

# EVOLUTION OF A MEETING: 20+ YEARS OF RESEARCH COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

**Michael L. McManus<sup>1</sup> (retired) and Kurt W. Gottschalk<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station, Hamden CT 06514

<sup>2</sup>USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station, Morgantown, WV 26505

The genesis of the USDA Interagency Research Forum on Invasive Species can be traced back to a special appropriation from Congress in 1983 to initiate a Gypsy Moth Research and Development Program in response to the massive gypsy moth outbreak of 1979-1982. Over 4 million hectares of forest land were defoliated in 1981. Though the Northeastern Research Station was the lead agency in this initiative, the U.S. Congress directed that the majority of the funding should be facilitated through state and university cooperators. In 1986, the Northeastern Research Station scheduled a review in Morgantown, WV, to review accomplishments of the research funded to date, reassess priorities, and identify research needs.

In July 1989, representatives of the Forest Service (FS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) initiated regular meetings to discuss opportunities to improve cooperation and maximize resources among those agencies conducting research on the gypsy moth. Representatives from the FS, State and Private Forestry, and the Cooperative States Research Service were added to the group which was called the “USDA Gypsy Moth Research and Development Coordinating Group” and was chaired by Max McFadden (FS, retired). The group determined that a combined interagency review of all gypsy moth R&D activities, including those of cooperators, would add immeasurably to better communication, and also agreed that proceedings should be published following the meeting. The initial meeting was held January 22-25, 1990, in East Windsor, CT, and was referred to as the USDA Interagency Gypsy Moth Review (Gottschalk et al. 1991). The objectives of the inaugural and subsequent meetings was to coordinate research on the European and Asian gypsy moth among USDA scientists and their extramural cooperators by facilitating the open exchange of information and data, and to encourage collaboration among the many scientists involved.

Beginning in January 1991, this meeting was held at the Loews Annapolis Hotel in Annapolis, MD. The meeting gained added stature when scientists from Asia, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere in North America were invited to attend and participate. The involvement of foreign scientists from countries where the gypsy moth and related species of Lymantriids are endemic added a global perspective to the meeting and enhanced international cooperation, particularly in the development and use of biologically based technologies. The introduction of the Asian gypsy moth to ports in Washington, Oregon, and Vancouver in 1991, and to Wilmington, NC, in 1993 provided increased relevance and significance to the meeting.

The program for the 1996 meeting was broadened to include topics related to the potential impacts of nonnative invasive species, prompted by introductions into North America of several exotic bark beetles and emerging concern over exotic weeds. The change in direction was especially timely since the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) was detected in several locations in the greater New York metropolitan area in the fall of 1996 and in Chicago, IL, in 1998. To reflect the increase in emphasis by federal agencies to address the emerging ALB problem and to develop eradication strategies, the title of the 1999 meeting was modified to “USDA Interagency Research Forum on Gypsy Moth and Other Invasive Species.”

In recent years, a complex of nonnative invasive species including emerald ash borer, citrus longhorned beetle, the European wood wasp, and several species of ambrosia and Scolytid bark beetles have been introduced into North America and collectively threaten forest and urban ecosystems; other introduced species such as the hemlock woolly adelgid and the gypsy moth continue to extend their range further south and west. Additionally, pathogens that cause sudden oak death and butternut

canker, and a plethora of invasive plants contribute to our management problems and threaten native ecosystems. All of the aforementioned invasive species have been addressed at the annual meetings in individual sessions or through oral and poster presentations.

The European community has become more actively involved and concerned about the threat of invasive species since many of the species mentioned have recently been detected in several western European countries with the emerald ash borer being discovered in Moscow in 2007.

Finally, in 2008, the title of the meeting was again modified to “USDA Research Forum on Invasive Species” to better reflect the emphasis and content of the meeting. The objectives of the Research Forum are as relevant in 2009 as they were at the meeting’s inception in 1990: to coordinate research among USDA scientists and

extramural cooperators by facilitating an open exchange of information and data and to encourage collaboration. However, the scope of the collaboration now covers a multitude of invasive species including the Asian and European gypsy moths that started the evolution.

The series of meetings has produced a parallel series of proceedings. Early on, the decision was made to focus primarily on abstracts of the presentations with a few longer papers to summarize key findings. The extended abstract approach provided two valuable benefits—it did not preclude the researchers from publishing their findings in peer-reviewed journals and it allowed for rapid publication of findings in an abbreviated form but that could be cited. The series of proceedings publications (Appendix A) provide a “trail or roadmap” of how USDA research has responded to the introduction of a number of important forest invasive species over the years.

## APPENDIX A

### Bibliography of USDA Research Forum Proceedings

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