

Alabama Cogongrass Control Center

Alabama's Cogongrass Control Program

The Alabama Cogongrass Control Center (ACCC) is a publicly-funded project whose mandate is to control cogongrass through several strategies across Alabama. This project is administered through Larson & McGowin, Inc. and the Alabama Forestry Commission (www.forestry.alabama.gov). The program is open to all private, nonindustrial landowners. If you have cogongrass on your land and wish to participate, it will be helpful to know how the project works and which program for which you may be eligible.

Cogongrass [*Imperata cylindrica* (L.) Beauv.] is a warm-season, perennial grass that originates from Asia. It was first introduced into the United States through Mobile in the early 1900's as packing material for oranges. The leaves can reach 5 feet in length but are typically shorter. They are easily recognized by their sharp edges and middle, whitish midrib that is slightly off-center. Their belowground root system is extensive, growing as a solid, dense mat of underground stems called rhizomes. Cogongrass typically grows in a circular pattern from small patches to many acres. Cogongrass can grow in open areas and under the shade of a forest. Though there are some other grasses that have these characteristics, taken as a whole these characteristics can be used to recognize it.

Cogongrass is currently found in over half of Alabama counties. It is likely to be in more counties but has not been identified because of the limited resources available to assess infestations. It is primarily found in Alabama's southern counties. Because of this, the ACCC has divided the state into 2 zones and will implement multiple strategies to better gain control of this plant. Currently, US Highways 80 and 82 is the demarcation line between the 2 zones. This highway generally traverses west-east from Tuscaloosa to Montgomery to Phenix City. In Zone One (north of these highways) we will attempt to eradicate cogongrass entirely. In Zone Two (south of these highways) we will perform control and mitigation activities depending on the program in which you are enrolled.

Some treatment programs will begin in 2010. We will determine eligibility based on your property's location and information. Each program will involve some measure of detection and mapping followed by treatment and monitoring over time. In all cases the landowner can enter into a separate agreement with the spray vendor to treat additional acreage at the landowner's expense. The programs are:

Program 1 – Detect and Eradicate – Infested lands north of US Highway 80 (between the AL/GA border and Montgomery) or north of US Highway 82 (between Montgomery and the AL/MS border) will be treated. If you live north of these highways you are eligible for this program. The ACCC will attempt to eradicate cogongrass from this zone entirely.

Program 2 – Control and Mitigate – If you own property in Zone 2 (south of the Highways mentioned in Program 1) and near the state's borders with Georgia, Florida, or Mississippi you are eligible for Program 2. The map provided on our website shows the areas that will be applicable to this program. If you aren't sure if your property would fall in this category contact the Program Coordinator or the Communications Director. We will give the highest priority to infestations along the Georgia border followed by the Mississippi and Florida borders (in that order).

Program 3 – Underserved And Limited Income Landowners – If you own property in the following counties in Zone 2—Sumter, Choctaw, Marengo, Hale, Perry, Dallas, Wilcox, Lowndes, Montgomery, Bullock, Macon, Russell, and Barbour—you may be eligible to participate in this program. Priority will be given to those landowners with 100 acres or less meeting program requirements, and spraying will be limited to 10 acres with highest priority along boundaries and roads.

Program 4 – Stop The Spread – If you own property within 5 miles south of Zone 1 you are eligible for this program. The objective of this program is to create a belt of protection between Zones 1 and 2, focusing on infestations that have migrated off of contaminated roads and rights-of-way.

Program 5 – Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat Protection – If your property contains species that are designated as critically imperiled (G1) or imperiled (G2) and are threatened by cogongrass you may be eligible for this program. We will coordinate with public agencies and private companies to provide supervision, labor, and applications. Species information can be obtained through the Alabama Natural Heritage Program (www.alnhp.org), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov), and private conservation organizations.

Program 6 – Landowner Lottery – If your property is in Zone 2 you are encouraged to apply for this program. This will be a lottery-selected mapping and control program that will begin in 2010. Selected landowners will have their property mapped for cogongrass. Selected properties will have up to 10 acres treated with first priority along roads and boundaries.

Although we would like to eradicate cogongrass entirely within the state and assist every landowner who applies, ARRA supported funding is limited, requiring a judicious strategy for implementation. We have devised a simple priority system within each ACCC program to help as many landowners as possible and have the greatest long-term effect. These programs are evolving and additional opportunities may arise in the future. Please check back regularly with us for more information and updates.

For more details on the ACCC and its programs, go to www.alabamacogongrass.com, send an email to us at info@alabamacogongrass.com, send a fax to (251) 650-1600, or contact the ACCC directly (334-240-9348). At this time we are not receiving applications but requesting contact information; these forms can be downloaded on our website. In spring 2010 we will begin accepting official applications for all programs.

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