TO       News Directors, Education and Science Reporters
FROM     UAF Cooperative Extension Service
SUBJECT  Plant Scientists Fight Alien Species
LOCATION Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge
DATE     Oct. 25 – 26, 2005

More than 100 plant scientists, experts and educators from across the state are expected to attend a multi-agency conference in Fairbanks Oct. 25-26 to help identify noxious and invasive plants and prevent their spread in Alaska.

Plants typically not native to an existing ecosystem have the potential to wreak economic and environmental disaster. The problem is costly, from labor and pesticide expenses; losses to fisheries, wildlife and crops; and the elimination of native species and ecosystems. The costs of controlling invasive species--estimated at $34 billion annually in the U.S. alone--can rapidly mount.

While the impacts in Alaska have been relatively small compared to other states, scientists have discovered several species of concern in recent years. Most recently, purple loosestrife, an extremely aggressive flowering perennial with purple spikes of flowers, was found for the first time ever growing wild in Alaska. Sale of the plant has been banned in 27 states. Extension agents began ringing alarm bells about purple loosestrife in 1997. In 2004, UAF's Extension Service decided the danger was too great and officially placed purple loosestrife on its "do not plant" list for Alaska.

The two-day conference at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge is sponsored by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and several other agencies and organizations. It will feature numerous state, federal and university plant science experts end educators. Participants will discuss invasive plants and create mechanisms to avoid invasive plant problems faced in the other 49 states.

-30-

CONTACT: UAF Cooperative Extension Service Director of Extension Communications Debra Damron at (907) 474-5420 or e-mail at debra.damron@uaf.edu.

ON THE WEB: Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM)- http://www.cnipm.org

DPD/10-21-05/CES-CU003-06 (CR/JS edit 102105)
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE INVASIVE PLANTS CONFERENCE CONTACT:

Michael Shephard, USFS Ecologist 907-743-9454 mshephard@fs.fed.us

Jamie Snyder, UAF-CES Invasive Plants Program* 907-743-9448 fnjms@uaf.edu

Ruth Gronquist, BLM 907-474-2377 Ruth_Gronquist@ak.blm.gov

Jeff Heys, NPS 907-644-3451 Jeff_Heys@nps.gov

Friday, Oct. 21, these individuals may be reached at their office numbers above.

Oct. 25-26 they can be reached at conference, at the Princess Riverside Lodge in Fairbanks.

*Monday, Oct. 24, Jamie Snyder will be at the Princess Riverside Lodge in Fairbanks, for conference preparations.