



## **SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS** *for South Carolina* **2003 -2011**

### **SUPPORT & FUNDING**

- The South Carolina Beach Vitex Task Force, formed in 2003, became simply the Beach Vitex Task Force as North Carolina and Virginia joined our efforts.
- The Task Force received over \$800,000 in grants from a diverse group of stakeholders including: National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Town of Pawleys Island, Donnelley Foundation and Bunnelle Foundation.
- The USFWS produced a beach vitex video demonstrating how the plant is altering the coastal ecosystem.

### **PERMITS & POLICY**

- The Office of Coastal Resource Management-SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control (OCRM-DHEC) changed its language in the “General Permit” to explicitly prohibit beach vitex from being planted on oceanfront dunes. The agency also announced a new, simpler beachfront permit to facilitate the replanting of native vegetation to help stabilize dunes particularly after beach vitex has been removed.
- Beach vitex ordinances were passed in several communities to deter the future planting/spread of the invasive plant. Task Force members worked with coastal community leaders to draft language for the ordinances and provide testimony during public meetings.
- Ecological and regulatory assessments were conducted by the US Geological Survey (USGS) for possible listing of beach vitex by US Dept. of Agriculture/Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) as a Federal Noxious Weed. Beach vitex, with a medium/high rating, was turned down because the plant is considered native in Hawaii.
- Task Force members appealed to the SC Dept. of Agriculture for beach vitex to be listed as a State Noxious Weed. Clemson Plant Industry, the regulatory agency, denied the request citing that the plant was a problem only in a narrow geographical area and that the Task Force had eradicated 99% of known sites. In contrast, beach vitex was made a State Noxious Weed in NC and is under permanent statewide quarantine in VA.

### **RESEARCH & MONITORING**

- Locations of beach vitex were reported by Task Force members and SC sea turtle volunteers on coastal beaches and recorded in a GIS database maintained by North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).
- Groundbreaking research on the biology and control of beach vitex was conducted by Clemson University and provided information on which herbicides are most effective and what makes the plant such a successful invader. Research results are being applied to beach vitex removal and dune restoration projects.
- SC Dept. of Natural Resources (SCDNR) provided funding for the survey of remote North Island in Georgetown County which is 8 miles long and only accessible by boat. Beach vitex plants were found each of the seven years the island was surveyed exhibiting

that the ocean gives the seeds and vegetative fragments a means of travel. The closest known source of beach vitex is 8 miles north of where most of the plants were found.

- The entire SC coast including barrier islands has been surveyed for beach vitex.

### **BEACH VITEX REMOVAL & RESTORATION**

- SC property owners gave permission for the treatment, removal and restoration of their oceanfront dunes.
- Over 220 known sites of beach vitex have been treated, cleared and replanted in SC. Crews have diligently searched and have no reason to expect to find more sites especially on the uninhabited barrier islands since 99+% of the seed production is controlled and contained.
- The NRCS donated to Clemson University 300 sweetgrass plants to be used for dune re-vegetation. Also, through a grant from the NRCS, a chipper was purchased which streamlined the process of clearing away and disposing of dead beach vitex from sites.

### **OUTREACH & EDUCATION**

- The Task Force held 7 symposia to update the public on work accomplished to eradicate beach vitex on the SC coast.
- Task Force members conducted 3 plant identification workshops, gave presentations to a variety of audiences including schools, expos, town councils, HOAs, environmental organizations, nurserymen, teachers workshops, master gardeners, garden clubs, etc.
- The Task Force website, [beachvitex.org](http://beachvitex.org), hosted and maintained by North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERR, features monthly updates, summaries of research and education activities, photos, maps of locations and an electronic form for reporting sightings.
- Extensive media coverage has raised public awareness of the problems associated with beach vitex and the need to control it. Beach vitex has been featured numerous times in newspaper/magazine articles and on television/radio.
- Beach vitex brochures, ID cards and signs have been widely circulated to educate the public.
- Task Force members attended National Invasive Weed Awareness Week in Washington, DC and lobbied before SC Senators and House representatives about beach vitex.

### **AWARDS**

- The Beach Vitex Task Force is called a shining example of inter-agency partnering and has received several awards including: the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's 2007 Community Spirit Award and US Fish & Wildlife Service's Southeastern Regional Director's Conservation Award.
- BASF awarded the Beach Vitex Task Force the 2009 Quality Vegetation Management (QVM) Project Habitat award, one of 3 national winners in the Invasive Weed Management division.