



Cogongrass in Georgia Winter 2021 Update

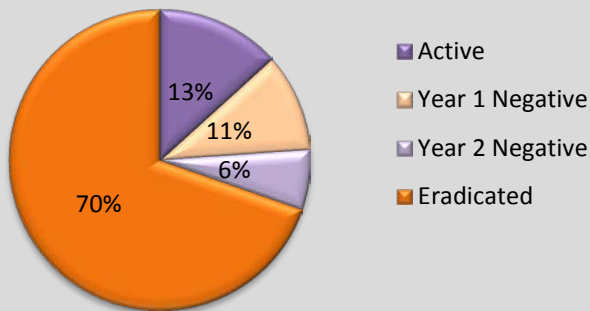
January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

Mark McClure, Forest Health Specialist

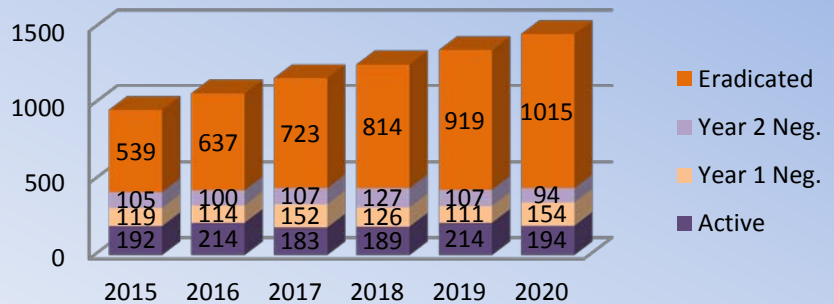
Cogongrass Detections in 2020 show slight increase over 2019.

In 2020, Morgan, Polk, and Pulaski counties were the only counties reporting cogongrass for the first time. There were 106 new detections in 2020, bringing the number of known cogongrass spots in the state to 1457, scattered across 68 counties. Overall, these values reflect a 12% increase in new detections in 2020 compared to 2019. Furthermore, there were 100 sites eradicated in 2020. The 1457 cogongrass spots encompass a total of 373 acres. The status and treatment for each spot is at varying levels. The Georgia Forestry Commission recognizes a spot as eradicated after three consecutive years of finding no cogongrass resprouts. Presently, **1015 spots** have been eradicated, **94 spots** have been negative for two years, and **154 spots** have been negative for one year, with the remaining **194 spots** classified as active. Overall, approximately 87% of all known spots are now negative for cogongrass. Landowners with questions regarding the status of the cogongrass spot(s) on their property should contact their Regional Forest Health specialist.

2020 Cogongrass Status Summary



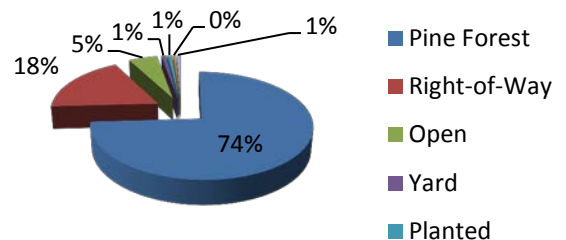
Cogongrass Status 2015-2020



Where are cogongrass sites being detected?

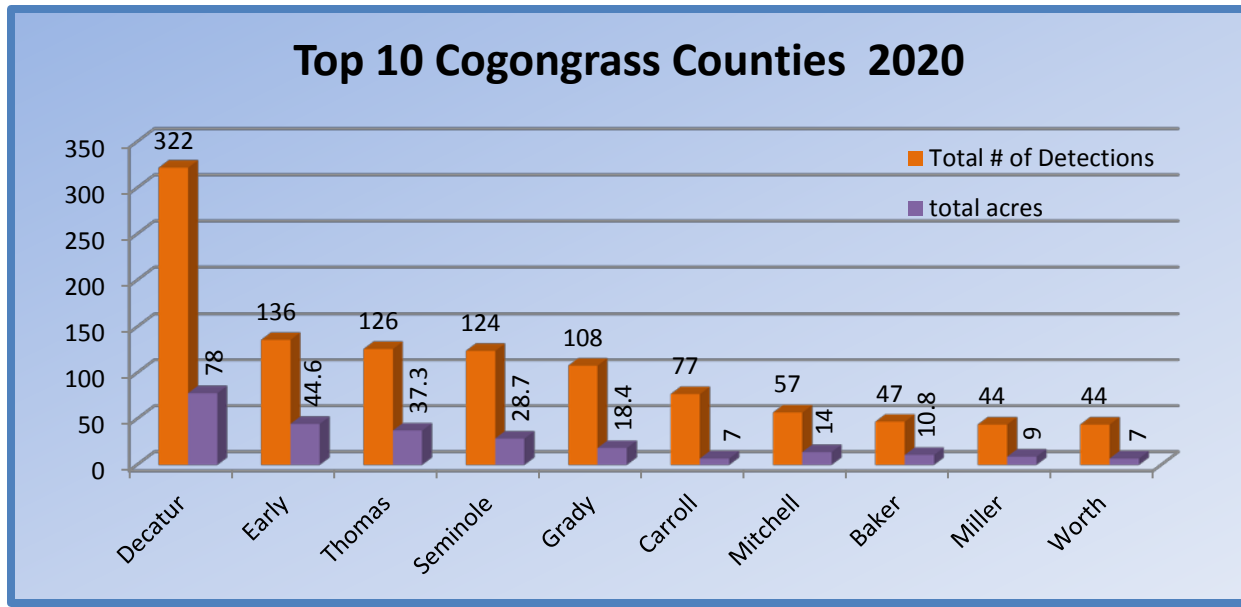
The most common cogongrass detections in Georgia are located within thinned pine stands or along road and utility rights-of-way. Approximately 74% of all cogongrass detections have been in thinned pine stands and 18% in rights-of-way. An additional eight percent have been unique detections in places such as pastures, pond dams, urban landscapes, flower beds, welcome centers, wildlife food plots, and within the sand dunes along the coast. These sites are of special interest to specialists tracking the movement and spread of this exotic, invasive species.

Location of Cogongrass in Georgia



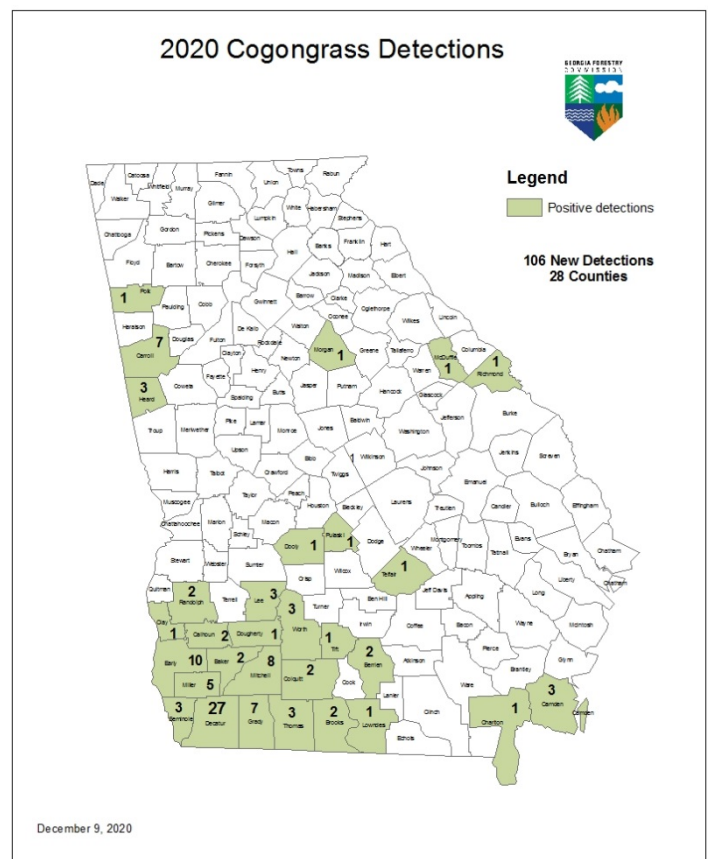
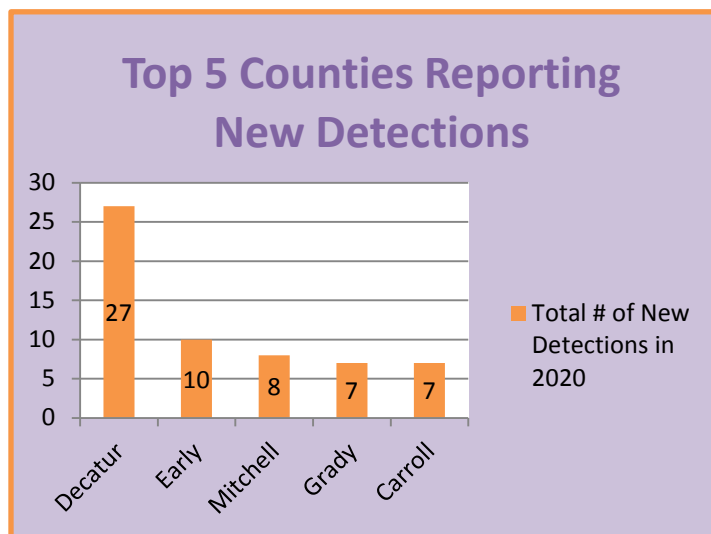
Where are the most detections being made?

The southwest corner of the state continues to be the cogongrass epicenter in Georgia. Decatur, Early, Thomas, Seminole, Grady, Mitchell, Baker, Worth and Miller counties, located in southwest Georgia, and Carroll County, located in west Georgia, complete the top 10 ranking counties by number of detections. The map below also displays the total number of cogongrass acres adjacent to the total number of spots.



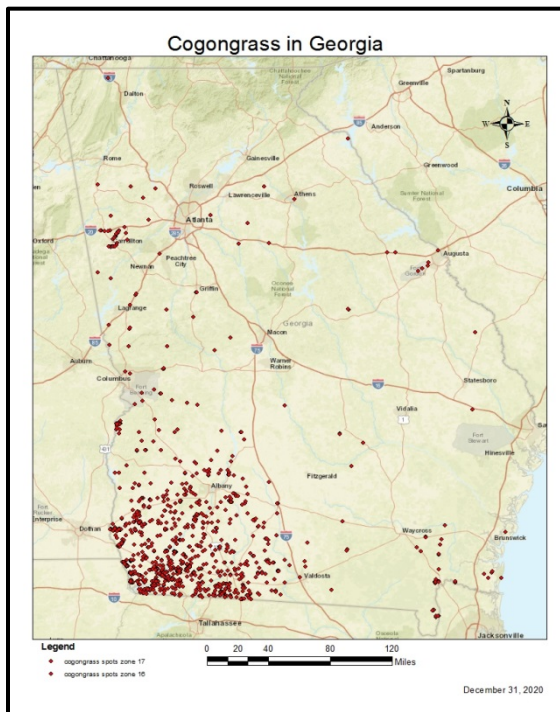
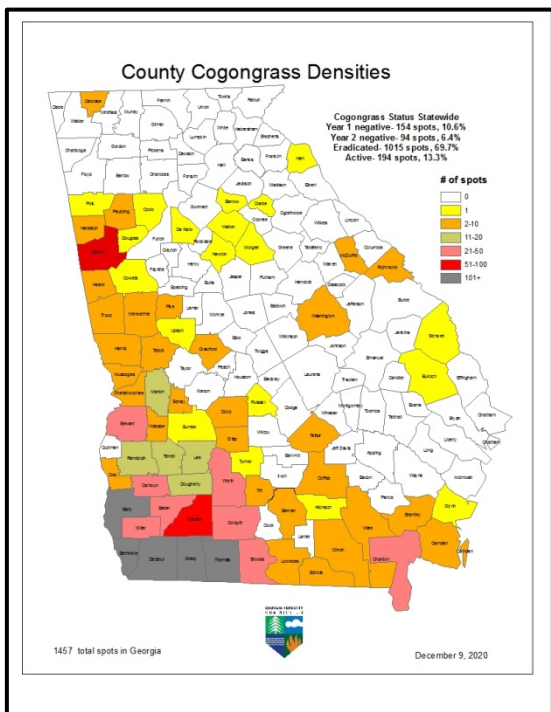
Which counties had the most detections in 2020?

The top five reporting counties in 2020 were Decatur, Early, Mitchell, Grady, and Carroll. The map on the right displays all counties with new detections (shaded green) along with the number of new detections. The graph below charts the top five counties.



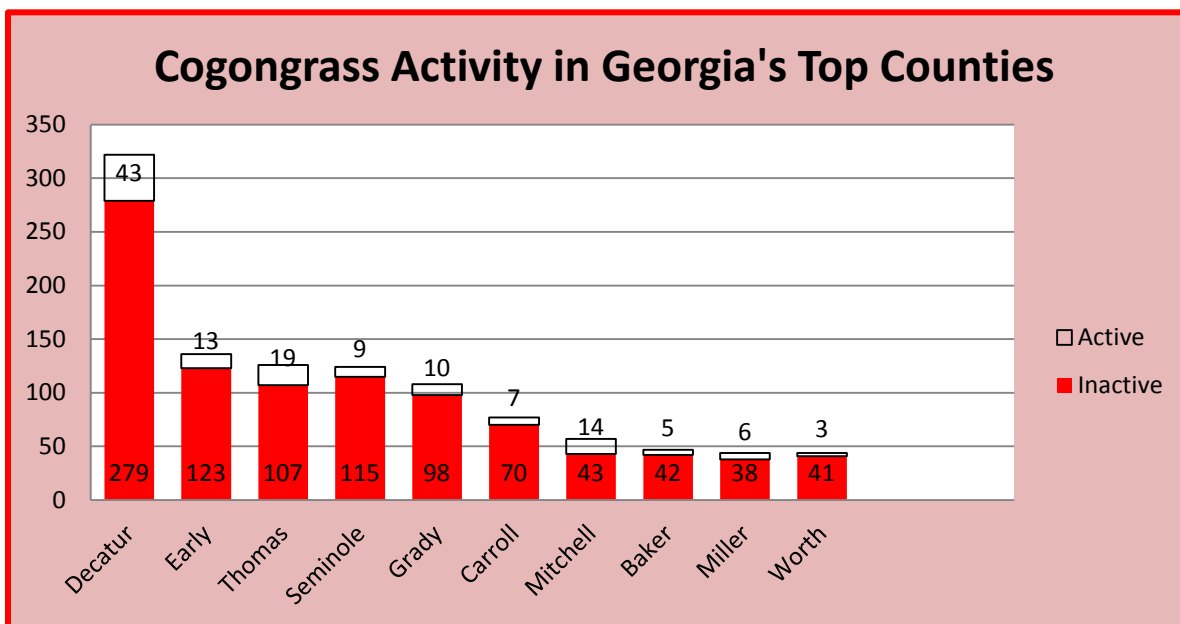
Which counties in Georgia have cogongrass and how much?

The map below (left) identifies cogongrass detections in each Georgia County. The map below (right) is a Road map displaying each identified cogongrass spot.



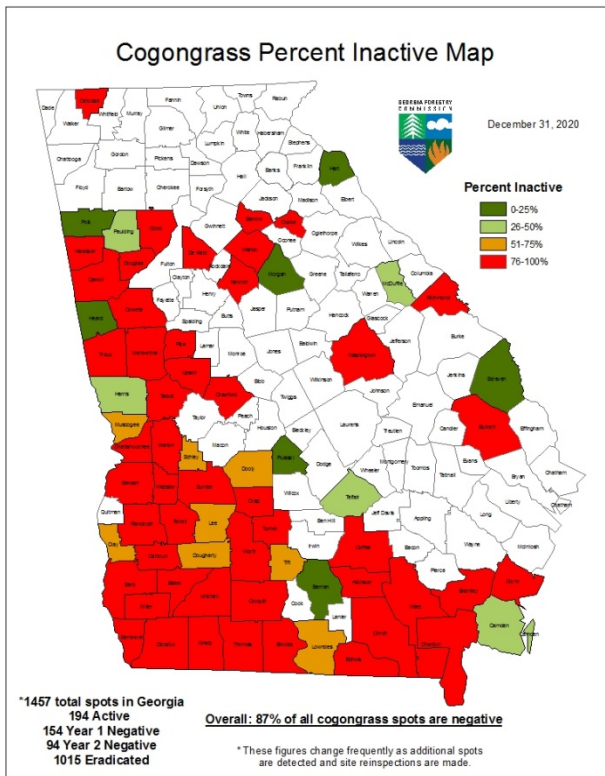
What is the cogongrass status in these counties?

Approximately 87% of all known cogongrass spots in Georgia are considered inactive. However, this percentage varies among counties. The graph below displays the number of active and inactive spots for the top counties.



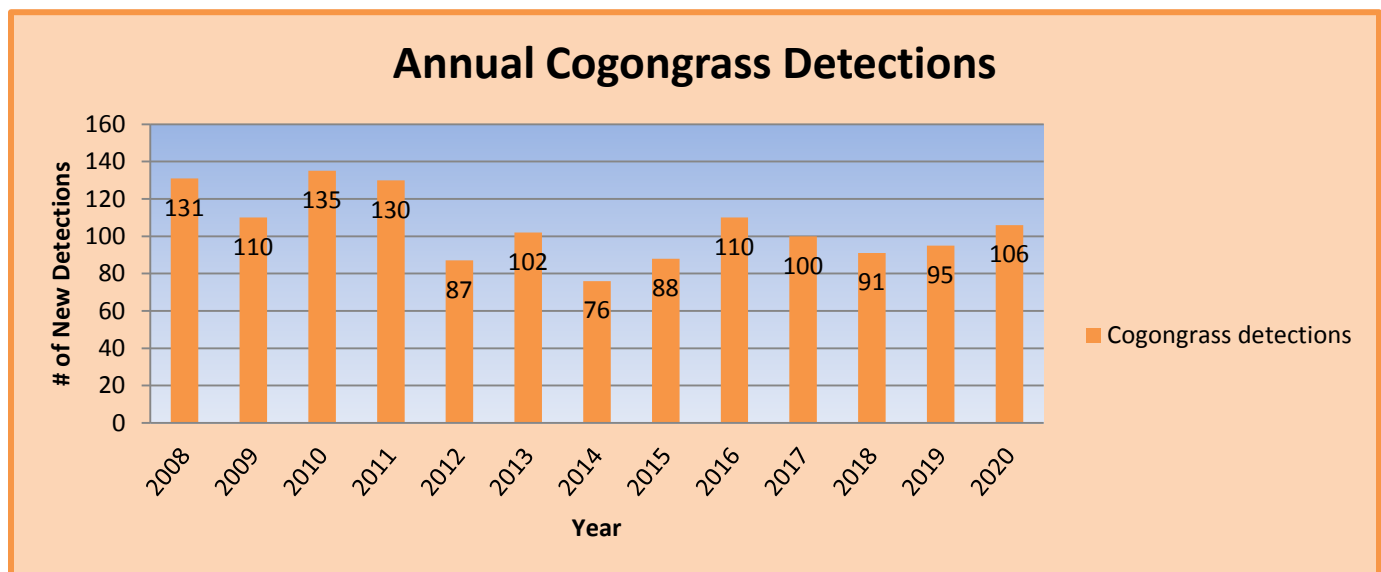
The cogongrass herbicide treatment program began in 2007. After 14 years, how much cogongrass is now inactive in each county?

The map below displays the amount of cogongrass in each county that is inactive. Cogongrass in all counties shaded red is 76-100% negative. That means 24% or less of the total number of spots are still active. Counties shaded orange have 51-75% of the total spots inactive, while light green shaded counties are 26-50% inactive. Counties shaded dark green have 0-25% of the total spots inactive.



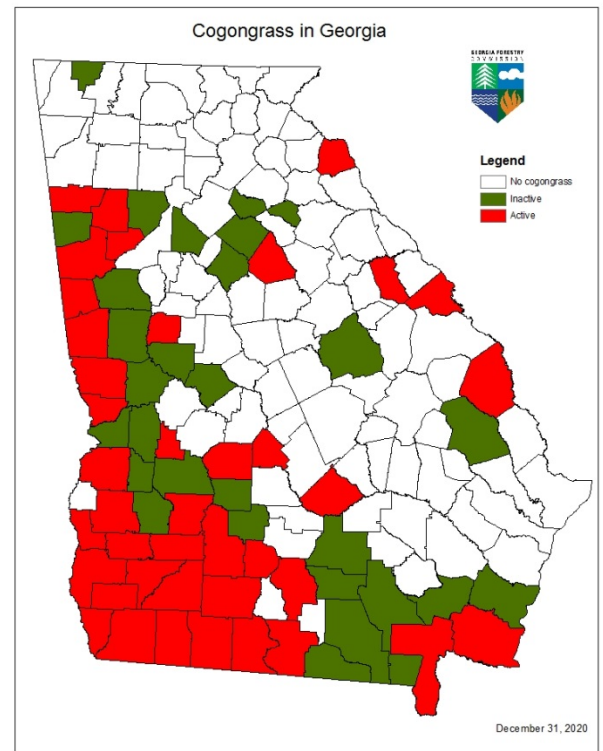
How many cogongrass spots have been reported annually since the Georgia Forestry Commission began its lead role in 2007?

The graph below shows annual detections since 2007.



Georgia cogongrass facts as of 2020:

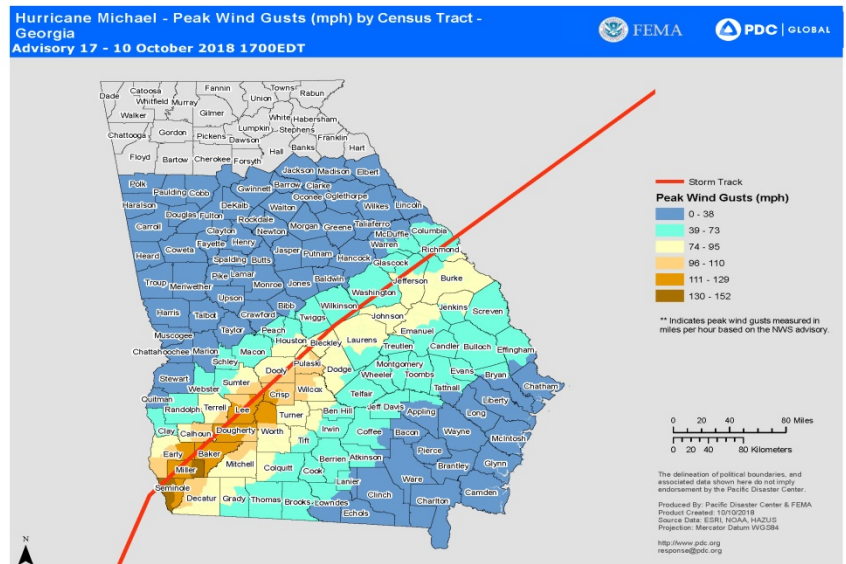
- This marks the 14th year the Georgia Forestry Commission has held the lead role in the cogongrass detection and eradication program.
- The Georgia Forestry Commission will continue to treat new cogongrass detections for landowners at no cost.
- All cogongrass spots continue to be monitored and treated annually until eradicated.
- Workshops, presentations, field days, etc. continue to be delivered to further educate Georgia citizens about identifying and controlling invasive species. Twenty three landowner programs were conducted delivering the cogongrass message to landowners and natural resource professionals. Many more programs were delivered by our task force partners.
- 87% of the total number of spots are negative (yr. 1, yr. 2, or eradicated).
- 76% of the total cogongrass acreage is negative.
- The average size cogongrass spot is between 0.10 and 0.25 acres. The largest spot treated in 2020 was 2.1 acres in size.
- Sixty-eight counties have had positive cogongrass detections. Twenty-nine of 68 cogongrass counties are now negative. The map to the right displays counties with active (positive) cogongrass spots in red, and counties with inactive (negative or eradicated) in green. Counties shaded white have no cogongrass detections.



Counties in path of Hurricane Michael show an uptick in number of new cogongrass detections.

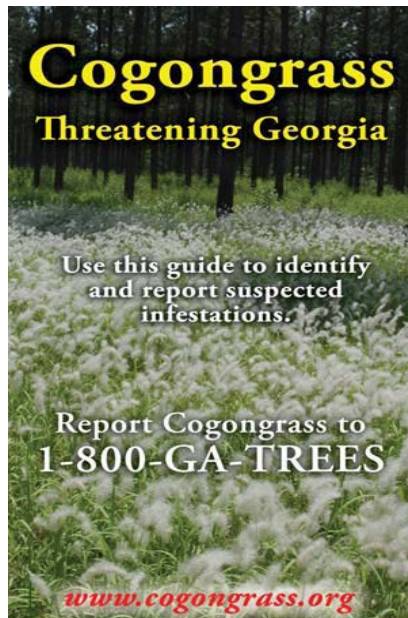
In October of 2018 Hurricane Michael caused millions of dollars of timber damage along its path in southwest Georgia. Loggers salvaged thousands of acres of timberland while land clearing contractors cleared many acres of destroyed or severely damaged woodlands. The combination of Hurricane Michael and timber harvesting and land clearing activities produced thousands of acres of soil disturbance. One well known fact about invasive species such as cogongrass is that they thrive on sites following soil disturbance. Therefore, the

Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health staff will continue to closely monitor new cogongrass detections in the path of Hurricane Michael. It will take 3-5 years to get a better grasp of the rate of spread of cogongrass in this region. However, current data shows a thirty-five percent increase in the number of new cogongrass detections in the path of Hurricane Michael from 2018 to 2020. This is primarily due to new spots being detected during timber harvesting and land clearing activities and not actual spread of seed or root material (rhizomes) on site or from one locale to another. The Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health staff will continue monitoring and reporting updates on the spread of cogongrass.



How to identify cogongrass:

Spring flowering season is the easiest time to detect cogongrass infestations. Cogongrass primarily flowers between April and early June. The white, fluffy seed heads are visible from a distance. However, the distinct golden brown coloration in late fall through winter following frost makes cogongrass visible during the colder months of the year. Cogongrass is most difficult to detect during the growing season. The most distinguishable feature of cogongrass is its dense, sharp, pointed rhizome root system, and it is recommended the rhizomes be dug up to make a positive identification.



Cogongrass identification brochure and pocket ID available from the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Contact your local GFC office or Regional Forest Health Specialist to obtain copies of these publications.



Matt Keel with DNR Wildlife Resources Division was the cogongrass detection winner for 2020!

The Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health staff held a contest seeking to award the person detecting the greatest number of cogongrass spots. Matt Keel with DNR detected the most new detections while performing land management activities on Silver Lake WMA in Decatur County. Matt was awarded a timber cruising vest.



The GFC Forest Health Dept. will once again award a prize to the person who locates the most positive detections in 2021. Therefore, all landowners and resource professionals are encouraged to search for cogongrass during the 2021 calendar year.

How do I report a suspected cogongrass spot?

Call your county Georgia Forestry Commission office or contact your Regional Forest Health specialist. A resource professional will visit the site to make a positive identification. The Georgia Forestry Commission will continue to spray all cogongrass detections in 2021 at no cost to the landowner. Landowners are required to sign a spray agreement with the Georgia Forestry Commission to legally allow resource professionals to access the property and spray the identified cogongrass. All positive detections are monitored annually until eradicated.

Landowners are encouraged to share information concerning cogongrass with their family, friends and adjoining landowners. It is important to realize that invasive plants such as cogongrass invade natural ecosystems and displace natural plant communities. Therefore, invasive species have a negative impact on our forest resources.

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