

**Invasives Workshop**  
**Session B Breakout Group**  
**Beyond Brochures: Engaging the Public in Addressing Invasives**

**Notes**

**Presentations**

Kudzu of the Coast: Linking Science, Volunteers, and Local Communities to Control Beach Vitex (BV) – Betsy Brabson, Coordinator, SC Beach Vitex Task Force

- The task force is now a cooperation of several states, including VA, NC and SC
- Their hook was sea turtles, how BV affects sea turtle habitat, the public loves sea turtles
- Web site – [www.beachvitex.org](http://www.beachvitex.org), includes the history of BV, online reporting tool, papers of BV, how VA became part of the network
- Use sea turtle volunteers to look for BV as they walk the beach May-October. They don't pull it up but report it, then an expert verifies
- They host BV workshops for the public, purpose to ID BV and native dune plants
- Media has covered the topic well, sea turtle hook and how it could over take sea oats (people identify with this as well)
- They host a symposium each year for Task Force partner and others affected by BV
- US Fish and Wildlife Service funded a video, shown on NC public television, includes information on how to ID BV and native dune plants
- Through a Natural Resources Conservation Service grant, purchase a chipper to help consolidate plant for transportation to disposal site at Hobcaw Barony
  - Participant discussion: important to education people on the proper disposal of invasive plants as well to prevent accidental spread of seeds
- National media exposure – USA Today and Associate Press articles
- Befriend nurseries because through invasive education you are potentially taking income away from them – most nurseries voluntarily stopped selling BV. Some have started selling native dune plants. Give nurseries alternatives to the invasives.
- Task Force members have lobbied in DC in attempt to get national funding. They don't want to receive and earmark and take money away from another cause. Not successful yet, but have created awareness at the national level.
- Attended national invasive species week in DC to share the BV story at the national level.
- Received approximately \$600,000 in grant funding through National Fish and Wildlife Funding, National Resources Conservation Service and others.
- Clemson has eradicated 238 sites of BV in SC, the whole coast has been searched.
- Is there coordination among state Task Forces? Each state has their own coordinators and funding.
- What about GA? There is not a coordinator for GA. Jekyll Island is the only know site of BV.

Success Stories and Lessons Learned in Volunteer Engagement and Interagency Cooperation – Dr. George Kessler, Clemson University and SC Cogongrass Task Force

- See PowerPoint Presentation

**Examples of successful outreach efforts**

Coastal Wildscapes a GA Non-Profit [www.coastalwildscapes.org](http://www.coastalwildscapes.org)

- Focus outreach on sustainable landscaping for biodiversity
- Target landscapers, civic groups etc through presentations and one-on-one interactions
- Web site has information tailored to natives alternatives to invasives
- Many groups like garden clubs are not comfortable with the web and still request printed materials.
- Their limitations include money and volunteers
- Most useful tool – informed and passionate person

Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) University Grounds

- Downtown Charleston Campus - very diverse
- Lots of inquiries from people passing by lead to Brown Bag Lunch series.
  - Discussed what they were planting, why, etc. Audience was university staff, students and general public.
- Look at what is being done as a whole – need more water gardens → not just about what is planted
- Hospital – a lot of visitors to campus, opportunity to education more than just university staff

Clemson Extension

- Working with Master Gardeners – also consumer of nursery plants
- Outings/Nature walks: residents of Sullivans Island unaware of invasive plant impacts.
- Garden clubs are always looking for speakers
- Get to gardeners who are not part of master gardeners and garden clubs

Other

- Native plant sales
- Tours to exclusive islands in GA
- Volunteers for native planting projects
- Invasive eradication demo sites including signage.

SC Native Plant Society

- Conference on Nurturing Nature: Call for projects on nurturing nature.
- Target schools, civic groups etc.

Kiawah – Dig up native plants on empty lots about to be developed and give to homeowners and use volunteers.

Brays Island – Use homeowners sweat equity controlling tallow.

**What can we do:**

- Highway demo with signage about invasive being treated
- Garden certification
- University – only buy certain species that are not invasive
- Importance of partnership – the more diverse the stronger the effort – private sector participation helps bring govt participation
- Understanding how to handle the issue (i.e. disposal of plants)
- Importance of strong leadership
- Partnership with birders? Some invasives are planted for birds. Birders need education. For ex. Privet creates great habitat for migratory birds → but decrease biodiversity
- Can't talk invasives without talking alternatives
- Birds/butterflies as a hook.
- Invasives not supporting bugs, importance of maintaining ecosystems
- Need to focus on broader audience
- Change to protecting what we have instead of always a focus on restoration

**Action items**

- Continue to grow partnerships
- Specie specific initiatives? Are in play and very effective
- Legislation for landscape industry
- Vitex to be listed as a SC noxious weed
- Working with nurseries and landscapers → face to the public → education
- Canned presentations for garden clubs – commitment to giving presentations
- Train volunteers to do outreach. Give presentations – SC State Garden Club organization → districts.
- Homeowner associations – Native plants, butterfly society. Links in HOA newsletters
- Lady Bird Johnsons Society (TX) . [www.beplantwise.org](http://www.beplantwise.org) → state garden clubs. Invasive to native translator
- Working with the DOT