

## Over 80 attend forest health workshop at Crummies Creek Tree Farm.

Written by Russ Richardson

On Thursday, June 29 over 80 foresters, botanists, researchers and landowners attended a program on invasive plants, forest health and forest productivity that was held at Crummies Creek Tree Farm near Arnoldsburg, West Virginia.

Workshop participants came from several different states and included botanists, biologists, ecologists, private consulting foresters, industrial procurement foresters, WV State foresters and US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and University researchers, WV Farm Bureau representatives and private property owners.

During the morning session several staff members from the WV Department of Agriculture and USDA APHIS spoke about West Virginia forest health issues and topics ranging from emerald ash borers and gypsy moths to quarantines, noxious plants, destructive insects and lethal diseases looming on the horizon.

At the end of a slow hill climb out of Crummies Creek that lasted most of the morning, a cove site was reached where ongoing Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) research and treatment projects were discussed. Dr. Cindy Huebner from the US Forest Service spoke about what has been learned about how Japanese stiltgrass spreads and unusual traits of stiltgrass that help in its ability to produce seed and spread over the landscape.

The afternoon session began at a bottomland location where an herbicide research project is underway to find the most effective and least damaging way to use herbicides to kill Japanese stiltgrass.

After a short walk from the herbicide trial site that involved stepping over a series of moss covered logs, the remainder of the day was spent in the cool, deep shade of a heavily forested cove.

During the afternoon presentations and discussions of several invasive plants of serious concern were given and included passing around “grab and ouch” samples of mile a minute that were brought along by Patricia Morrison of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Although the mile a minute is still uncommon in most of West Virginia it is rapidly spreading along the Ohio River and it poses a potential threat for the interior of the state.

Researchers from WVU discussed the recently proven impact of garlic mustard on hardwood regeneration and the spread of garlic mustard in West Virginia.

The day concluded with a panel discussion that included a description of the ecological problems being created by invasives and proactive steps being taken by The Nature Conservancy in West Virginia to contain Japanese stiltgrass in Smoke Hole, one of West Virginia’s prime ecological treasures.

Karen Sykes, USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry Forest Resources Group Leader discussed what is being done on invasive species in other states. Workshop participants learned that nationally, very little is known about the amount of private land impacted by invasive plants because it is a largely unstudied issue that has never been a priority for funding or research. Karen also discussed new National Forest initiatives such as mandatory vehicle, logging and fire fighting equipment washing to prevent the spread of soil borne diseases and noxious and invasive plants.

Juergen Wildman of the WV Division of Forestry finished the day with a presentation on a cost-share program under development by DOF for the treatment of Chinese tree of heaven.