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Southeast Exotic
Pest Plant Council

Tennessee Exotic
Pest Plant Council

Texas Invasive Plant
and Pest Council

March 5, 2009

Mark Tercek, President and CEO
The Nature Conservancy
4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22203-1606

Dear Mr. Tercek and Mr. Milliken,

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils. Our member organizations—state and regional groups focused exclusively on protecting wildlands from invasive plants—represent thousands of natural resource managers across the nation.

We learned recently that in response to economic challenges The Nature Conservancy will be disbanding its internationally-renowned Global Invasive Species Team. This is discouraging news for those of us in the field, as I am sure it is for you, too. The GIST has been a tremendous partner in our work to advance invasive plant management on the ground. They have developed an incredible array of resources, and serve as innovators in bringing new tools into use.

They have also helped lead some of our most important policy pursuits, from working with nurseries on voluntary measures to prevent introductions of invasive plants to working with USDA to strengthen import screening requirements. With their global focus on this truly international problem, they lent one of the few environmental voices in circles where key decisions are fashioned. The GIST comprised a talented team of experts that contributed to the success of our work in many ways.

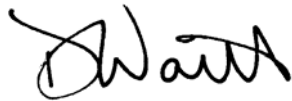
As one of the only major environmental groups with on-the-ground natural resource management experience, The Nature Conservancy can and should continue to play a strong role in invasive species issues. We urge you to maintain strong invasive species efforts within every state program. As resources allow, we also urge you to renew the organization's invasive species efforts at the national and international level. Coordination at these levels is crucial for effectively preventing the spread of invasive species.

As we move forward in tough economic times, our groups must provide leadership in maintaining focus on critical investments in the ecological health of our natural infrastructure. Controlling invasive species is one of these. With a changing climate, this work gets even more important and challenging. As you are well aware, stewardship is a critical partner to acquisition when protecting lands. With protecting natural communities as the core of your mission, and invasive species management being a central aspect of stewardship, we count on TNC being an active partner in this arena.

If we are to be successful in addressing invasive species, it will be because we muster resources commensurate with the threat. With the closing of the GIST, we take a significant step backward. We hope to work with TNC to reverse this direction in the future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any one of my colleagues throughout the country on this topic.

Sincerely,



Damon Waitt, NAEPPC Chair
President, Texas IPPC



Doug Johnson, NAEPPC Vice-Chair
Executive Director, California IPC



Lisa Smith, NAEPPC Secretary
Mid-Atlantic EPPC



Brian Bowen, NAEPPC Treasurer
Southeast EPPC

Responses should be directed to:

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cc: Roger Milliken, Jr., Chairman, Board of Directors
Bill Ginn, Chief Conservation Programs Officer
Brian McPeck, Chief Operating Officer, Conservation Programs
Joni Ward, Science Advisor
John Randall, Director, Global Invasive Species Team
State Directors