April 21, 2023

 The USDA-ARS Invasive Plant Research Laboratory (IPRL) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida is currently seeking a post-doc associate to implement and evaluate a classical biological control agent targeting Brazilian peppertree, *Schinus terebinthifolia*, in the greater Everglades area of Florida.

BACKGROUND

Brazilian peppertree, *Schinus terebinthifolia* (Anacardiaceae), is one of the worst environmental and agricultural weeds worldwide. Brazilian peppertree is a threat to diverse natural areas, agriculture, and cattle production. This weed has colonized most of the Florida peninsula, covering more than 280,000 ha, often with dense monospecific stands that eliminate native plant growth. Brazilian peppertree is a woody shrub that often grows in dense thickets. Biological control of this weed includes mass production, release and evaluation of a thrips, *Pseudophilothrips ichini* (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae). A permit for release of this agent was issued in 2019 and since that time research has documented improved rearing and release methods of the thrips. Currently research continues to examine the factors that influence agent production, impact on Brazilian peppertree populations, and biotic resistance that reduces effectiveness.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to establish viable populations of *P. ichini* on Brazilian peppertree in southern Florida as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP). To this end, the postdoctoral associate will manage the rearing, deployment, evaluation, and monitoring of *P. ichini.* The ultimate goal is to increase suppression of Brazilian peppertree throughout the CERP area.

APPROACH

The postdoctoral research associate will develop mass rearing protocols in the laboratory and in outdoor screenhouses and gardens, collaborate with the principal investigator in developing a release and monitoring study design, develop contacts and interact with cooperators and land managers from various agencies, participate in a field-based evaluation of impacts, and will be responsible for data collection, data analysis, and writing peer-review publications of results. The successful candidate will also participate in other related research activities as directed.

POSITION DETAILS

The successful candidate must be a US citizen, a recent Ph.D. graduate with a degree in entomology, ecology or a related field. This position is a GS-11 temporary 2 year appointment, depending on funding, that can be renewed once, with the total appointment not to exceed 4 years. The position is available in May of 2023. No relocation expenses will be paid. Interested applicants should provide a letter of interest, transcripts, and three references to Gregory S. Wheeler (greg.wheeler@ars.usda.gov).