

**Program Name:** Southwest Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (SWF CISMA)  
**Project Name:** SWF CISMA  
**Project ID:** 4303  
**Lead Agency:** Multiple

**Strategy and Biennial Report Objective Addressed:** 3-D.2  
**Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework Goal:** 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Measurable Output(s):** Number of agencies involved; materials developed, website “hits”

**Project Synopsis:**

Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) are derived from the same concept as Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs), which are common in the Western US. These partnerships are developed to unite federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, private landowners and various interested groups under the common goal of managing invasive plants in a defined area. As many of us already know, invasive species know no boundaries, and as such, we must learn to work “across the fence” on both private and public lands to control these plants and animals.

Why is working across fences important? Florida is an inviting destination for invasive species that threaten to undermine the health of the state's fragile environment. Non-native plants and animals can greatly alter the native landscape, adversely impact native wildlife, destroy agricultural crops and threaten public health. Public and private land managers in Florida agree that invasive non-native species are a statewide problem with high ecological and economic costs.

Because invasive species are not confined by fences, property lines, or political boundaries, a cooperative approach is needed to connect private landowners and public land managers with invasive species expertise and assistance programs. All stakeholders, both public and private, can benefit from collaborative efforts to reduce the threat.

How can CISMAs help? They address concerns including prevention, education/awareness, early detection and rapid response to new threats or locations. They help with monitoring of existing invasive species, development of integrated pest management plans and determining success of management.

Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas are an effective way to formalize partnerships among public and private entities working toward a common goal of increased awareness and effective prevention and control of invasive species. Currently in Florida, there are 17 active CISMAs, and these partnerships include participants from county and city governments (Alachua County, Collier County, Seminole County, Walton County, City of Gainesville), non- governmental organizations (The Nature Conservancy), private landowners, state government (Water Management Districts, FL Fish and Wildlife Commission, FL Department of Environmental Protection, FL Department of Transportation), and federal government (US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Wildlife Services). CISMAs are a mechanism for long-lasting cooperation and community awareness and involvement.

**Southwest Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (SWF CISMA)** was founded in September 2008 after a long history of cooperative efforts on public and private lands in this region with many efforts that spilled over onto private lands. Lee, Collier, Charlotte, and Hendry county contain some of the most ecologically diverse and unique communities in North America. However, these same communities are threatened by a myriad of invasive nonnative plants and nonnative animal species, many of which are established, reproducing, and directly impacting native plant and wildlife populations along with reducing the value of areas for sustainable agricultural production. Early detection and repeated treatments across boundaries are needed, as two-thirds of the land is in private ownership adjacent to public lands. Exotic plant infestations on unmanaged lands serve as a constant seed and/or spore source to adjacent lands, as well as lowering the economic viability of these agricultural lands. Land management that works to include non-native invasive plant removal, in conjunction with prescribed burning, are two of the most important management techniques utilized in southwest Florida to improve, restore, and maintain healthy native habitats and retain productive agricultural lands.

The mission of this group is to coordinate and increase efforts between local, state and federal agencies and landowners of all sizes. The goal is to reduce the impact of or eliminate invasive, nonnative plants and nonnative animals by combining programs and resources to address invasive species on a landscape level to achieve common goals and objectives.

Education and outreach will play a vital role in securing cooperation with public lands, private landowners, homeowners and visitors to the region.

**Current Status:** Active Partners: USFWS, Collier County, Lee County, Florida Forestry Service, Florida DEP State Parks, City of Sanibel, UF IFAS, Charlotte County, FFWCC. ADDED Glades County to CISMA area.

website: [www.FloridaInvasives.org/Southwest](http://www.FloridaInvasives.org/Southwest)

Educational materials: CISMA brochure, Kids activity guide, “Don’t Let it Loose” stickers and magnets, “Keeping Your Pets Safe Around Cane Toads”, “Have You Seen Me?” Tegu and python reporting cards

Kids interactive game: native and non-native species identification

**Project Schedule:**

Start Date: 2008                      Finish Date: Ongoing

**Detailed Project Budget Information**

	2014 <sup>1</sup>	2015	2016	2017	2018	Balance to Complete	Total
<b>Federal</b>	\$5000	\$5000					
<b>SFWMD**</b>							
<b>NGO</b>	\$900						
<b>Local</b>	\$2500	\$838 <sup>2</sup>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,400</b>	<b>5,838</b>					<b>TBD</b>

<sup>1</sup>Each of these categories is from a grant source. The money is tied to specific projects and/or goals of the CISMA. We may receive more in 2015, but it is more likely that we will just have what is left over after this year’s expenditures.

<sup>2</sup>Funds raised from Silent Auction at Annual Exotics Workshop. Funds targeted for 501c3 application.

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**Hyperlink:** [www.FloridaInvasives.org/Southwest](http://www.FloridaInvasives.org/Southwest)