ISAC
INVASIVE SPECIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

C/O NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR · OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
1849 C STREET NW · WASHINGTON, DC 20240

MEMBER'S ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATE

March 6-8, 2023 Virtual Meeting

MEMBER'S NAME

LeRoy Rodgers

ORGANIZATION

South Florida Water Management District

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ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

The SFWMD is charged with managing and protecting the water resources of 16 counties stretching from Orlando to the Florida Keys. Our mission includes restoration of the Florida Everglades and Kissimmee River, improving water quality, protecting coastal estuaries, and managing the regional water supply. Invasive species management is a major component of the SFWMD's efforts to protect and restore the natural resources in our region.

PRIORITIES / ACTIVITIES FOR FY2023

The District continues efforts to achieve landscape level control of melaleuca (Melaleuca quinquenervia) and Old World climbing fern (Lygodium microphyllum), two highly invasive plants, in the Greater Everglades region of South Florida. While "maintenance control" has been achieved in the majority of the Everglades landscape, several areas remain heavily infested and require significant effort to restore. The South Florida Water Management District (District) is working with regional partners (USFWS and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission-FWC) to leverage resources necessary to achieve maintenance control in these areas.

The District is implementing numerous large scale restoration projects involving invasive plant removal. These include the Kissimmee River restoration program, A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Abiaki wetland restoration project, Picayune Strand Restoration Project, and several projects associated with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Through collaboration with USGS, FWC, and University of Florida, the District is evaluating methods to improve detection of Burmese pythons in remote areas of the Florida Everglades. These efforts primarily involve use of telemetered pythons or telemetered prey animals to locate pythons in areas where visual surveys are ineffective. Telemetry data from "scout pythons" also provides useful information related to python behavior, habitat utilization and population dynamics. The District, in close collaboration with the FWC, continues to expand the python removal contractor program, which utilizes paid python removal experts to survey regional levees and canals to detect and remove pythons.

Due to increased public concern over the use of herbicides, especially in and around aquatic environments, the District is implementing an herbicide reduction plan aimed at reducing herbicide use rates. The plan includes feasibility assessments of integrated pest management strategies (synergistic combinations of control tools to improve control efficiency) as well as efforts to increase scientific literacy among stakeholders on the benefits and risks of herbicides.