

# Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce

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## Press Release

For Release at 10:00 A.M., Friday, August 8, 2003

### Agriculture Commissioner Wages War On Farmland Predator 'Cogongrass'

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture & Commerce Lester Spell initiated today a demonstration effort to contain cogongrass in Mississippi. The federally funded program was made available statewide and targets heavily infested agricultural or forest land. Cogongrass is ranked as the seventh worst weed in the world and is widely considered the worst weed in Mississippi.

"It is vital to our landowners that action be taken immediately to put a halt on cogongrass," Spell said. "Cogongrass is rapidly spreading in all parts of Mississippi with the greatest problem in the southern counties. In order to protect our natural habitats, agricultural lands, forestry production, and property values, cooperative efforts like this program must be started to impede the growth and dispersion of cogongrass. It literally chokes out the living habitat for all other plants and animals."

Keith Pouncey, Field Coordinator of Noxious Weed Programs, manages the program for the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and is responsible for distribution of herbicides and verification of use on cogongrass. Pouncey said that cogongrass was introduced to the United States through Mobile in the 1912 as a packing material. In the last twenty years, cogongrass has dispersed from infestations in nineteen counties to confirmed sightings in fifty counties.

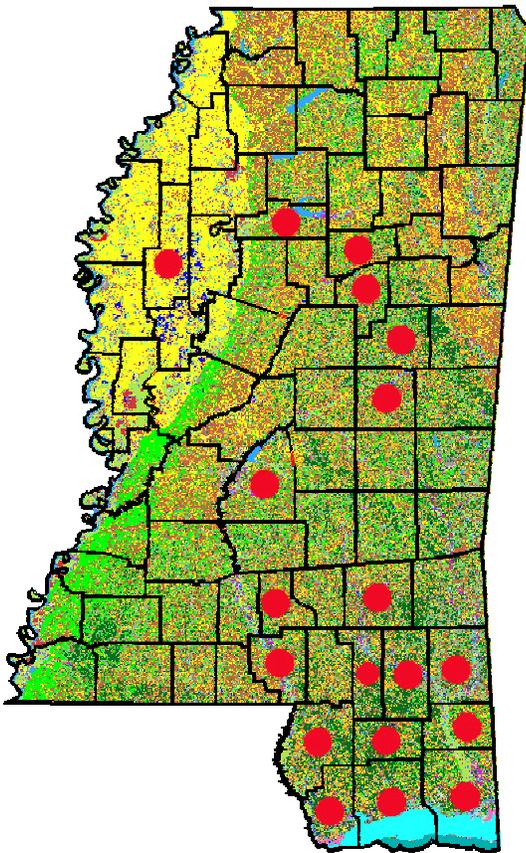
Commissioner Spell stated that cogongrass was identified as a noxious weed in a bill introduced to the 2003 Mississippi Legislature. The Noxious Weed Law protects Mississippi from the introduction and spread of noxious weeds in Mississippi. The regulations of the law fall under the authority of the Commissioner. Spell said, "The objective in the fight against cogongrass is to effectively control cogongrass on Mississippi lands – which includes eradication, reduction, or containment. We anticipate very positive results."

Under the 2003 cogongrass control demonstration program, federal funds allow the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce to procure herbicides (glyphosate and Arsenal (imazapyr)) to provide to program participants to demonstrate effectiveness of chemical treatment on cogongrass. Landowners are responsible for application at recommended rates on up to 25 acres. Demonstrations are being conducted in twelve counties with heavily concentrated infestations.

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## *Counties infested with cogongrass*

1979



2002

