

WSSA Enters a New Era of Invasive Weed Communication

Author: DiTomaso, Joseph M.

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Letter from the Editor

WSSA Enters a New Era of Invasive Weed Communication

Invasive Plant Science and Management (IPSM) is a quarterly journal that will be published in both a hard copy and on-line format. The unique aspect of IPSM is its focus on not only the biology and ecology of invasive plants, but also on many other aspects related to invasive plant management and restoration, ecological and environmental impacts, risk and/or cost/benefit analyses related to management, case studies, and updates on new invasive plants and policy, compliance and regulatory legislation. In addition, the journal will also provide review articles on important and timely topics related to invasive plants.

The initial concept for this journal began more than three years ago. Although many journals include research papers on the biology, ecology or management of invasive plants, and a few encourage papers on restoration of invaded plant communities, none provide a central theme specific to understanding the science, management, sociology, and policy issues associated with invasive plants. Through the leadership of Lars Anderson and Vanelle Peterson, the establishment of a committee to evaluate the potential for establishing such a journal was approved by the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) Board of Directors in 2006. This committee consisted of Joe DiTomaso, Kevin Gibson, Janet Clark, John Jachetta, Greg MacDonald, Karen Ridgway, and Mike Foley, and the committee worked with the WSSA president Dale Shaner. The task of the committee was to determine national interest in a peer-reviewed journal focused on all aspects of invasive plants. This was accomplished by conducting an electronic survey of several professional societies, NGOs, and governmental organizations interested in invasive plants and their management.

The survey not only evaluated the interest level of the participants, but also the preferred topics, publication frequency and format, and likely level of involvement in the journal. The survey was extended to WSSA members, which made up about 40% of the respondents, as well as other ecological societies, Exotic Pest Plant or Invasive Plant Councils (EPPC/IPC), The Nature Conservancy, federal, state and local agencies, and other plant-oriented societies.

The results of the survey clearly affirmed the need for this journal. Of the 793 responses, over 90% indicated an interest in the journal with 62% expressing a strong interest. In addition to the interest among WSSA members, there was also strong interest among those affiliated with EPPC/IPC (24% of the respondents), the Ecological Society of America (9% of respondents), and the Aquatic Plant Management Society (8% of respondents). Of equal importance, 41% of those expressing an interest in the journal noted they would contribute a paper and 28% volunteered to serve as a reviewer for submitted manuscripts.

Among the respondents who showed interest in the journal, about half were involved in research, with the remainder working in areas such as regulatory, sociology, or field management. The survey respondents consistently indicated that the journal should include not only research papers on the biology, ecology, and management of invasive plants, but also studies on restoration of invaded areas and case studies from field practitioners. The survey not only revealed a strong need for the journal, but also clearly showed that many would be willing to help produce it. This confirmation led to the WSSA Board of Directors' approval to establish the new journal in early 2007.

Definitions of an Invasive Plant

According to the Presidential Executive Order (13112) signed in 1999, an invasive plant species is defined as any "alien" species, including its seeds, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to its environment (ecosystem), and whose introduction, through "intentional or unintentional escape, release, dissemination, or placement of a species into an ecosystem as a result of human activity," "does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health." The Invasive Species Advisory Council (ISAC) has a very similar definition. This definition does not differentiate between non-native species that cause economic or environmental harm in agricultural and non-agricultural ecosystems.

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In contrast, many of the EPPC/IPC's apply a more limited definition of invasive plant that focuses specifically on wildland or natural areas. For example, the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) defines an invasive plant as a non-native plant that can spread into wildland ecosystems, displace native species, hybridize with native species, alter biological communities, or alter ecosystem processes.

Although WSSA has not developed an official definition of an invasive plant, IPSM considers invasive plants to include those species that primarily invade non-agricultural communities. This can include species that overlap between the two ecosystems, but does not include strictly cropland or urban weeds.

Goals of IPSM

The structure and submission process will be very similar to that of *Weed Science* and *Weed Technology*, the two other

journals published through WSSA, and will include an editorial board and outside reviewers. All published articles will be peer-reviewed, including the case studies. Unlike *Weed Science* and *Weed Technology*, research articles published in *Invasive Plant Science and Management* will also include an interpretive summary, which is designed to provide a concise description of the importance of the research to the field practitioner.

WSSA's goal is to provide a resource that can be used by diverse groups working with invasive plants, including academicians, field practitioners, governmental agencies, policymakers, and educators. Ultimately, the objective is to provide the best possible information to facilitate better communication and coordination in the development of invasive plant management programs throughout the country and the world.

Joseph M. DiTomaso
Editor, *Invasive Plant Science and Management*