

The Iron Furnace Cooperative Weed Management Area
Statement of Purpose
February 6, 2008

Invasive, non-native plants which include the most problematic “weeds” are drastically altering natural habitats throughout the U.S. by displacing native species and reducing species diversity. Fish and wildlife populations and native plant communities are degraded when non-native invasive plants dominate habitats such as forests, grasslands and wetlands. Invasive species cost the U.S. economy more than \$120 billion annually in damages to agriculture, industry, recreation, forestry, and human health. Because they often lack natural controls and have high reproductive abilities, invasive plants are often very difficult to control.

Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA) are local organizations that integrate available invasive plant management resources across jurisdictional boundaries in order to benefit entire communities. The Iron Furnace Cooperative Weed Management Area is Ohio’s first and only CWMA and was formed in September 2006. The Iron Furnace CWMA is located in southern Ohio in Lawrence, Gallia, Scioto and Jackson counties (see map).

The Iron Furnace Region gets its name from the 46 charcoal iron furnaces built in Ohio during the 1800’s. At the time of European settlement, the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains along the Ohio River were blanketed in an oak-hickory forest and rich in natural resources including coal, iron ore, salt and clay. By 1900, this region produced most of the iron in the United States and most of the armament used in the Civil War. Because of the iron furnace industry, most of this region in Ohio was clear-cut and harvested successively at 20 to 30 year intervals. Because of the importation of non-native plants from around the world, and a continual history of intense land use, invasive, non-native species are common and are occupying more and more of the landscape.

The goal of the Iron Furnace CWMA is to develop and support partnerships among a diverse group of private landowners, concerned citizens, agencies, organizations, educational facilities, local governments, and others in the region to improve awareness of the threats of invasive, non-native plants. Beyond awareness, this group will work together to promote and conduct land stewardship, education, research, and information exchange regarding invasive plants. The Iron Furnace CWMA will also work cooperatively with the Ohio Invasive Plants Council when their objectives coincide.

This partnership is led by a team consisting of county, federal, state, university, and private organizations seeking to develop a strategic invasive plant management plan for the area referenced in the map above. The leadership team currently consists of:

1. Lawrence Soil & Water District
2. Lawco Lake Association
3. Ohio Valley Resource Conservation District
4. Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry
5. Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas & Preserves
6. Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife
7. Ohio Invasive Plants Council

8. Ohio University Main Campus and Southern Campus
9. Southern Ohio Forestland Association
10. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
11. U.S. Forest Service, Wayne NF Ironton District
12. Buckeye Rural Electric
13. US Forest Service State & Private
14. Ohio Forestry Association
15. Roots of Appalachia Growers Association

The objectives of the Iron Furnace CWMA are:

- To increase public awareness through education about invasive, non-native plants by hosting weed workshops, field tours, and public meetings; and by providing informational materials on invasive, non-native plants.
- To seek grants and other funding sources to support the goals of the Iron Furnace CWMA.
- To provide coordination and leadership for a local volunteer monitoring program to collect information on the locations and spread of invasive, non-native plants and for early detection of new invasive, non-native plant infestations. This information would aid in prioritizing sites for invasive plant control.
- To develop and implement a strategic plan for the Iron Furnace CWMA which will determine the long-term direction and priorities of the CWMA.
- To systematically control, over time, invasive, non-native plants in the Iron Furnace CWMA