

## Alabama Cogongrass Control Center

### General Information For Landowners

**What is the Alabama Cogongrass Control Center?** The Alabama Cogongrass Control Center (ACCC) is a publicly-funded program through an ARRA stimulus grant whose mandate is to control cogongrass through several strategies across Alabama. This program is administered through Larson & McGowin and the Alabama Forestry Commission ([www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov)).

**What is cogongrass?** 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.

**Why is it a problem?** Cogongrass is one of the 10 worst weeds in the world. It is steadily marching through Alabama and into neighboring states. This highly invasive pest permanently alters plant and animal communities, increases fire frequency and intensity, and requires extensive investment to control. In other areas of the world cogongrass has destroyed entire landscapes, creating a 'sea' of cogongrass with no other plants. Domestic food and fiber supplies are negatively impacted by cogongrass through reduction in wildlife food sources and killing or injuring valuable cash crops such as corn, cotton, and trees. Cogongrass exists on rights-of-way, forests, and agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Because it is found in so many areas, there is a need for a large-scale, concerted effort to effectively control it.

**How is it treated?** Currently the most effective approach to controlling cogongrass infestations is with repeated chemical application, sometimes over several years. There are numerous herbicides on the market currently labeled for cogongrass. Contact the AFC for the most effective amounts and rates or go to the websites listed for more information. Mechanical treatments, such as disking, are also used but not applicable over many areas.

**How do I figure out if I have it on my property?** There are several ways to know if cogongrass is either on your property or a potential threat. First, know how to identify it by going to [www.cogongrass.org/cogongrassid.pdf](http://www.cogongrass.org/cogongrassid.pdf) and downloading the field guide. If you prefer, you can contact your county forester, extension agent, land manager, or natural resources expert to arrange for a professional determination.

**Am I eligible for the program?** Treatment programs will begin in 2010 in the northern half of Alabama and along the state's borders in the south. If you are a private, non-industrial Alabama landowner and currently have cogongrass on your property you

may be eligible to apply. Depending on the property location and size, the size of the infestation, proximity to main transportation routes, and other factors you will be prioritized within the program's strategies. See the program guidelines on our website for all the details, or contact us to receive a copy.

**How do I enroll?** Contact us via email, regular mail, phone, or fax to request a copy of the landowner packet. It includes an enrollment form and an access agreement. Both should be completed before we visit your property. Our website has all this information as well ([www.alabamacogongrass.com](http://www.alabamacogongrass.com)). An online application form will soon be available.

**I am currently spraying cogongrass. Can I still participate in the program?** We are working with other cogongrass assistance programs to increase the efficacy of the program. However, there are some restrictions if you are currently participating in government cost-share programs. In general, you cannot enroll the same acreage that is currently in any government cost-share program. See the program guidelines for further information.

**I do not have funds to spray cogongrass. Can I participate in these programs?** Applicants of this program will not have to pay for the services. This is not a cost-share program like other services; *we will arrange for spraying and monitoring with no out-of-pocket expense to the landowner for the area sprayed by this program.* Because of the funds available, however, we will have restrictions of how much acreage can be sprayed per landowner.

**Where can I get more information?** There are many sources of information about cogongrass on the internet. Public agencies are a good clearinghouse. The sites listed below will get you started.

- [www.alabamacogongrass.com](http://www.alabamacogongrass.com) – all information pertinent to this program
- [www.forestry.alabama.gov/viewers/afc\\_cogongrass\\_viewer.aspx](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov/viewers/afc_cogongrass_viewer.aspx) - Alabama Forestry Commission's updated map of current cogongrass infestations in the state
- [www.cogongrass.org](http://www.cogongrass.org) – a comprehensive site created and maintained by the Center For Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia ([www.bugwood.org](http://www.bugwood.org))
- [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org) – images that can be used for identification of cogongrass on your property
- <http://www.forestry.alabama.gov/Cogongrass.aspx> – effective herbicides to eradicate cogongrass

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## Alabama Cogongrass Control Center

### About the Cogongrass 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 and the Alabama Forestry Commission. 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 program works and which strategy 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 strategy in which you are enrolled.

Some treatment strategies will begin in 2010. We will determine eligibility based on your property's location and information. Each strategy 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 strategies are:

**Strategy 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 roads you are eligible for this strategy. The ACCC will attempt to eradicate cogongrass from this zone entirely.

**Strategy 2 – Control and Mitigate** – If you own property in Zone 2 (south of the highways mentioned in Strategy 1) and near the state's borders with Georgia, Florida, or Mississippi you are eligible for Strategy 2. If you aren't sure if your property would fall in this strategy contact us. We will give the highest priority to infestations along the Georgia border followed by the Mississippi and Florida borders (in that order).

**Strategy 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 strategy. Priority will be given to those landowners with 100 acres or less meeting certain requirements, and spraying will be limited to 10 acres with highest priority along boundaries and roads.

**Strategy 4 – Stop The Spread** – If you own property within 5 miles south of Zone 1 you are eligible for this strategy. The objective 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.

**Strategy 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 strategy. 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](http://www.alnhp.org)), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ([www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)), and private conservation organizations.

**Strategy 6 – Landowner Select** – If your property is in Zone 2 you are encouraged to apply for this strategy. This will be a lottery-type (but weighted based on certain criteria) mapping and control strategy that will begin in 2011. 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 strategy to help as many landowners as possible and have the greatest long-term effect. These strategies 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 this program, go to [www.alabamacogongrass.com](http://www.alabamacogongrass.com), send an email to [info@alabamacogongrass.com](mailto:info@alabamacogongrass.com), send a fax to (251) 650-1600, or contact the ACCC directly (334-240-9348). At this time we are receiving enrollment applications; these forms can be downloaded on our website or requested directly from us. In 2010 we will begin treatment for Strategies 1 and 2. In 2011 we will begin treatment for all other strategies.

For more information about cogongrass on the internet, go to:

Program website – [www.alabamacogongrass.com](http://www.alabamacogongrass.com)  
Alabama Forestry Commission - [www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov)  
Larson & McGowin – [www.larsonmcgowin.com](http://www.larsonmcgowin.com)  
Cogongrass information – [www.cogongrass.org](http://www.cogongrass.org)

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