

NISC

Updates, News & Notes¹

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A. Update on the implementation of past recommendations/action items²:

Spring 2015 – Recommendation: ISAC recommends that the NISC member agencies develop the early detection and rapid response framework and emergency funding plan called for in the Council on Climate Preparedness and Resilience and Natural Resources Working Group’s Priority Agenda: Enhancing the Climate Resilience of America’s Natural Resources (October 2014) ; and, that they seek the involvement and advice of non-federal stakeholders, subject matter experts, tribal, state, and local government representatives who will be critical partners in the successful implementation of this framework and fund.

In February, the Administration released the interdepartmental report, Safeguarding America’s Lands and Waters from Invasive Species: A National Framework for Early Detection and Rapid Response (<https://www.doi.gov/ppa/reports-and-statistics>). The report calls for the implementation of five recommendations for Federal action that rely on existing institutional coordinating networks and build on existing initiatives. Numerous NISC member departments assisted in the report’s development, including the Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, State Department, and Department of Defense. The process also engaged multiple and diverse stakeholders from state and tribal governments, academic institutions, conservation organizations, and industry, among others.

Spring 2015 – Action: Request NISC staff to liaise with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to identify and resolve issues that impede the timely and successful completion of Section 7 consultations under the Endangered Species Act for biological control agents.

The USFWS (Service) implemented regular coordinating calls with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection (APHIS) Service Plant Protection and Quarantine to review outstanding questions on the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Petitions that are in the biological assessment (BA) / consultation phase. They also prepared and presented an intra-Service TAG Petition and Biological Assessment Review Coordinating Process to the Service's Regional Endangered Species Consultation and Recovery Chiefs. The process received unanimous interest and willingness from the Chiefs for their voluntary participation in Test Plant Lists and Petition Reviews. BAs require review and are non-discretionary. The following Service groups contribute voluntarily to Test Plant List and Petition reviews: Regional Integrated Pest Management/Invasive Species Coordinators; USFWS-only botany listserv; USFWS Pollinator Working Group; Endangered Species Act (ESA) Regional Consultation Coordinators; and, ESA Regional Recovery Coordinators.

¹ Limit each section to one type written page. Links (URLs) to additional information are welcomed.

² Restate recommendation/action item and provide date of ISAC meeting.

The Service also completed reviews of USDA APHIS's BAs for *Lasioptera donacis* for control of giant reed, *Hypena opulenta* for control of swallow-worts, *Aceria drabae* for hoary cress, and *Rhinus pilosa* for yellow toadflax. The Service sent the concurrence letter for release of *Lasioptera donacis* on April 27, 2016 to USDA APHIS and is reviewing the concurrence letters for the remaining species for transmittal to USDA APHIS.

Fall 2015 – Recommendations: Various biological control recommendations

The Department distributed the white paper and recommendations to the DOI invasive species community, and integrated pest management coordinators in particular. Agency responses are below:

US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service): ISAC recommendations on biocontrol implementation are in keeping with the programs and policies of the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). The ISAC recommendations reinforce the approaches that the Service implements through its Integrated Pest Management policy (569 FW 1), the Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health policy (601 FW 3) and habitat management strategies such as Strategic Habitat Conservation and Landscape Conservation Design. These policies and strategies call on strong partnerships among federal, state, tribal, and non-governmental groups to achieve conservation delivery and management of ecosystem habitats using a diverse integrated pest management (IPM) toolbox that has long-included biocontrol. To be an adaptive management practice, monitoring post-treatment/release is imperative, as the results inform decisions moving forward. Monitoring is a key component of Strategic Habitat Conservation and current conservation delivery practices. It is a goal of the NWRS to provide habitats that support and sustain the native diversity of species and, when appropriate, to restore degraded habitats to ensure ecosystem health. The ISAC recommendations on biocontrol implementation by federal agencies appear to support / be current with Service policy and programs.

National Park Service (NPS): Within the NPS, biocontrol is part of an integrated IPM strategy. The NPS Pesticide Use Proposal System (PUPS) must approve the use of biocontrol. NPS reviews all PUPs for biocontrol at the national level. In general, the NPS is relatively conservative in its use of biocontrol. Most aspects of biocontrol are managed at the local, or park, level. This includes coordination with other entities, post-release monitoring, and follow-up ecological rehabilitation. This is also managed at the local, or park, level.

Reclamation: Reclamation has a comprehensive IPM program that encourages the use of biocontrol when appropriate. Reclamation worked with relevant partners, as well as participated in the efforts presented by the ISAC to ensure that biological control is an effective mechanism for reducing invasive species for specific Reclamation projects.

Bureau of Land Management: The BLM currently has partnerships with each state's appropriate agency identified to regulate the introduction of biological control agents. Native American tribes, where applicable, university researchers, and additional federal, state and local governments, along with the general public are involved in the broad picture to expand the understanding and implementation of biological control. The BLM currently uses the Standard Impact Monitoring Protocol (SIMP) and citizen scientists for post-release monitoring. In addition, the BLM is currently developing a cost/benefit analysis. As part of the overall process for the management of invasive species, the characteristics and environmental conditions of the proposed introduction site are incorporated into the site-specific analysis. Input from the analysis determines the level of site restoration that will be needed. The BLM takes advantage of, not only the particular individuals involved with the development of a particular

biological control agent, but also those within the Bureau, and outside the Bureau, who have had first-hand experience with the proposed agent for release. The site analysis document incorporates the necessary information, regarding, among other things, the characteristics of the site and the associated environmental conditions, ecological and actual potential predation issues that may affect the performance of the identified biological control agent. The BLM is a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and provides information and makes recommendation on APHIS' ultimate approval on the releases of biological control agents in the United States. The BLM uses the information in the petition to further its site-specific analysis as part of its evaluation and will conduct consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service or NOAA Fisheries if necessary, utilizing the Biological Assessment and Environmental Assessment that APHIS has written as part of the TAG petition for individual biological control agents.

B. Departmental news of relevance to ISAC priorities³:

Early Detection and Rapid Response: See Section A., Safeguarding America's Lands and Waters from Invasive Species: A National Framework for Early Detection and Rapid Response (<https://www.doi.gov/ppa/reports-and-statistics>).

Emerging Invasive Species: Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death: A newly identified fungal pathogen, *Ceratocystis fimbriata*, is causing Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death (ROD) and mass mortality of 'ōhi'a trees (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) on Hawai'i Island. Scientists from USGS, universities, and USDA are coordinating research efforts to provide information for land managers to effectively control the spread of ROD. DOI land managers are increasing capacity to monitor and respond to ROD outbreaks in parks and refuges, and collaborating with scientists to identify and evaluate potential management approaches. DOI agencies redirected over \$347,000 in FY 2016 federal funds to support initial research, early detection and response, management and outreach efforts. The Department will continue to leverage existing resources in collaboration with numerous agencies and organizations to help advance steps to combat the spread of the disease.

Zika Virus: The Department participates in weekly inter-departmental coordinating calls on Zika response, led by the Department of Health and Human Service's Secretary's Operation Center and the White House Office on Science and Technology Policy. The Department's Office of Emergency Management leads internal coordinating calls and is working with DOI bureaus/offices to develop a DOI Zika preparedness and response plan. Various bureaus also developed, or are in the process of developing mission-specific operation plans, educational alerts, and guidance.

Federal Authorities: USFWS Multi-species proposed rule: On October 30, 2015, USFWS (Service) Branch of Aquatic Invasive Species proposed to list 10 freshwater fish (Amur sleeper, crucian carp, Eurasian minnow, European perch, Nile perch, Prussian carp, roach, stone moroko, wels catfish, and zander) and one crayfish (yabby) as injurious species. All species have a high climate match in parts of the United States, a history of invasiveness outside their native ranges, and, with one exception (zander in Spiritwood Lake, North Dakota), are not currently found in U.S. ecosystems. The Service used Ecological Risk Screening Summaries to obtain climate-matching and other information. This is the first rule the Service is proposing since signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) in 2013, which outlines an agreement regarding the voluntary refrain from importation of species not yet in trade in the United States. The 60-day public comment period ended on December 29. The Service expects to publish a final rule in August 2016.

USFWS Large Constrictor Snake final rule litigation: In 2010, the Service's Branch of Aquatic Invasive Species (BAIS) proposed to list nine species of large constrictor snakes as injurious species. In 2012, BAIS published a final rule listing four species (Burmese and two other pythons, plus the yellow anaconda). In 2014, the Service reopened the comment period on the five remaining constrictor snakes (reticulated python, green anaconda, Beni anaconda, DeSchauensee's anaconda, and boa constrictor). In March, the Service published the final rule to list the reticulated python and the three anacondas, but withdrew the proposal to list the boa. As soon as the second final rule published, the plaintiffs, the United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK), for the lawsuit against the first final rule filed an amendment to add the four newly listed species to their challenge. On May 12, 2015, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted USARK's motion for a preliminary injunction finding that the plaintiffs were likely to prevail on the merits of the case that the Service lacks authority to prohibit interstate transport of species listed as injurious wildlife under Title 18 of the Lacey Act. Department of Justice appealed the preliminary injunction and provided oral arguments on April 1 in DC Circuit Court. The appeal has not been ruled on but a decision is expected this summer.

³ Focus on technical issues of substantial merit – release of reports, policy actions, etc.

USFWS Salamander Chytrid Fungus: On January 12, the Service published an interim rule in the Federal Register to list 201 species of salamanders as injurious because they pose a serious threat to native salamanders as carriers of the lethal fungus *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal). The Service is foregoing a proposed rule due to the imminent nature of the threat. The interim rule took effect January 28. The listing applies to both live and dead specimens. The rule prohibits the importation and interstate transport of the listed species without an approved permit for scientific, educational, medical, and zoological purposes. Peer review and public comments were accepted for 60 days after the interim rule was published. Response to the publication of the rule has continued to be positive with significant media coverage in outlets such as the New York Times. The Service is evaluating peer review and public comments and anticipates publishing a final rule early in the next Administration.

Landscape Level Coordination and Cooperation: DOI continues to work with USDA and partners to implement actions identified in the report, An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/>. Many of the actions rely on landscape level approaches as well as coordination across the sagebrush biome. Highlights of invasive species actions include establishing large-scale demonstration projects for control of cheatgrass and other invasive annual grasses, developing scalable and adaptive grazing management plans for reducing invasive annual grass and other fine fuels through targeted livestock grazing methods, developing an actionable science plan of prioritized research needs, and developing a conservation and restoration strategy for the sagebrush-steppe that considers emerging science.

Everglades Restoration: The Secretary's Regional Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives incorporated [invasive exotic species initiatives](#) into their multi-agency coordination efforts. Several coordination tools have been developed including: the [Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework](#), [Preliminary Priority Action Assessment](#), [Invasive Exotic Species Cross-cut budget](#), and an Everglades rapid response screening tool is in development. These tools help to frame and implement goals, budgets, and strategies across agencies, to help reduce the cost, spread, and impacts of exotic species in the unique and vulnerable Everglades ecosystem.

C. Departmental notes of relevance to ISAC⁴:

The President's FY 2017 budget request included \$106 M for invasive species programs, including \$1.5 M to support implementation of recommendations in the National EDRR Framework;

<https://www.doi.gov/budget/appropriations/2017/highlights>. Unfortunately, neither the House nor Senate Appropriations Committees' marks supported the EDRR funding.

DOI Bureaus are identifying steps to implement policy options identified in the report, Federal Policy Options for Addressing the Movement of Aquatic Invasive Species onto and off of Federal Lands and Waters, <http://www.anstaskforce.gov/Documents/2015-0828-Federal-Lands-Policy-Options-for-Addressing-the-Movement-of-AIS-onto-and-off-of-Federal-Lands.pdf>. They will submit progress reports by the fall Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force meeting.

DOI formed an Invasive Species Task Force in 2015 comprised of bureau/office representatives who continue to meet regularly. They are advancing Departmental priorities such as developing a new departmental policy on invasive species, evaluating information management needs and opportunities for interoperability, and assessing performance metrics to evaluate program effectiveness. They also participated in the development of the National EDRR Framework.

This January, Dr. Susan Pasko joined USFWS as Executive Secretary of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Dr. Pasko provides support and policy analysis to the co-chairs of the Task Force to implement provisions of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act.

BLM hired Stephanie Carman as the permanent Fisheries and Aquatics Program Lead in the Washington Office Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and will start July 24. Stephanie worked for BLM since 2010 in various roles. In addition to leading the BLM's fisheries and aquatics program, responsibilities include serving as BLM's representative on the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

USGS's Core Science Analytics, Synthesis, and Libraries Program is working on the compilation and ongoing maintenance of authoritative nonnative species lists for the areas of Alaska, Hawaii, and lower 48 states, in support of the National EDRR Framework's mention of the need to develop non-regulatory watch lists (p 19 and footnotes 9&11).

DOI Bureaus/Offices will present on a variety of topics, including biosecurity, at the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress in Honolulu, Hawaii September 1-10; <http://www.iucnworldconservationcongress.org/>.

⁴ Focus on organizational/logistical information relevant to ISAC – staff changes, upcoming meetings, etc.