

Heading Kudzu Off At the Pass In Illinois



A fast-growing, aggressive invasive weed, kudzu climbs up and over trees and other vegetation, starving other plants of needed sunlight.

Kudzu has been called “the plant that ate the South.” A fast-growing climbing vine that covers anything and everything in its path, kudzu kills trees and shrubs, destroys thousands of acres of native plants each year and continues to expand its territory northwest and westward.

The economic and wildlife impacts of kudzu in the South are well documented. It destroys habitat and recreation areas wherever it can establish a monoculture. Removing the vine is incredibly difficult, and requires coordinated control efforts across different vegetation types.



Experts from state and federal agencies, as well as neighboring states battling infestations, came together to work out a way to keep kudzu out of Illinois.

Challenge :

While the shorter growing season in the Midwest has kept the threat at bay, kudzu occurs in Illinois and has been found as far north as Chicago. Experts from around the state gathered to discuss the problem, and began working on solutions with researchers and officials in states with large infestations. The goal was to get kudzu out of Illinois and keep it out.

Solution :

Federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered with State Departments of Transportation, Agriculture and Natural Resources in 2002 to create a plan that would eradicate kudzu. The plan demonstrated the potential economic and wildlife impacts an unchecked kudzu infestation could have in Illinois. The weed was added to the State Noxious Weed list, an essential component of funding and statewide support for eradication programs. Private land owners were guided through well-researched control initiatives, and infestations were mapped and tracked all over the state.

This unique and highly effective partnership has been hard at work since its formation to educate state and federal officials about the threat and help land owners get kudzu infestations under control and keep them that way. The group has gathered grants from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Pulling Together Initiative and the US Forest Service’s State and Private Forestry Program.

Results :

It is currently estimated that nearly 500 acres of kudzu can be found in Illinois, on the land of 133 different owners. Of those acres, 81 percent have a treatment program in place, and 109 of the land owners are receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for their control efforts. The partnership continues to seek additional funding for control and monitoring, and preventing kudzu from gaining a further foothold in the Midwest.



Learn More:

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