Greetings from South Florida,

As I write this letter, I’m looking out my window at the thousands of beautiful red Brazilian pepper seeds on the trees across the street from my house and I know that many of those seeds will soon be deposited in my yard by all the birds that visit me. This is a painful time of year as we watch the proliferation of pepper seeds and anticipate all the new plants that will soon become established.

Considering that Brazilian pepper can be found across more than 700,000 acres throughout the state, it is no wonder that long-term, efficient control in our natural areas is challenging. There may be only a handful of land managers in the state of Florida who are not expending resources annually to control Brazilian pepper. Our efforts would be greatly enhanced with the aid of biological control agents. Thankfully, two biocontrol agents have been approved by TAG! The FLEPPC Board of Directors recently voted to send the following letter of support and encouragement (p. 2) to the USDA APHIS in hopes that the final approvals for release will be issued quickly.

Brazilian peppertree infested with the leaf galling psyllid Calophya latiforceps, approved for release by TAG (photo credit: Rodrigo Diaz).

Brazilian peppertree thrips Pseudophilothrips ichii approved for release by TAG (photo credit: Gregg Wheeler).

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Funding Opportunities

Julia Morton Invasive Plant Research Grant

FLEPPC and FISP CISMA Grant

Kathy Craddock Burks Education Grant
Dear Deputy Administrator El-Lissy,

The members of the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) include ecologists, land managers, invasive species biologists, foresters and other scientists who are concerned about the negative impact Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) is having on Florida’s natural areas. Brazilian peppertree, (Anacardiaceae) has successfully colonized most of the Florida peninsula, covering more than 280,000 ha (700,000 acres) with thick monospecific stands that eliminate understory plant growth. In South Florida, this invasive weed interferes with restoration efforts of the Florida Everglades. In the last year alone, six agencies responsible for invasive species control in Florida expended more than $6.6 million for control of Brazilian peppertree across the state. This problem is not restricted to Florida. In Hawaii, surveys conducted in the early 1990s estimated that 50,000-ha were moderately to heavily infested with another 200,000-ha infested with occasional to scattered plants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (1998) identified Brazilian peppertree as one of the most significant non-indigenous species currently impacting federally-listed threatened and endangered native plants throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

Researchers with the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and University of Florida have developed two biological control agents that have the potential to reduce the vigor of the Brazilian peppertree, thereby decreasing the plant’s invasive qualities and allowing our stakeholders to gain control over this destructive species.

Permission was requested of the USDA/APHIS Technical Advisory Group (USDA/APHIS/TAG) to field release two biological control agents for Brazilian peppertree. These include the thrips, *Pseudophilothrips ichini* (Thysanoptera: Thripidae) (Tag No. 14-02, Petition submitted August 2014) and the leaf galling psyllid, *Calophya latiforeps* (Hemiptera: Calophyidae) (Tag No. 15-02, Petition submitted April 2015). Both potential agents were collected in the native range of the weed and introduced under quarantine in Florida where their safety was examined. Both species were found to feed and complete development on all invasive varieties of Brazilian peppertree. Both species will attack flushing tips and young leaves, reducing the vigor, growth and reproduction of the weed. Further, neither insect can feed and sustain a population on native or agricultural species that occur in the invaded range of Florida. The thrips was recommended for release by USDA/APHIS/TAG in May 2016. The leaf galling psyllid was recommended for release by USDA/APHIS/TAG in April 2016.

The FLEPPC members and Board of Directors fully support the efforts of the USDA/ARS and others to release these two biological control agents. We encourage you to approve Plant Protection and Quarantine 526 Permits for these agents expeditiously. If approved, these species will be the first biological control agents released against Brazilian peppertree in the continental US. These species are anticipated to contribute significantly to the integrated control of this invasive weed that interferes with the Florida Everglades Restoration efforts and other natural area management efforts throughout the state.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Signed,

Christen Mason
Chair
Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council
Note from the Secretary:

This Newsletter contains news from our members and highlights from our November, 9 2016 BOD meeting. Our next meeting will be held January, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. on-site at the Crowne Plaza Melbourne-Oceanfront.

‘Like’ us on Facebook!

‘Follow’ us on Twitter!

Annual Meetings & Upcoming Events

Florida CISMA 4th Wednesday Monthly Call
1:30 PM
floridainvasives.org/cismas.cfm

March 6-7, 2017
Florida Weed Science Society Annual Conference
Haines City, FL
sites.google.com/site/floridaweedsciencesociety

March 7-9, 2017
Conserving Biodiversity: Challenges for Florida in the Anthropocene
Florida Gulf Coast University, Ft. Myers, FL
fgcu.edu/biodiversityconference

April 12-14, 2017
FLEPPC Annual Symposium
Melbourne, FL
fleppc.org

April 17-21, 2017
Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (GEER)
Coral Springs, FL
cconference.ifas.ufl.edu/GEER2017

May 17-21, 2017
Florida Native Plant Society
Westgate River Ranch Resort
fnps.org/conference

July 16-19, 2017
Aquatic Plant Management Society Meeting (APMS)
57th Annual Meeting
Daytona Beach, FL
apms.org

October 22-26, 2017
International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species (ICAIS)
Marriott Coral Springs, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
icais.org

Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council

OFFICERS
Christen Mason, Chair
cmason@sfwmd.gov

Sherry Williams, Past Chair
swilliams02@seminolecountyfl.gov

Aimee Cooper, Secretary
aimee.lz.cooper@gmail.com

Karen Brown, Treasurer
kpbrown@ufl.edu

Ruark Cleary, Editor
Ruark.Cleary@MyFWC.com

DIRECTORS
2nd Year
Gwen Burzycki
BurzyG@miamidade.gov

Sarah Laroque
slaroque@earthbalance.com

Greg MacDonald
pineacre@ufl.edu

Gregg Walker
gwalker@fnai.fsu.edu

1st Year
Kristine Campbell
kristine.campbell@myfwc.com

Jimmy Lange
jlange@fairchildgarden.org

Mike Middlebrook
middlebrookm@stlucieco.org

Cody Miller
cody.marie.miller@tnc.org

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
By-Laws
Mike Renda
mrenda@tnc.org

CISMA Grant
Gregg Walker
gregory.walker@dep.state.fl.us

Education Grant
Kris Campbell
kristine.campbell@myfwc.com

Field Trips
Cody Miller
cody.marie.miller@tnc.org

Finance
Ruark Cleary
Ruark.Clearay@MyFWC.com

FNIA/FLEPPC Liaison
Gary Knox
gknox@ufl.edu

Legislative
Deahl Lienarance
dlieurance@ufl.edu

Membership
Gayle Edwards
gayleedwards56@tutul.com

Merchandise
Jimmy Lange
langerj@fairchildgarden.org

Nominations
Jim Burney
jburney@fairchildgarden.com

Outreach
Christen Mason
cmason@sfwmd.gov

Plant List
Patricia Howell
phowell@broadsand.org

Research Grant
Jim Cuda
jcuda@ufl.edu

Symposium Local Arrangements
Sherry Williams
swilliams02@seminolecountyfl.gov

Symposium Program
Karen Brown
kbbrown@ufl.edu

Vendors
Michael Meisenburg
Michael@nestleeco.com

Webmaster
Chuck Bargeron
chbargeron@ufl.edu

TASK FORCE CHAIRS
Australian Pine
Tony Pernas
Tony.Pernas@nps.gov

Brazilian Pepper
Jim Cuda
jcuda@ufl.edu

Carrotwood
Chris Lockhart
Habitatpestid.com

Chinese Tallow
Greg Wheeler
greg.wheeler@ars.usda.gov

Dioscorea
Christopher Kerr
Christopher.Kerr@freshfromflorida.com

Grasses
Greg MacDonald
pineacre@ufl.edu

Lygodium
LeRoy Rodgers
lrodgers@sfwmd.gov

Melaleuca
Francois Laroche
Flaroche@sfwmd.gov

Skunkvine
Brian Nelson
brian.nelson@swfwmd.state.fl.us
INVASIVE ORCHIDS EXPLOIT DIVERSE FUNGAL COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENTS OF MIAMI-DADE
Jason L. Downing Ph.D., Orchid Biologist
Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Coral Gables, Florida

Since the 1960s, several non-native orchid species have been documented as established in southern Florida with at least two species, *Eulophia graminea* (Asian ground orchid) and *Oeceoclades maculata* (African monk orchid) rapidly spreading in the region. Other weedy interlopers include *Cyrtopodium flavum* (yellow cowhorn orchid) and *Zeuxine strateumatica* (lawn orchid or soldier orchid). In addition to prolific seed production and dispersal, evidence suggests that the spread of these species into natural areas may also be facilitated through nearby municipal and residential mulch sources. Researchers at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and Florida International University are addressing the spread of these exotic species and particularly the role mycorrhizal fungi may play. All orchids require these beneficial fungi for seed germination, making them key determinants in where and what abundance orchids occur.

Early findings have showed that these invasive orchids associate with a greater diversity of mycorrhizal fungi as compared to much rarer native congeners within the region, such as *Cyrtopodium punctatum* (Florida cowhorn orchid) and *Eulophia alta* (wild coco). They are also exploiting specific groups of basidiomycete fungi that are widely available in a variety of mulch types throughout urban Miami-Dade County. These mulches are providing the ideal microhabitat conditions for the fungi necessary for seed germination, and may be creating stepping stones for dispersal into natural habitats such as the pine rocklands. These findings will help us to better predict and control the spread of these exotic plants and guide future management of municipal and residential mulch usage.
RESTORATION OF SEASONALLY-FARMED EVERGLADES PRAIRIE WITHOUT REMOVAL OF DISTURBED SOIL
Gwen M. Burzycki1, Christina Stylianos2, and Jason Smith
1Miami-Dade County RER-Division of Environmental Resources Management, 2South Florida Water Management District

Everglades wetlands are characterized by large expanses of graminoid-dominated prairie and marsh that have woody vegetation only in small concentrations where topography and hydrology combine to protect these areas from the shaping forces of fire in the landscape. During the first half of the 20th Century, large swaths of short hydroperiod Everglades wetlands in southern Miami-Dade County were farmed seasonally (during the winter, or dry season) up until the mid-1950s. Over 4,000 acres of forested wetlands exist in areas outside Everglades National Park where seasonal farming was abandoned in the 1950s. The repeated addition of fertilizers to oligotrophic wetland soils has been shown to create a disturbed environment that facilitated colonization of woody species after farming was abandoned. These forested wetlands are currently often dominated by highly invasive species such as Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and shoebutton ardisia (*Ardisia elliptica*), and have proven difficult and expensive to restore and to maintain free of invasive and nuisance species. More cost-effective techniques are needed to lower both initial restoration and long-term maintenance costs for such wetlands. In areas where removal of fertilizer-enriched soils is not feasible, soil disturbance appears to be a major factor in determining which species initially colonize a restoration site. Selective mulching to remove above-ground woody biomass, followed by a combination of herbicide treatment and mowing to prevent reestablishment of woody species and promote colonization by native graminoids, can result in rapid (within 2-3 years) restoration of short hydroperiod Everglades prairie. It can subsequently be managed free of woody invasive plants through application of integrated land management practices including but not limited to prescribed fire. Initial and projected long-term costs for this process are substantially less than other restoration techniques, including restoration and maintenance of a native-dominated forested wetland community, or restoration and maintenance of graminoid prairie by clearing and grubbing forested wetlands, then allowing natural recruitment to occur. This process is also considered more sustainable because the wetland hydroperiod in the restored area is nearly unchanged, minimizing the effects on area ecological services.

Five-year cost comparison for ground crew treatment of forested wetlands (red bars) vs. prairie conversion.
Minutes from FLEPPC Board of Directors Conference Call
Recorded by Aimee Cooper (FLEPPC Secretary) | November 9, 2016, 10:30 AM

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

Call to Order/Roll Call: 10:35 AM

Attending (Officers): Karen Brown, Aimee Cooper, Christen Mason, Sherry Williams; (Board of Directors): Gwen Burzycki, Kristine Campbell, Jimmy Lange, Sarah Laroque, Greg MacDonald, Mike Middlebrook, Cody Miller; (At-large Members): Gayle Edwards, Patty Smith; Absent with notice: Ruark Cleary, Gregg Walker

Chair Activities/Correspondence, Christen Mason

Christen shared information regarding a presentation by Pete Deal showing the possibility of using cows for biocontrol for invasive weeds, specifically praxelis. Greg MacDonald is aware of work being done out west, where cows are used as a method to control specific weeds on ranchland, but this would not be a good method for natural areas. Christen confirmed that this method of control would be for ranchland only and not in natural areas. Pete is hoping to get support from FLEPPC and the CISMAs. Before we can reach a resolution, it was suggested that Pete give us an overview of the work, either allowing him to present at a meeting, or submit a written report to the BOD, so that we can have a better understanding of his proposition. Additionally, it was suggested that we should contact the Cattleman’s Association, especially since we would like to get them more involved in FLEPPC efforts.

**OFFICER REPORTS**

Treasurer’s Report, Karen Brown

Balance in Checking $22,167.99  
Balance in Savings $20,258.24  
TOTAL: $42,426.23

The CD was cashed in last July and moved to our savings account in the amount of $5,328.49. This is earmarked for use as a scholarship fund some day in the name of Kathy Craddock Burks. The funds from the raffle also go to the scholarship. It was unclear as to whether the funds generated by the Silent Auction go into the scholarship fund or not. To resolve this matter there was a motion to move the Silent Auction funds to the KCB scholarship fund. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously among the Board of Directors.

Editor’s Report, Ruark Cleary

There has been an ongoing discussion of moving *Wildland Weeds* to SE-EPPC, where the cost of producing an issue would be shared among all eight chapters of SE-EPPC. Karen contacted a graphic designer to draft an estimate for a 20-page issue of *Wildland Weeds*. The approximate cost would be $1,700.00; divided among the eight chapters, this would cost $212 per EPPC. There was a motion to transition *Wildland Weeds* from FLEPPC to the SE-EPPC board with the creation of an editorial position/committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously among the Board of Directors. It was further suggested to transition the FLEPPC Editorial Officer position into a Vice Chair/Vice President Officer position. However, before any movement of either of these actions, a review of our bylaws and a proposal for the transition of Wildland Weeds to SE-EPPC BOD needs to be prepared.

Secretary’s Report, Aimee Cooper

We discussed a revamp of our Newsletter so that it contains more useful and entertaining information. Any success stories, upcoming projects, ongoing projects, events, news releases, photos, memorials, etc. are welcomed and requested. Contents of the newsletter are not meant to be large entries that we would typically see in *Wildland Weeds*, nor do we want to compete for information with *Wildland Weeds*. These should be more like summaries and stay within a 300-600 word count, but may vary depending on whether it’s a featured story, stories accompanied with photos, or simply an announcement. Please send to Aimee at aimee.lz.cooper@gmail.com.
**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**FLEPPC Julia Morton Invasive Plant Research Grant**, Jim Cuda  
Click on above link or visit the FLEPPC homepage at fleppc.org. Deadline is Friday, January 20, 2017.

**CISMA Grant**, Gregg Walker  
Advertising for the grant began on Friday, November 4, 2016 via email list serves and web sites. Click on above link or visit the FLEPPC homepage at fleppc.org. Deadline is Friday, February 17, 2017.

**Kathy Craddock Burks Education Grant**, Kristine Campbell  
Click on above link or visit the FLEPPC homepage at fleppc.org. Deadline is Friday, January 27, 2017.

**Outreach, Anticipated Vacancy**  
Sherry represented FLEPPC at three events: 1) Southern Chapter of the Horticulture Society, 2) Mead Gardens Backyard Biodiversity Day (October 15), and 3) Oakland Heritage Days (October 22). Combined events had over 4,000 in attendance. Christen also represented FLEPPC at the Firefest held at Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Over 3,800 were in attendance.

**Symposium Field Trips, Cody Miller**  
Field trip planning for the annual conference continues to progress in the surrounding areas of Melbourne and north Sebastian areas. Volunteers are needed to lead these field trips! If interested please contact Cody Miller cody-marie.miller@tnc.org for more information.

**Symposium Planning/Programming, Karen Brown/Sherry Williams**  
Volunteers are needed for soliciting donations for the Silent Auction! Please contact Christen cmason@sfwmd.gov for more information.

**Meeting Adjourned**  
A motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded at 12:55 p.m.

**Next board meeting**  
The next Board meeting will be held ON-SITE at the Crowne Plaza Melbourne-Oceanfront Friday, January 27, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

**Additional Announcements**

**Natural Area Weeds: A Property Owner’s Guide to Melaleuca Control** by Ken Langeland, Stephen Enloe and Jim Cuda in IFAS Extension has been newly revised and is available for downloading (PDF file available at link). Please spread the word and make use of this excellent tool.

Follow this link to view a FL-DACS DPI brochure on Florida’s Pest Plants – Noxious Weeds and Prohibited Aquatic Plants. The brochure prints on on both sides of standard letter size paper and can be folded to a trifold brochure. FLEPPC is cited several times in the brochure and prohibited plants that are also on the FLEPPC Invasive Plants List are noted. Only scientific names are used, making the list a little difficult for the public, but it’s an excellent brochure nonetheless.

Forrest Bennett, Founder and President of Nature Coast Action Team, Inc. (NCAT) worked with the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners to help pass a new Lead Tree (Leucaena leucocephala) Eradication Ordinance in Hernando County and renew enforcement of the existing Brazilian Pepper ordinance by Code Enforcement. This will result in complete removal of both species on all public and private lands starting soon. For more information, contact him at fbennett123456@gmail.com 352-596-2262.
CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council invites abstract submissions for contributed oral and poster presentations for the 2017 FLEPPC Annual Conference. The conference will be held April 12th–14th at the Crowne Plaza Oceanfront in Melbourne, Florida. This year’s theme: THE WALKING WEEDS

Conference benefits and features: All natural resource professionals will benefit from the information exchange and networking opportunities afforded by this conference. CEUs will be offered in several categories. The agenda will feature research and management presentations, technical field trips, and a vendor product display. There will be a graduate student competition with cash prizes for best oral presentation and best poster presentation. A proceedings, including all abstracts (oral and poster), will be provided.

Deadline for Abstract Submissions: February 17th, 2017

Program Topics: Submissions are welcome for any area of invasive plant species investigation, including but not limited to:

- Ecology
- Management
- Restoration
- Risk Assessment
- Economics
- Policy and Regulation
- Evolutionary Biology
- Interdisciplinary Projects

Instructions for abstracts: Abstracts for oral and poster presentation should be 300 words or less and submitted using MS Word. Full details are provided at fleppc.org.

Submit abstract to: Karen Brown, FLEPPC Program Chair, kpbrown@ufl.edu. Notification of acceptance or rejection will be emailed to author(s) by February 28th, 2017.