TEXAS GULF REGION COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT AREA KICK-OFF MEETING
MONDAY, February 24, 2014, 12pm – 5:30pm
UT-MSI, PIER LAB

PARTICIPANTS PRESENT

Justin Bush, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center
Damon Waitt, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center
Mariah Morales, City of Port Aransas
David Hyde, City of Port Aransas
Katie Swanson, Mission Aransas NERR
Owen Fitzimmons, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries
Beau Hardegree, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Lyndon Holcomb, Port Aransas Citizen Volunteer
Carolyn Grosse, Port Aransas Citizen Volunteer
Sean McDougall, WA BLM
David Parsons, City of Port Aransas
Rick Adams, City of Port Aransas
Kendal Keyes, Texas Parks & Wildlife
Scott Cross, Nueces County Parks
Mike Murphrey, Texas Forestry Service
Julie Findley, Keep Port Aransas Beautiful
Scott Holt, Port Aransas Citizen Volunteer

Overview of Brazilian Pepper-tree Problem:

- Brazilian Pepper Trees were discovered to be an issue prior to 2005, when efforts began to control them. In 2008, the Texas Forestry Service did an aerial survey of Mustang Island and found 43 acres of land covered with the invasive trees. Now, just a few years later, that coverage is up to 52 acres and is still growing. In 2010, controlled burns were used to try and control the coverage of Brazilian Pepper trees, but this effort was considered only semi-successful. The trees grew back.
- A cooperative effort between the City of Port Aransas and UT-MSI was formed when an intricate 'fort' that housed as many as 12 transient/homeless people was carved out of the trees near the beach and the UT-MSI campus.
- Beau Hardegree, of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, assisted the City in obtaining a grant for $30K, with a City match, to establish a follow up plan for the care of the species and with writing a Brazilian Pepper Tree Control Plan.
- With the increased levels of infestation in the coastal habitats around Port Aransas, the species is expected to dominate the extent of this fragile coastal habitat.

Explanation of the CWMA:

- Because landscaping partnerships are much more effective than individual approaches, a Cooperative Weed Management Area is being formed. These partnerships help control invasive species, even on private land, since the group effort raises awareness.
- CWMA must be a reasonable control area to obtain a viable result for encouragement of future projects as well as future funding.
- Invaders of Texas are a group of citizen scientists who have developed important measuring tools to track and report both plant and pest invasive species. www.texasinvasives.org Using their tools will be an important aspect of tracking and measuring the areas CWMA will treat.

Overview of Grant Outcomes:

- A CWMA for Brazilian Pepper-tree is established with the support of project partners.

To build this institutional capacity it will be important to reach out to and recruit additional public agencies, non-governmental organizations and private partners into the CWMA and to expand the membership of the CWMA with three (3) additional key partners. It is necessary to develop a strategic management plan and organizational structure to maintain long-term relationships of these partners.

- After a brief brainstorming session, outreach extensions should be considered for the following organizations:

-Aransas Wildlife Refuge
-Bass Family/St. Jose Island
-Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program
-City of Aransas Pass
-City of Rockport
-Copano Bay Soil & Water Conservation District
-Corpus Christi Parks Department
-Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
-Keep Port Aransas Beautiful
-Kiwanis
-Mid-Coast Invaders
-NOAA
-Native Plant Society of Texas
-Nueces County Parks Department
-Port Aransas Garden Club
-Port of Corpus Christi/Port Authority
-Rotary Club of Port Aransas
-Texas General Land Office
-Texas Master Naturalist (Mid-Coast)
-Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
-TxDoT (Dennis Markwardt)
-US Fish & Wildlife Service
-UT, Marine Science Institute

- Establish a baseline distribution of Brazilian Pepper-tree populations and determine levels of impacts within the CWMA boundary.
  - Planning, research and monitoring will include: determining the geographic extent of the CWMA, compiling known infestation locations from partners, universities and web-based databases already established, like Invaders of Texas, develop a database and GIS system to track surveys and treatments performed within the CWMA, and conduct surveys for new populations of Brazilian Pepper-trees.
    - NERR can import data from Texas Invasives website and adjust data to fit the specific needs of this project and possibly use their current surveys to include Brazilian Pepper-tree data.
    - Prioritize treatment areas.
    - Enlist assistance from Citizen Scientists and Boy Scout groups to collect data and manage smaller areas.
- Develop a scalable pilot project for management and control of Brazilian Pepper-tree within the CWMA.
  - Determine potential treatment areas based on established maps and conditions, design and implement treatments based on Early Detection and Rapid Response analysis. Develop treatment strategy using Integrated Weed Management methods and assessments. Monitor pre and post treatment and evaluate treatment efficacy.
    - Scott Cross has a Brazilian Pepper-tree Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project with a 3-5 year plan to monitor.

        - A “steering committee” approach will be used to coordinate efforts.
- Increase public awareness and increased participation by private and public land owners in Brazilian Pepper-tree management.
    - Outreach and education by creating a strategy for civic engagement designed to increase awareness, build partnerships and provide opportunities for active participation. Use social networking methods to educate and focus outreach on 100 households adjacent to public lands adjacent to infested areas, conduct 5 public outreach events and monitor the number of people reached through these strategies.
        - Future grant opportunities to offer replacement plant incentives for private land owners to irradiate Brazilian Pepper-trees from their land.
        - There will be a brief open house during the Invasive Species Conference.
        - Utilize Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Education Outreach Coordinator and Programs.

Items for the Steering Committee, at the next meeting, to be held in April:

- Education Plan
- Strategic Plan
    - Gathering data
    - Prioritize areas of need
    - Address larger sites
- Post treatment/replanting alternatives
- Review City’s Management Plan/Park 15-year Plan for Charlie’s Pasture to use as a guide.