

Cooperative Restoration Programs in Critical Habitats in the Upper South Carolina Coastal Region

J. M. Whetstone, C. L. Page, C. A. Gresham and M. C. Nespeca

The Winyah Bay Focus Area Task Force, a coalition of public and private partners working to sustain the ecological integrity of the third largest watershed on the East Coast, is the leading local force in protecting this important coastal wetland complex. The 525,000-acre Winyah Bay Focus Area covers the lower drainage of the Black, Great Pee Dee, Little Pee Dee, Sampit and Waccamaw Rivers and their confluence into Winyah Bay itself.

The Winyah Bay Focus Area Task Force has formed an Invasive Species Subcommittee composed of representatives of the Task Force, Clemson University, The Nature Conservancy, SC DNR, University of South Carolina, private industry and landowners to address the threat of invasive species in the Winyah Bay Focus Area. The Subcommittee has identified six major invasive species: common reed, beach vitex, giant reed, Chinese tallow, alligatorweed and water hyacinth.

Projects have been initiated through public-private partnerships to develop control protocols, determine the extent of coverage of the invasive species, conduct demonstrations of potential control methods, develop cost-share programs for private landowners to conduct a organized control programs and conduct symposia on the latest biology and control information on the invasive species.

Specific eradication programs for common reed and beach vitex are ongoing and control demonstrations on Chinese tallow, giant reed, alligatorweed and water hyacinth are initiated.