



Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force Archived Announcements JANUARY TO JUNE 2008

January 2008

South Carolina Update

January 8, 2008 Chuck Gresham, Clemson, and Betsy Brabson, Task Force SC coordinator, were invited to give a presentation about invasive plants at the monthly meeting of the Alhambra Garden Club, Mt. Pleasant, SC. Gresham's power point presentation focused on invasives in general. Brabson then spoke specifically about the beach vitex problem. Club members were instructed about what they could do to help and asked to write their Congressmen in support of beach vitex eradication and to appropriate funding



The beach vitex monster!

January 19-20, 2008 Clemson's Baruch Institute participated in the Winyah Bay Heritage Festival in Georgetown, SC. The festival celebrates the rich heritage of hunting, fishing, decoys and conservation in the Winyah Bay area. Clemson was one of 25 conservation organizations exhibiting. Beach vitex was one of three topics highlighted in the Clemson display. A giant beach vitex stump, removed from an ocean-front property in Georgetown County, was made to look like a gnarly monster. Hal Drotor, Clemson's chief beach vitex eradicator, was the artist. Most festival attendees decided they did not want oceanfront dunes to look like this!

January 31, 2008 Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force partners gathered at Clemson's Baruch Institute for a 2008 planning meeting. Partners were updated on Task Force activities, eradication/restoration work in SC and plans for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for the NC coast. A date was chosen for the 5th Beach Vitex Symposium which will be Wednesday, March 19 at 10:00 a.m. The location this year will be at the North Myrtle Beach City Hall, 1018 2nd Ave. South, which is more central to both Carolinas.



Task Force Partners posed for a photo with the Beach Vitex Monster (standing left to right: Mike Walker, Huntington Beach State Park; Jack Whetstone, Clemson; Bill Eiser, Office of Coastal Resource Management-DHEC; George Chastain, Baruch Foundation; Jen Spicer, North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERR; Randy Westbrook, US Geological Survey; Jennifer Koches, US Fish & Wildlife Service – kneeling: Betsy Brabson, Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force; Chuck Gresham, Clemson; Dale Suiter, US Fish & Wildlife Service.

North Carolina Update

January 17, 2008 Melanie Doyle, NC Task Force coordinator and Dale Suiter, US Fish & Wildlife Service, met with Rick Iverson (NCDA), Rob Richardson (NCSU), Sarah True (NCSU) and William Strickland (BASF) to discuss the implementation of the Keystone Grant in NC.

February 2008

South Carolina Update

February 2008 BASF Corporation's quarterly magazine winter edition, Latitude, featured a cover story, Ordinary People, Extraordinary Change: Saving Sea Turtles on the Carolina Coast. The article was written about the impact beach vitex has on loggerhead sea turtles' nesting habitat and the efforts of the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force to eradicate the invasive plant from the coastline. Betsy Brabson, Task Force SC coordinator was featured for her work with sea turtles and concern about beach vitex that lead to the formation of the CBVTF. Chuck Gresham and Jack Whetstone, Clemson's Baruch Institute, received recognition for their research and control demonstrations on beach vitex. These test sites helped fine-tune the most effective method (hack and squirt) and herbicide (BASF's Habitat) to treat the invasive plant. BASF is a partner on the Task Force's National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Pulling Together Initiative Grant.



February 15-17, 2008 The Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force was an exhibitor at the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition (SEWE) in Charleston, SC. The Task Force display, which has been updated to reflect the eradication/restoration work, was in the Conservation Tent at Marion Square and manned by Task Force volunteers and partners. Now in its 26th year, SEWE is the largest wildlife art and nature event in the nation. The Expo attracted 40,000 attendees to enjoy world-class original art, diverse exhibits, interesting presentations and lectures.



February 26, 2008 The Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force received an award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation during National Invasive Weed Awareness Week (NIWAW) in Washington, DC. During a reception at the US Botanic Garden, Task Force SC coordinator Betsy Brabson, accepted a plaque for the 2007 Pulling Together Initiative Community Spirit Award. The inscription reads: For exceptional achievements utilizing partnerships to manage invasive plants through the Pulling Together Initiative Grant Program. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awards 40-50 Pulling Together Initiative Grants annually. For more info about the award, please visit the NFWF web site.



Task Force SC coordinator Betsy Brabson, accepted a plaque for the 2007 Pulling Together Initiative Community Spirit Award.

Clemson Update

Even though February is normally a slow month, Clemson's dune restoration project has remained active. Mimi Williams, NRCS, visited sites to inspect the sweetgrass variety trials that were planted on 10 cleared vitex sites last summer. She indicated that she could provide more sweetgrass to add textural variety to the replanting effort.

Surveying for beach vitex of beaches north of Winyah Bay has been completed. 12 additional infestations were documented, fortunately none were very large. The data from a competition experiment conducted in the Brookgreen Gardens greenhouses in 2006 was analyzed and a significant antagonistic relation between beach vitex and sea oats and vitex and sea-shore elder was documented.

Six thousand American beachgrass seedlings were planted at 33 sites on Pawleys Island, one site at Litchfield by the Sea and six sites at DeBordieu in Georgetown County. American beachgrass is a known beach dune builder that has been used for decades on the South Carolina coast.

Craig Aubrey and Tera Baird of the Environmental Services section of the Charleston US Fish and Wildlife Service office visited the Clemson Lab and then toured beach vitex sites at Pawleys Island to learn about the restoration project.

Finally, the new chipper was put into production use as the Clemson crew began clearing vitex sites that were injected with herbicide last fall.



Top left: Sweetgrass trial planted on cleared site. Bottom left: Competition experiment conducted at Brookgreen Gardens greenhouses. Top right: Reps from US FWS tour beach vitex sites on Pawleys Island. Bottom right: The new chipper was put into use at sites that were injected with herbicide last fall.

North Carolina Update

Task Force members are continuing to make contacts with coastal towns and developing a work plan for North Carolina's National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Keystone grant.

February 3, 2008 Melanie Doyle, NC Task Force Coordinator, conducted a seminar at the Spring "How Does Your Garden Grow Show", sponsored by the New Hanover County Arboretum & North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. The subject was invasive species that began as landscaping plants. A substantive portion of the talk covered beach vitex and the efforts of the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force.

February 7, 2008 The Cape Fear Garden Club held its 2008 Wildlife Seminar focusing on backyard wildlife. Melanie Doyle, gave a presentation about invasive plant species that, although attractive to wildlife, should never be planted. Beach vitex was included in this list, as well as a description of the problems this plant causes.

March 2008

South Carolina Update

March 6, 2008 The Weed Science Society of North Carolina (WSSNC) held its annual meeting at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, NC. Betsy Brabson, SC Task Force Coordinator spoke to 75 members about Organizing a successful multi-state education and eradication program for beach vitex. The WSSNC was formed to advance the discipline of Weed Science in North Carolina and improve the well-being of the citizens of the state through a better understanding of weeds and their management.

March 13, 2008 The Coastal Observer (Pawleys Island) ran an article, SC to Share Success Stories at Symposium, notifying its' readers about the upcoming Beach Vitex Symposium on March 19.

March 19, 2008 The 2008 Beach Vitex Symposium was held at the North Myrtle Beach (SC) City Hall with about 55 people in attendance from Federal and state agencies, municipalities, academia, conservation organizations and concerned citizens. There was a large contingency of North Carolina attendees as a result of moving the location of the symposium to a more central location between the Carolinas.

The morning session focused on 2007 task force accomplishments, news of North Carolina's recent grant of \$128,500 and plans for large scale eradication, the role of the Carolina's sea turtle network in surveying for beach vitex, improvements/changes on the website and an update on beach vitex being listed as a State Noxious Weed in NC. After lunch, the group watched a demonstration of Clemson's eradication technique and learned how the dunes are replanted with native vegetation after beach vitex is removed. After the symposium, a small group went to Kingston Plantation to see the largest stand of beach vitex on the SC coast. The site was treated last fall and will be cleared and replanted this summer.

March 20, 2008 The Sun News (Myrtle Beach, SC) ran a large article on beach vitex complete with photos on the front of the local news section. The article updated readers on the 2008 Beach Vitex Symposium.



Scenes from the 2008 symposium. Attendants were caught up on task force news, then watched a demonstration of herbicide application and chipping.

Myrtle Beach television channel WPDE featured an interview with Task Force SC Coordinator Betsy Brabson on several of its news programs. Brabson was interviewed during the 2008 Beach Vitex Symposium.

Dr. Chuck Gresham retired from Clemson University's Baruch Institute after a 33 year career in forest science. Gresham has been the backbone of the beach vitex eradication project in South Carolina and has worked on it eagerly and tirelessly for the past 4 ½ years. His enthusiasm has been an inspiration to the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force and greatly appreciated. As a retirement gift, the task force presented Gresham with the t-shirt he has been requesting and some extras for him to share with the eradication crew.



Clemson Update

During March Clemson's dune restoration project made great progress in clearing the killed vitex from lots on Pawleys Island. The crew cleared 24 of the 50 lots where the beach vitex was injected last fall. Although this sounds like the Clemson crew is only half way through, they tackled the big sites first and probably removed 70% to 80 % of the dead vitex on the island. Only one set of four lots with a heavy beach vitex infestation remains to be cleared. The remainder of the lots has small populations of 1 to 2 plants that can be rapidly cleared. Clearing will proceed to sites north and south of Pawleys Island in April and planting will begin then.

North Carolina Update

The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) presented Melanie Doyle, Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force, NC Coordinator, their Sustainability Award - Large Project, for her work with the task force.

March 5, 2008 Melanie Doyle made a presentation to the NC Colonial Waterbirds Working Group during their annual meeting at Hammock Beach's State Park updating them on the Task Force's progress in North Carolina. Surveying and eradication efforts planned for the 2008 season were also detailed.

March 19, 2008 A large delegation of the CBVTF from North Carolina attended the Beach Vitex Symposium in North Myrtle Beach on March 19. Melanie Doyle presented a summary of North Carolina's achievements, as well as a description of the work planned for the 2008 season.

March 31, 2008 The Star News (Wilmington, NC) ran an article, State hopes to wipe out pretty but invasive plant, about the state's recent grant receipt and hopes to eradicate beach vitex.



April 2008

South Carolina Update

April 4, 2008 The SC Dept. of Natural Resources held its spring sea turtle workshop at Ft. Johnson, Charleston, SC. Betsy Brabson, SC Task Force coordinator, gave a brief update on beach vitex eradication to project leaders and other volunteers. Brabson thanked the group for their surveying/reporting efforts and asked that they continue to search the coast during their beach walks. The SC Sea Turtle Network is an army of about 800 volunteers along the SC coast who protect sea turtle nests.

Clemson Update

All beach vitex has been treated at Pawleys Island and most of the dead debris has been cleared. Planting of the dunes was initiated in March and April.

The Carolina Dunes site in Myrtle Beach, which was treated last fall, was cleared and the area was replanted in April.

The largest beach vitex site found to date and most problematic, Kingston Plantation in North Myrtle Beach, was treated last December. Clearing began the end of April and will continue into May. Clemson technicians did some minor retreatment of the 1.6 acre site. The dunes will be replanted with sea oats and bitter panicum.



North Carolina Update

The educational beach vitex video produced by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in 2006 is now playing regularly on the New Hanover County government cable channel. The Task Force is grateful to Mr. Mark Boyer, Public Information Officer for New Hanover County, for making the decision to show this important and informational film.

Beach vitex was been discussed at several sea turtle volunteer orientation meetings all along the North Carolina coast this spring. Thanks go out to Dr. Matthew Godfrey (NC Wildlife Resources Commission) and James Casey (UNCW), as well as all other sea turtle folks who will be helping the Task Force in surveying efforts.

May 2008

South Carolina Update

May 12, 2008 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service honored 16 of its partners with 2007 Southeastern Regional Director's Conservation Awards in Atlanta, GA. Sam D. Hamilton, Southeast Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented recipients with their awards saying, "We applaud their efforts and dedication, which are freely given in service to the natural world." Betsy Brabson, Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force SC Coordinator, received one of the 16 conservation awards for her work with the task force. Jennifer Koches of the Charleston office of the USFWS nominated Brabson for the award. <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2008/r08-022.html>



BASF Corporation has posted on the web the article, Ordinary People, Extraordinary Change: Saving Sea Turtles on the Carolina Coast, from its winter issue of Latitude Magazine. The article was written about the impact beach vitex has on loggerhead sea turtles' nesting habitat and the efforts of the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force to eradicate the invasive plant from the coastline. <http://www.vmanswers.com/printerfriendly.aspx?pid=1602>



Betsy Brabson received a conservation award from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

May 15, 2008 The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation approved an award of \$40,000 in federal funds to the Belle W. Baruch Foundation to support the Pulling Together to Eradicate Beach Vitex in the Carolinas project. The award was made on the condition that these funds are matched by \$41,500 in additional non-federal funds raised by the Belle W. Baruch Foundation specifically for this project. This is the 5th grant the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has provided to the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force.

Clemson Update

April 28- May 16, 2008 The largest (1.6 acres) and most problematic beach vitex site to date, Kingston Plantation/Hilton-Embassy Suites in Horry County, was finally cleared. Clemson University provided both equipment and crew. Hilton- Embassy Suites provided additional labor, Starwood Landscaping provided an additional trained crew of two and the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force provided two weeks of temporary labor through Manpower of Myrtle Beach to get the job accomplished. This was another example of a cooperative effort brought together by our task force to keep the work moving forward.

The Clemson field crew cleared an additional 14 sites of treated beach vitex from Long Bay Estates, Horry County, south to Litchfield Beach, Georgetown County. 16 sites were replanted, including the very visible corner at the "Birds Nest" section of Pawleys Island.

Reports of resprouting are being logged and retreated is done as clearing/planting is being done in each area. In addition, resurvey work continues in those areas to check for new growth.

Clemson Impacts, a quarterly magazine that Clemson University publishes about its public service activities, featured an article about beach vitex in the spring issue. Beach vitex may be on last legs in SC, reported the success Clemson has had treating the plant with the herbicide Habitat and restoring the dunes with native vegetation. "Vitex could be virtually eliminated in South Carolina by the end of 2009," said Jack Whetstone, Sea Grant Extension Program specialist at the Baruch.



"Birds nest" section of Pawleys Island corner before (top) and after eradication (bottom) .

May 12, 2008 Coastal County District Conservationists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) traveled to Clemson's Baruch Institute to meet with representatives of the beach vitex project. The purpose was to learn about the project and visit eradication/restoration sites. These representatives, having been educated on beach vitex, will return to their districts and be able to identify the plant.

May 28, 2008 South Carolina ETV's Emmy Award-winning "Making It Grow!" came to Georgetown County to film sites of invasive beach vitex and phragmites. This television show is a live, interactive call-in program produced by ETV and Clemson University serving viewers with current research-based horticultural information. Host Rowland Alston and featured guests focus on gardening topics, while highlighting interesting places and products from around the state.

The "Making It Grow!" film crew visited an oceanfront site at Litchfield Beach covered with beach vitex. On either side of the site were properties Clemson employees had treated last fall, had cleared and were replanting the dunes with sea oats and bitter panicum. Chuck Gresham was interviewed by host Rowland Alston about the origin of beach vitex, the problems it presents and the methods of eradication/restoration. The show is scheduled to air in August.



North Carolina Update

A brief update about beach vitex work in North Carolina appeared in the Early Summer edition of Coastwatch magazine, the publication of NC Sea Grant.

Ongoing survey work for populations of beach vitex continued along the North Carolina coast.

June 2008

South Carolina Update

June 24, 2008 The SEWEE Association Inc. in Awendaw, SC is a non-profit corporation organized to promote understanding and appreciation of natural environments of the Southeast. SEWEE partners with several National Wildlife Refuges and forests of coastal South Carolina. The organization hosted a week long workshop for area school teachers (grades 6-12) called Reclaiming the Lowcountry: Investigating Local Ecosystems from the Forest to the Sea. The workshop (including field studies) concentrated on invasives, their effect on ecosystems and what can be done about them. Betsy Brabson, task force SC coordinator, gave a presentation on beach vitex, its effect on the dune ecosystem and the eradication/restoration efforts.

Clemson Update

The Clemson crew cleared six lots, cleared and planted one lot and planted 17 lots during the month of June. Due to hot weather and lack of rainfall, the previously planted lots have required extra attention, mainly periodic watering. The effort is going well and rainfall toward the end of the month helped. In addition, all reported sites of regrowth have been retreated or will be in the first two weeks of July.

North Carolina Update

June 2, 2008 Several members of the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force attended a workshop sponsored by BASF and North Carolina State University regarding a new herbicide called Clearcast. This could have beach vitex control application. William Strickland of BASF and Dr. Rob Richardson of NCSU were both organizers and presenters. Presenting from SC was Jack Whetstone of Clemson's Baruch Institute, speaking in detail about beach vitex, the task force, and our eradication efforts. Also attending were Dale Suiter (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Sarah True (NCSU), Rick Iverson (NCSU) and Melanie Doyle (NC Aquariums) and NC task force coordinator.

Letters went out to every town along the North Carolina coast this month from the task force and written by Dale Suiter, officially informing them of the grant funds available for eradication efforts to begin this fall and the importance of getting beach vitex under control as soon as possible. Many of the recipients of those letters have already responded positively.

June 10, 2008 Dale Suiter and Melanie Doyle met with Charles Derrick, Public Works Director, Town of Topsail Beach, to discuss the planned eradication efforts for this fall. The group also toured beach vitex sites that had been treated two seasons ago with either physical removal, herbicide spraying, or both. Unfortunately, all sites still had beach vitex. A few new locations were recorded also.

June 13, 2008 Melanie Doyle met with an employee of the Town of Kure Beach to survey a few unreported locations of beach vitex, as well as to get a copy of the town's new ordinance prohibiting the species.

June 27, 2008 Melanie Doyle met with three members of the Town of Carolina Beach government to discuss the adoption of an ordinance and to survey both known and unreported sites of beach vitex.