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New Jersey Senate Passes Invasive Species Management Act, a Collaborative Effort to Protect the State's Ecosystem

TRENTON, NJ — On March 24, 2025, the New Jersey Senate passed Senate Bill S1029, the Invasive Species Management Act, with a unanimous vote of 39-0. This legislation marks a significant achievement in balancing the concerns of the New Jersey nursery industry with efforts to protect New Jersey's ecosystems from invasive species, reflecting years of dedication and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders.

Senate Bill S1029 presents a comprehensive approach to invasive species management, establishing a robust regulatory framework to address ecological challenges. The bill creates the New Jersey Invasive Species Council, a 19-member body comprising experts from state departments, environmental organizations, and relevant professional fields. This council will be responsible for developing and maintaining a critical list of prohibited invasive plant species, providing strategic guidance to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Agriculture, and the Legislature. The legislation introduces a carefully phased implementation strategy. Thirteen months after enactment, individuals will be prohibited from propagating, importing, or introducing listed invasive species without obtaining a conditional use waiver from the DEP. This restriction will expand after 49 months to include the sale, distribution, export, and offering of these species.

This bill represents a major step forward for New Jersey, previous attempts to address invasive species regulation have faced challenges. In 2019, Assembly Bill A1887 aimed to establish the "New Jersey Invasive Species Task Force," but did not advance. In 2022-23, Senate Bill S2186 sought to regulate the sale and distribution of certain invasive species and re-establish the New Jersey Invasive Species Council, but was vetoed by Governor Murphy due to concerns about duplicating existing authority within the Department of Environmental Protection. The history and current successful passage of Senate Bill S1029 highlights the power of collaboration, dedication, cooperation, and commitment to New Jersey's environment.

Key contributors to this bill include:

NJFTF Invasive Species Subgroup and Additional Participating Stakeholders

- Laura Bush, Russell Furnari Native Plant Society of New Jersey
- Jeanne Fox, JD, Adjunct Faculty Columbia SIPA & Rutgers Bloustein; former BPU President; former EPA Regional Administrator; former DEPE Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner
- Lori Jenssen, Executive Director, New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association (NJNLA)
- Michael Van Clef, Ph.D., Program Director, FoHVOS NJ Invasive Species Strike Team (NJSST)
- John Landau, Rutgers Environmental Steward
- Richard A. McCoy, American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) Northeast Representative, Member NJNLA and NJLCA

Co-Chairs, New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force (NJFTF)

- Andrew Bennett, Board Member, New Jersey Forestry Association

- Anjuli Ramos, Chapter Director, Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter
- Alison Mitchell, Executive Director, New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- Kelly Wentzel, Director of Stewardship, New Jersey Audubon

In addition, a central information clearinghouse will also be developed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), offering resources for managing and controlling invasive species and the bill creates an initial list of 30 prohibited invasive species and includes restrictions on their propagation, importation, and introduction.

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
 Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)
 Mimosa or silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*)
 Porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis glandulosa*
 var. *brevipedunculata*)

Japanese angelica tree, (*Aralia elata*)
 Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
 Japanese clematis (*Clematis terniflora*)
 Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
 Weeping lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*)
 Winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
 English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
 Japanese hop (*Humulus japonicas*)
 Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneate*)
 European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
 Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*)

Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)
 Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
 Japanese crabapple (*Malus toringo*)
 Chinese silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)

Eurasian water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)
 Oriental photinia (*Photinia villosa*)
 Running bamboo (*Phyllostachys*)
 Callery or Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
 common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
 Jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*)
 Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
 European water chestnut (*Trapa natans*)
 Siebold's arrowwood (*Viburnum sieboldii*)
 Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*)
 Chinese wisteria *Wisteria sinensis*)

If passed, Bill S1029, the New Jersey Invasive Species Management Act, would be one of the most comprehensive invasive species laws in the nation. Its broad regulations on the sale, distribution, and propagation of invasive species, along with the creation of a New Jersey Invasive Species Council oversight committee, would establish a stronger framework for prevention and management. While other states have also implemented robust invasive species policies, this bill would position New Jersey at the forefront of invasive species regulation. Furthermore, the Invasive Species Management Act will be a crucial tool in preserving New Jersey's valuable nursery industry, protecting and enhancing ecosystems, and promoting sustainable practices throughout the state. The bill has now been referred to the Assembly Commerce, Economic Development, and Agriculture Committee for further consideration.

Press Release Issued by:

The New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force (NJFTF), Native Plant Society of New Jersey, New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association, Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter, and other stakeholders are involved in the development of the Invasive Species Management Act.