



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TO: Jim Liesenfelt, Interim County Manager

THRU: Tad Calkins, Assistant County Manager

FROM: Amanda Elmore, Deputy Director, Natural Resources Management Dept.

AE

SUBJ: Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendation (CEER) #2025075

CEER #2025075, titled Brazilian Pepper, was received by the County from Matthew Heyden.

Citizen Statement:

Brazilian Pepper is the single most aggressive alien species that is destroying what is left of our native plants that are supposed to be here. Yes, possession of Brazilian pepper with the intent to sell or plant is illegal.

The following few sentences are from the FWC website regarding how serious the Brazilian Pepper problem is:

Because of its aggressive growth rate, never plant Brazilian pepper. Possession of Brazilian pepper with the intent to sell or plant is illegal in Florida without a special permit

Why Brazilian pepper must be managed

Brazilian pepper invasions represent a significant threat to Florida's native plant and wildlife populations. Typically, Brazilian pepper forms dense forests that exclude all other plant life by producing a dense closed canopy. These forests are considered to be poor habitat for native wildlife species and may negatively impact bird populations.

Environmental damage caused by Brazilian pepper forests

Brazilian pepper produces dense closed canopy forests that shade out almost all other plant life.

Brazilian pepper forests alter natural fire regimes.

Brazilian pepper forests are considered to be poor habitat for native wildlife species.

Because of its relationship to poison ivy, many who come in contact with its sap develop allergic skin reactions.

Citizen Recommendation:

For years we have used inmates to do highway cleanup. While it's a great program, they learn NOTHING. Using hand picked non-violent inmates that could benefit from the brief, inexpensive training and would be interested in a career afterwards with a REAL future, would have something waiting for them when they were released. I have years of experience as a volunteer doing this work, enlisting as many as 140 volunteers. It's physical work....but INCREDIBLY satisfying as the results are instant. When folks are used that don't know what they are doing, the results are terrible. However, when folks know the plants....the natives that are struggling are instantly exposed to sunlight, and when the pepper is killed, the auxins that they release that exterminate surrounding plant life are stopped. This is only a program for folks that want win, win, win. The county gets to protect all public property. Inmates that begin to work in the program gain an immediate sense of self esteem because each day, they accomplished something EXTREMELY important. The COUNTY SAVES A FORTUNE and protects the most important asset. Finally, inmates that have never had a good opportunity for employment, have actual knowledge and skills that makes them Valuable. Both men and women can do the work.

Staff Analysis:

A very similar CEER submitted was considered by the Board last year - #2024001. The Board rejected the recommendation.

Invasive plant removal on public lands is valuable, as is the rehabilitation of inmates. Natural Resources Management (NRM) Staff has sporadically utilized inmates for land management. However, these efforts mainly involved hand-weeding and less intense physical activities. Removal of invasive plants, such as Brazilian pepper, typically involves chain saws or heavy equipment, and herbicides to stump-treat for the prevention of regrowth. Specialized licensing is required to oversee the use of these herbicides. NRM does not have appropriate oversight staffing to train and supervise inmates in these intensive efforts. NRM will continue leveraging partnerships to ensure the most effective utilization of available resources.

Staff Recommended Action:

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners reject CEER #2025075, as it does not enhance of the effectiveness and efficiency of County government as required by Home Rule Charter as detailed in the staff analysis.

CC: Frank Abbate, County Manager

Horst, Rachel

From: CEER@brevardfl.gov
Sent: Friday, January 31, 2025 3:59 PM
To: Horst, Rachel
Subject: A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025075

Recommendation # 2025075

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025075 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

Contact Information:

Group/Organization	Space Coast Audubon
Name	matthew heyden
Address	6534 Ridge Ct, Titusville FL 32780
Phone	(321) 338-5857
Email	mheyden716@aol.com
Alternate Email	mheyden716@aol.com

Recommendation Information:

Recommendation ID	2025075
Recommendation Title	Brazilian Pepper
Areas Affected	all publicly owned properties in Brevard County
Department Affected	DEVELOPMENTAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
Current problem	<p>Brazilian Pepper is the single most aggressive alien species that is destroying what is left of our native plants that are supposed to be here. Yes, possession of Brazilian pepper with the intent to sell or plant is illegal. The following few sentences are from the FWC website regarding how serious the Brazilian Pepper problem is: Because of its aggressive growth rate, never plant Brazilian pepper. Possession of Brazilian pepper with the intent to sell or plant is illegal in Florida without a special permit Why Brazilian pepper must be managed Brazilian pepper invasions represent a significant threat to Florida's native plant and wildlife populations. Typically, Brazilian pepper forms dense forests that exclude all other plant life by producing a dense closed canopy. These forests are considered to be poor habitat for native wildlife species and may negatively impact bird populations. Environmental damage caused by Brazilian pepper forests Brazilian pepper produces dense closed canopy forests that shade out almost all other plant life. Brazilian pepper forests alter natural fire regimes. Brazilian pepper forests are considered to be poor habitat for native wildlife species. Because of its relationship to poison ivy, many who come in contact with its sap develop allergic skin reactions.</p>

Recommendation

Recommendation: For years we have used inmates to do highway cleanup. While it's a great program, they learn NOTHING. Using hand picked non-violent inmates that could benefit from the brief, inexpensive training and would be interested in a career afterwards with a REAL future, would have something waiting for them when they were released. I have years of experience as a volunteer doing this work, enlisting as many as 140 volunteers. It's physical work....but INCREDIBLY satisfying as the results are instant. When folks are used that don't know what they are doing, the results are terrible. However, when folks know the plants....the natives that are struggling are instantly exposed to sunlight, and when the pepper is killed, the auxins that they release that exterminate surrounding plant life are stopped. This is only a program for folks that want win, win, win. The county gets to protect all public property. Inmates that begin to work in the program gain an immediate sense of self esteem because each day, they accomplished something EXTREMELY important. The COUNTY SAVES A FORTUNE and protects the most important asset. Finally, inmates that have never had a good opportunity for employment, have actual knowledge and skills that makes them Valuable. Both men and women can do the work.

Attachments

No Documents were attached.

Please do not reply to this e-mail, as it will go to an unmonitored mailbox.