The Florida Invasive Species Partnership (FISP) is a collaboration of federal, state, and local agencies along with non-government organizations, all with a stake in managing invasive species in Florida. Because species can spread beyond fence lines, our goal is to connect private landowners and public land managers with invasive species expertise and assistance programs across boundaries. FISP encourages the development, implementation, and sharing of new approaches to address the threat of invasive species and provides tools and resources that enable the development of unified approaches, bridging the gap between private landowners and land management agency invasive species efforts. **As such, the Florida Invasive Species Partnership is a strong advocate for research on, and implementation of, cost-effective and environmentally sensible biological control solutions for managing invasive species in Florida.**

Biological control utilizes living organisms to suppress insect pest and weed populations, and is often deployed in conjunction with other pest management tactics in an integrated approach. One benefit of biological control is sustainability, both in economic and environmental terms. Importation of biological control, which identifies and releases natural enemies from an invasive species’ native home, provides permanent suppression of the invasive species with no additional inputs – once an agent is established in a new environment, the economic benefits continue to accrue in perpetuity. Moreover, biological control agents know no borders, spreading from release sites to attack pest or weed populations across the landscape of private and public lands, including environmentally sensitive areas where the use of heavy machinery and chemicals may not be appropriate.

Florida has a long history of biological control with successful programs against both insect pests and invasive plants, beginning with the introduction in 1893 of a ladybird beetle for control of cottony cushion scale in citrus, followed by many other introductions to control agricultural pests. While most insect biological control projects have been directed toward the management of agricultural pests, there are recent examples of efforts to develop biological control solutions for the management of insect pests in natural areas. For example, a parasitic fly from Central America has been released to control an exotic weevil that is devastating native endangered bromeliads in Florida, and a South American parasitoid is currently under investigation for release against a moth that threatens populations of rare prickly pear cacti in Florida.

Biological control of invasive plants in Florida began in the 1960s with a highly successful program against alligatorweed using three South American insects. More recently, insect herbivores released against the Australian Melaleuca tree are exerting substantial suppression of the invasive tree. Tropical soda apple, a serious weed in pastures and natural areas, has been controlled by the release of a South American beetle with an estimated annual savings to cattle ranchers of $3.5 – 8.0 million. An on-going project involving the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of Florida, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is releasing a Chinese beetle for control of air potato, with impressive results only a few years after the project began.

FISP firmly supports the use biological control against invasive species, which continue to arrive in Florida at an alarming rate. Biological control is a major weapon in the arsenal of management practices available for combatting invasive species populations, and continued development and implementation of effective programs requires sustained financial support from state and federal funding agencies.