rank only because we are currently focused on grasslands
8. Conium maculatum- another one to watch- seems to like roadsides, wet areas
9. Daucus carota- has dropped in rank- seems to be manageable and appears to thin itself out over time
10. Microstegium vimenium- has dropped in rank because there seems to be no effective treatment for it. We do have partners who are experimenting with well-timed weedwhacking, and if this proves successful, the plant may move up in priority rank again. For now, we'll just have to let it go due to lack of manpower/lack of money and time/ fear of causing an increase in the populations WITH management.

11. Dipsacus sylvestris- one to watch- it seems to be establishing itself rapidly along roadsides statewide

Threat Abatement Strategies

Last year we assembled a group of volunteers dedicated to the removal of invasives. Organizational changes stalled this program for 2002, but we plan to get the program up and running again in the spring. This will be an integral part of invasives management, as we are facing the same old problems that all programs have faced in the past- lack of money, lack of time, and lack of manpower. Because of this, the volunteers will likely be needed more than ever.

The restoration of native grasses and forbs to now-fescue-dominated areas will also go a long way in preventing the establishment of invasive species. Few species are truly hardy enough to compete with native grasses and forbs in the long term. The introduction of Plateau to the market has been a boon for grassland management- though it must be used carefully, it has made management of warm season grasses and forbs much less time consuming and much more effective.

In the future, we expect to be incorporating more woodland areas into our focus, and when this occurs, we will need to incorporate different ideas into our invasive species management plans. In all likelihood, we will need to not only perform removal of existing invasive species populations, but will need to reintroduce native species as well to prevent further invasion. Fire will again be a tool in many areas- a good portion of the conservation area is dominated by upland hardwood habitats that are fire tolerant.

Our biggest obstacle in engaging partners has so far been nearly everyone's lack of time, money, and, to some degree, interest. Many of our partners have an agricultural focus, and if the invasives are not causing widespread economic damage within the focus area, they are simply not considered a true threat. We hope to involve university students in the future to help us inventory the conservation area more thoroughly. Sources of native plant material are becoming much more common than they have been in the past. All in all, invasives are becoming a more prominent ecological threat than ever, and as peoples'
awareness increases, we hope to use this to our advantage.