

INVASIVE SPECIES ON ISLANDS AND THE MICRONESIA BIOSECURITY PLAN
Briefing Paper for the Interagency Group on Insular Affairs
February 28, 2012

Background: Invasive species are a primary threat to economies, ecologies and sustainability on islands around the world. Due to their small size, isolation and high levels of endemism, the impacts of invasive species on islands is often more severe and immediate than that seen on continents. Invaders such as the coqui frog, brown treesnake, miconia and fruit flies have caused hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage, caused extinctions of endemic species and have dramatically altered the native ecology of numerous islands. However, the same characteristics that make islands so susceptible to invasive species damages also allow islands to more easily prevent, mitigate or remove invasive species incursions.

In support of the military relocation to Guam and the CNMI and the associated environmental impact statement, the Department of Defense (DOD) has funded the development of a Micronesia Biosecurity Plan (MBP).

- DOD has provided over \$3.7 million to Federal and regional partners to:
 - Scientifically analyze invasive species risks to the entire region of Micronesia;
 - Make recommendations to minimize these risks;
 - Collaboratively develop a regionally-vetted, strategic implementation plan.
- Federal partners have contributed approximately \$500,000 in in-kind support as well.
- This unprecedented effort will help address both invasive species threats to the military mission and invasive species concerns raised by the Micronesian Chief Executives and federal and regional partners.
- The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) is providing overall coordination for this inter-departmental, multi-lateral effort.

Key Points:

- Efforts to prevent or mitigate invasive species damages directly underpin efforts to address:
 - Climate change adaption;
 - Food security;
 - Conservation of biodiversity and critical habitat;
 - Development of sustainable green economies.
- The MBP is the most comprehensive study and plan to prevent and mitigate invasive species damages ever attempted, covering all taxa and all ecosystems.
- NISC is collaborating with regional and international partners who are highlighting the development of the MBP as a model for islands around the world.
- The MBP is an example of U.S. leadership on an important Green Economy issue and of multilateral cooperation with Pacific Island partners to proactively address a common concern.
- The MBP represents a new level of inter-departmental collaboration on invasive species:
 - Four different departments + NISC are cooperatively developing MBP with input from regional experts and stakeholders. (DOD, USDA, DOI, Smithsonian).
- The MBP directly supports the “One Guam” and “Green Guam” “pillars” of the build-up as well as the practical cooperation component of the Wellington Declaration.

Micronesia Biosecurity Plan (MBP) and Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP)

Purpose: In support of the Military relocation to Guam and the CNMI (Guam Build-up) and the associated Environmental Impact Statement, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has provided over \$3,700,000 of funding to proactively address terrestrial and marine invasive species risks to Micronesia. This unprecedented effort will help address both invasive species threats to the Military mission and invasive species concerns raised by the Micronesian Chief Executives and federal and regional partners.

Phase 1: Risk Analyses and Recommendations: DOD-funded Federal scientists are conducting port inspection evaluations and risk analyses on pathways, vectors and targeted invasive species from all taxa (plant, animal and pathogen) in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. The risk analyses and inspection needs assessments will inform the development of biosecurity recommendations for all of Micronesia.

Partnership: The MBP is being developed by a unique partnership of U.S. agencies working in close collaboration with a variety of local and regional invasive species, agricultural, trade, port authority, and inspection and quarantine experts.

U.S. Federal partners and their role in the MBP include:

- Department of Defense – Funding, internal DOD coordination, review.
- Department of Agriculture – APHIS: All terrestrial organisms and port evaluations.
- U.S. Geological Survey: Freshwater vertebrates and invertebrates.
- Smithsonian Institute: All marine organisms and freshwater plants.
- National Invasive Species Council (NISC): Overall coordination and primary liaison with regional and international partners.

Phase 2: Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP): DOD recently funded the University of Guam (UOG) to work with its partners at the Secretariat of the Pacific Commission (SPC), Landcare New Zealand and elsewhere to conduct peer review and develop an SIP for the MBP. The scientific peer review will strengthen and augment the underpinning science of the biosecurity recommendations. To develop the SIP, the UOG team will study the MBP and current effective models of biosecurity worldwide and then engage local, regional, U.S. Federal and Pacific experts to chart an effective, realistic path to achieve maximum regional implementation of the MBP. Active consultation with regional experts and diverse leaders is a key aspect that will enable more effective and efficient implementation.

Beyond Micronesia: NISC is working with the Micronesia Regional Invasive Species Council (RISC), the Micronesian Center for a Sustainable Future (MCSF) and other international and regional partners such as the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and others to highlight the MBP as:

- A potential model of effective regional collaboration and proactive biosecurity.
- A tremendous tool to invasive species efforts on islands around the world.
- A program of direct benefit to efforts to address issues such as climate change adaptation, food security, the conservation of biodiversity and development of green, sustainable economies.

Presidential Documents

Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999

Invasive Species

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4701 *et seq.*), Lacey Act, as amended (18 U.S.C. 42), Federal Plant Pest Act (7 U.S.C. 150aa *et seq.*), Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2801 *et seq.*), Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and other pertinent statutes, to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause, it is ordered as follows:

Section 1. Definitions.

(a) "Alien species" means, with respect to a particular ecosystem, any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem.

(b) "Control" means, as appropriate, eradicating, suppressing, reducing, or managing invasive species populations, preventing spread of invasive species from areas where they are present, and taking steps such as restoration of native species and habitats to reduce the effects of invasive species and to prevent further invasions.

(c) "Ecosystem" means the complex of a community of organisms and its environment.

(d) "Federal agency" means an executive department or agency, but does not include independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104.

(e) "Introduction" means the intentional or unintentional escape, release, dissemination, or placement of a species into an ecosystem as a result of human activity.

(f) "Invasive species" means an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

(g) "Native species" means, with respect to a particular ecosystem, a species that, other than as a result of an introduction, historically occurred or currently occurs in that ecosystem.

(h) "Species" means a group of organisms all of which have a high degree of physical and genetic similarity, generally interbreed only among themselves, and show persistent differences from members of allied groups of organisms.

(i) "Stakeholders" means, but is not limited to, State, tribal, and local government agencies, academic institutions, the scientific community, non-governmental entities including environmental, agricultural, and conservation organizations, trade groups, commercial interests, and private landowners.

(j) "United States" means the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and all possessions, territories, and the territorial sea of the United States.

Sec. 2. Federal Agency Duties. (a) Each Federal agency whose actions may affect the status of invasive species shall, to the extent practicable and permitted by law,

(1) identify such actions;

(2) subject to the availability of appropriations, and within Administration budgetary limits, use relevant programs and authorities to: (i) prevent the introduction of invasive species; (ii) detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; (iii) monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; (iv) provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; (v) conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction and provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and (vi) promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them; and

(3) not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere unless, pursuant to guidelines that it has prescribed, the agency has determined and made public its determination that the benefits of such actions clearly outweigh the potential harm caused by invasive species; and that all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm will be taken in conjunction with the actions.

(b) Federal agencies shall pursue the duties set forth in this section in consultation with the Invasive Species Council, consistent with the Invasive Species Management Plan and in cooperation with stakeholders, as appropriate, and, as approved by the Department of State, when Federal agencies are working with international organizations and foreign nations.

Sec. 3. Invasive Species Council. (a) An Invasive Species Council (Council) is hereby established whose members shall include the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Council shall be Co-Chaired by the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Commerce. The Council may invite additional Federal agency representatives to be members, including representatives from subcabinet bureaus or offices with significant responsibilities concerning invasive species, and may prescribe special procedures for their participation. The Secretary of the Interior shall, with concurrence of the Co-Chairs, appoint an Executive Director of the Council and shall provide the staff and administrative support for the Council.

(b) The Secretary of the Interior shall establish an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App., to provide information and advice for consideration by the Council, and shall, after consultation with other members of the Council, appoint members of the advisory committee representing stakeholders. Among other things, the advisory committee shall recommend plans and actions at local, tribal, State, regional, and ecosystem-based levels to achieve the goals and objectives of the Management Plan in section 5 of this order. The advisory committee shall act in cooperation with stakeholders and existing organizations addressing invasive species. The Department of the Interior shall provide the administrative and financial support for the advisory committee.

Sec. 4. Duties of the Invasive Species Council. The Invasive Species Council shall provide national leadership regarding invasive species, and shall:

(a) oversee the implementation of this order and see that the Federal agency activities concerning invasive species are coordinated, complementary, cost-efficient, and effective, relying to the extent feasible and appropriate on existing organizations addressing invasive species, such as the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, and the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources;

(b) encourage planning and action at local, tribal, State, regional, and ecosystem-based levels to achieve the goals and objectives of the Management Plan in section 5 of this order, in cooperation with stakeholders and existing organizations addressing invasive species;

(c) develop recommendations for international cooperation in addressing invasive species;

(d) develop, in consultation with the Council on Environmental Quality, guidance to Federal agencies pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act on prevention and control of invasive species, including the procurement, use, and maintenance of native species as they affect invasive species;

(e) facilitate development of a coordinated network among Federal agencies to document, evaluate, and monitor impacts from invasive species on the economy, the environment, and human health;

(f) facilitate establishment of a coordinated, up-to-date information-sharing system that utilizes, to the greatest extent practicable, the Internet; this system shall facilitate access to and exchange of information concerning invasive species, including, but not limited to, information on distribution and abundance of invasive species; life histories of such species and invasive characteristics; economic, environmental, and human health impacts; management techniques, and laws and programs for management, research, and public education; and

(g) prepare and issue a national Invasive Species Management Plan as set forth in section 5 of this order.

Sec. 5. *Invasive Species Management Plan.* (a) Within 18 months after issuance of this order, the Council shall prepare and issue the first edition of a National Invasive Species Management Plan (Management Plan), which shall detail and recommend performance-oriented goals and objectives and specific measures of success for Federal agency efforts concerning invasive species. The Management Plan shall recommend specific objectives and measures for carrying out each of the Federal agency duties established in section 2(a) of this order and shall set forth steps to be taken by the Council to carry out the duties assigned to it under section 4 of this order. The Management Plan shall be developed through a public process and in consultation with Federal agencies and stakeholders.

(b) The first edition of the Management Plan shall include a review of existing and prospective approaches and authorities for preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species, including those for identifying pathways by which invasive species are introduced and for minimizing the risk of introductions via those pathways, and shall identify research needs and recommend measures to minimize the risk that introductions will occur. Such recommended measures shall provide for a science-based process to evaluate risks associated with introduction and spread of invasive species and a coordinated and systematic risk-based process to identify, monitor, and interdict pathways that may be involved in the introduction of invasive species. If recommended measures are not authorized by current law, the Council shall develop and recommend to the President through its Co-Chairs legislative proposals for necessary changes in authority.

(c) The Council shall update the Management Plan biennially and shall concurrently evaluate and report on success in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in the Management Plan. The Management Plan shall identify the personnel, other resources, and additional levels of coordination needed to achieve the Management Plan's identified goals and objectives, and the Council shall provide each edition of the Management Plan and each report on it to the Office of Management and Budget. Within 18 months after measures have been recommended by the Council in any edition of the Management Plan, each Federal agency whose action is required to implement such measures shall either take the action recommended or shall provide the Council with an explanation of why the action is not feasible. The Council shall assess the effectiveness of this order no

less than once each 5 years after the order is issued and shall report to the Office of Management and Budget on whether the order should be revised.

Sec. 6. *Judicial Review and Administration.* (a) This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to create any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any other person.

(b) Executive Order 11987 of May 24, 1977, is hereby revoked.

(c) The requirements of this order do not affect the obligations of Federal agencies under 16 U.S.C. 4713 with respect to ballast water programs.

(d) The requirements of section 2(a)(3) of this order shall not apply to any action of the Department of State or Department of Defense if the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense finds that exemption from such requirements is necessary for foreign policy or national security reasons.



THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 3, 1999.



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NISC NEWETTER

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February 2012

News and Announcements



The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) is pleased to announce the Third Annual - National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) beginning February 26, 2012 until March 3, 2012 in Washington D.C. NISAW is a week of activities, briefings, workshops and events focused on strategizing solutions to assess invasive species prevention, detection, monitoring, control, and management issues at local, state, tribal, regional, national and international scales. Guests will be staying at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C. The last day to make your reservation, at reduced rates, is January 31, 2012.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Grassroots action to prevent and control invasive species – Panel discussions and Webinar
- Invasive Species Prevention Day
- Workshop on invasive species prevention and management in urban areas
- Invasive Species Award Ceremony and Capitol Hill Reception
- Update by federal agencies on important invasive species issues and initiatives
- International Issues and Green Economy Forum

Please visit www.nisaw.org for more information!

Contact Lori Williams if you have any questions or comments.

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Salazar Announces Ban on Importation and Interstate Transportation of Four Giant Snakes that Threaten Everglades

January 17, 2012: WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has finalized a rule that would ban the importation and interstate transportation of four non-native constrictor snakes that threaten the Everglades and other sensitive ecosystems across the United States, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today.

The final rule – which incorporates public comments, economic analysis, and environmental assessment – lists the Burmese python, the yellow anaconda, and the northern and southern African pythons as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act in order to restrict their spread in the wild in the United States. It is expected to publish in the Federal Register in the coming days. To read the entire article, please go to: <http://oneinterior.doi.net/oneinterior/News/Salazar-Announces-Ban-on-Importation-and-Interstate-Transportation-of-Four-Giant-Snakes-that-Threaten-Everglades.cfm>

Special points of interest:

- NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK (NISAW)
- SALAZAR ANNOUNCES BAN ON FOUR GIANT SNAKES

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NAPPRA Final Rule and First Round of Candidate Taxa

In May 2011, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS PPQ) published the final rule establishing the new category of plants for planting for which importation is not authorized pending pest risk analysis (NAPPRA). The rule also allows the Agency to list plant taxa that meet criteria for this category. If scientific evidence indicates that a plant taxon is a quarantine pest (not present in the United States, or if present, then with limited distribution and under official control) or a host of a quarantine pest, APHIS PPQ will document the scientific evidence, make it available for public comment, and then determine whether to add the taxon to the NAPPRA lists. NAPPRA allows PPQ to quickly take action to regulate the importation of plants that could pose a pest risk to the US and to ensure that all known pest



risks are addressed before the plants are brought into the country. In July 2011, PPQ published a Federal Register (FR) notice making available for public comment the first 41 taxa of plants for planting as quarantine pests and 107 taxa of plants for planting as hosts of quarantine pests that we are considering adding to our NAPPPRA lists. Once the final FR notice is published in the coming weeks, there will be dozens of potential pest plants and hosts of pests that will no longer be allowed to enter the US until a pest risk analysis is conducted. Additional taxa will be added to the lists over time, always with an associated public comment period. Before considering whether to remove a taxon from a NAPPPRA list, PPQ will conduct a full pest risk analysis to determine the weediness of the plant, what other quarantine pests might follow that pathway (arrive on the plants) and whether mitigations to lower the risk are available. After the pest risk analysis is completed, APHIS PPQ will remove the taxon from the category and allow its importation subject to general requirements, allow its importation subject to specific restrictions or prohibit its importation. For more information about NAPPPRA, please visit the APHIS web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/plant_imports/Q37/nappa/index.shtml and sign up for the PPQ Stakeholder Registry at: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/subscriber/new>.

Policy Issues

Managing Invasive Species in the Face of Climate Change: A Call for Input

Individually, climate change and invasive species present two major threats to biodiversity, ecosystem services, food production, human health and local livelihoods. Combined, the complexity of the interaction of these two global drivers increases dramatically, and evidence is rapidly growing on how climate change is compounding the already devastating effects of invasive species.

The November 2011 meeting of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) featured presentations and a discussion on how to address these drivers of change: invasive species and climate change. Their final recommendation calls for the formation of an ad hoc group to work with ANSTF and the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) to identify existing tools, resources and guidance for agencies, regional panels and site-based managers together with the identification of major gaps in knowledge. The ANSTF and NISC realize numerous efforts focused on climate change are already underway, including the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Adaptation Strategy, a range of inter-agency fora, task forces and communities of practice on climate change and adaptation, as well as relevant initiatives by specific agencies and the broader climate change community.

The aim of the ad hoc group is not to duplicate these efforts, but to work with (or within them) to distill the state of knowledge on invasive species management in the face of climate change. Given the sizable amount of

ongoing work, we need your help to identify key intersections where these climate change dialogues and initiatives are addressing invasive species. More specifically, it would be useful to get information on:

- Key initiatives or efforts by your agency or organization that relate specifically to invasive species and climate change (or that should be addressing the issues in an integrated manner);
- Individuals that can serve as information resources for particular programs or issues;
- Individuals that can serve as information resources for particular programs or issues;
- Individuals interested in the topic that might want to work with this ad hoc group; and
- Other ideas or suggestions that would be helpful in facilitating this process.

Responses would be appreciated by the end of February, although the process will be ongoing (with a progress report due to the next ANSTF meeting in May). To provide information or for any questions, please contact Stas Burgiel, (NISC), at 202.354.1891 or by email at stas_burgiel@ios.doi.gov or Maria Boroja, (USDA/APHIS), at 301.851.3100 or email Maria.T.Boroja@aphis.usda.gov

U.S. Forest Service National Forest System Issues Final Invasive Species Management Policy

On December 5, 2011 the U.S Forest Service published in the Federal Register the final version of its new comprehensive policy (directive) for the management of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species on the 193 million acre National Forest System; the culmination of nearly 9 years of development, public review, and coordination with stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels. This new policy is the first holistic, 'all taxa' invasive species management policy developed by the U.S. Forest Service in its 100+ year history, a major policy milestone for this federal land management agency. It is built upon the latest scientific information, proven concepts, and widely accepted approaches for managing invasive species. Nationwide support for the new policy has been overwhelmingly positive, with many public and private organizations lauding the U.S. Forest Service for setting a high bar for management policy against invasive species on those public lands and waters. The agency's Directives System has been amended to issue the new policy to the field as Forest Service Manual Chapter 2900 – "Invasive Species Management".



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The new policy calls for a collaborative and holistic approach for protecting and restoring aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems from the impacts of invasive plants, pathogens, algae, vertebrates, and invertebrates. It articulates broad objectives, requirements, and definitions for Forest Service employees and partners to more effectively address invasive species management issues at the local, regional, and national levels. It clarifies and improves the understanding, scope, roles, principles, and responsibilities associated with National Forest System invasive species management for Forest Service employees and the public. It is founded upon a comprehensive array of authorities, regulations, and laws which give the agency the full legal and jurisdictional capacity to act against any invasive species threat to the natural or cultural resources in National Forest System, and to prevent the spread of those invaders to neighboring areas.

Comprehensive resource planning on National Forests and Grasslands has always been a critical component of management program on these areas, but in many cases National Forest System land management planning had inadequately addressed the broad invasive species threat. Capitalizing on recommendations from the National Invasive Species Council and the Council on Environmental Quality, with respect to incorporating invasive species planning elements under NEPA, this new policy will help increase the Forest Service's effectiveness to incorporate invasive species planning elements under NEPA, this new policy will help increase the Forest Service's effectiveness to incorporate invasive species management considerations into National Forest System land management planning. In addition to the direction in the new policy, the U.S. Forest Service is developing an accompanying Forest Service Handbook as part of the agency's Directives System. This accompanying handbook will be a supplemental policy directive necessary to articulate the specific standards, guidelines, criteria, procedures, and other tactical requirements for implementing the provisions of the new Forest Service Manual Chapter 2900 – National Forest System Invasive Species Management. Development of the Forest Service Handbook is currently underway, and the agency will be working closely with Tribal government interests during the development process. When the proposed draft handbook is completed, it will be available for public review and comment. If you would like to read the policy entry in the Federal Register, please go to <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-05/pdf/2011-31090.pdf>

National Ocean Council--National Ocean Policy Draft Implementation Plan/Comments

SUMMARY: On July 19, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order 13547 establishing a National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and the Great Lakes (National Ocean Policy). As part of the President's charge for Federal agencies to implement the National Ocean Policy, the National Ocean Council developed actions to achieve the Policy's nine priority objectives, and to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the

ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Collectively, the actions are encompassed in a single draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan). The draft Implementation Plan describes more than 50 actions the Federal Government will take to improve the health of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, which support tens of millions of jobs, contribute trillions of dollars a year to the national economy, and are essential to public health and national security.

The draft Implementation Plan will ensure the Federal Government targets limited resources more effectively to deliver demonstrable results for the American people, including predictability for users, more efficient and coordinated decision-making, and improved sharing of data and technology. For each action, the Implementation Plan outlines key milestones, identifies responsible agencies, and indicates the expected timeframe for completion. Experts from the National Ocean Council's member departments, agencies, and offices developed the actions in the draft Implementation Plan with significant input from national, regional, and local stakeholders and the general public. The development process included public comment periods from January through April 2011 and June through July 2011, and 12 regional listening sessions around the country.

Next, public comments on the draft Implementation Plan will inform the preparation of the final plan. We welcome your general input, and also pose the following questions:

- Does the draft Implementation Plan reflect actions you see are needed to address the nine priorities for the ocean, coasts, and the Great lakes?
- What is the most effective way to measure outcomes and to detect whether a particular action in the Implementation Plan has achieved its intended outcome? Would a report card format be useful?

Comments received will be collated and posted on the National Ocean Council Web site. The final Implementation Plan is expected in the spring of 2012.

The draft Implementation Plan and additional information can be found at <http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/oceans>. Comments should be submitted electronically to <http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/oceans>. Comments may also be sent in writing to "ATTN: National Ocean Council" by fax to (202) 456-0753, or by mail to National Ocean Council, 722 Jackson Place NW., Washington, DC 20503.



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In The News

Bat-killing Fungus More Lethal Than Previously Thought

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

January 18, 2012: White-nose syndrome has killed millions more bats during the last five years than previously thought, according to federal researchers.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials now believe the disease, caused by the infectious fungus *Geomyces destructans*, is responsible for 5.7 million to 6.7 million bat deaths in 16 states, a range several times higher than previous estimates.

The higher death toll reflects the gravity of the problem, said Jeremy Coleman, national white-nose syndrome coordinator for FWS.

"We still don't know what the cascading effects will be in the environment to our ecosystems," he said. "This much is certain: Bats have such low reproductive rates that it will likely take multiple human generations to get bat populations back up to the numbers they were just five years ago.

"Estimating bat deaths has been a difficult task because, until recently, the affected animals were considered common and were not a priority for seasonal population counts. But as mortality rates climb as high as 100 percent in some nests, officials in the United States and Canada worked to find a more consistent estimate, Coleman said.

White-nose syndrome -- which manifests as a white, powdery substance on affected bats' noses, ears and wings -- is spread by direct contact between animals. The disease seems to have had more devastating effects for the 25 species of hibernating bats, but wildlife biologists expect each of the 45 bat species in the United States and Canada could be vulnerable.

USDA To Close Hundreds of Offices

GovtExec (January 9, 2012) - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled a plan Monday to overhaul and streamline the department's operations, an effort that will involve closing hundreds of USDA installations around the country.

Under the plan, known as the Blueprint for Stronger Service, the department will close 259 domestic offices, facilities and labs in the United States, and seven foreign offices.

They include the following closures:

- The Farm Service Agency will consolidate 131 county offices in 32 states.
- The Foreign Agricultural Service will close two country of-

ices.

- The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will close 15 offices in 11 states and five offices in foreign countries.
- The Rural Development division will close 43 area and sub-offices in 17 states and U.S. territories.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service will close 24 soil survey offices in 21 states. To read the entire article, go to: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0112/010912usda-closures.htm>

New Quantitative Method Enables Researchers to Assess Environmental Risks Posed by Non-Native Species

ScienceDaily (December 26, 2011) - The Harlequin ladybeetle, Japanese knotweed and the American lobster -- while this trio of creatures may have friendly sounding names, they are all introduced species in Norway, and may be anything but friendly to the Norwegian environment. But determining exactly how damaging introduced species may be in their new environment has always been something of a challenge for biologists and land managers - until now.

A coalition of researchers from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and staff from the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre have created a unique quantitative method that enables researchers and others to assess the environmental risks posed by non-native species. While the method is tailored to the Norwegian environment, it can easily be adapted to other countries, and fills a vital need internationally for a quantifiable, uniform approach to classifying and assessing alien species, the developers say.

"This provides an objective classification of these species' potential impact on the Norwegian environment. We relied on much of the same principles as are used in the preparation of the 'Red List' of endangered and threatened species," says Professor Bernt-Erik Saether at NTNU's Center for Conservation Biology (CCB), who has spearheaded the development of the new methodology along with a coalition of other Norwegian biologists and staff from the Biodiversity Information Centre. To read the entire article, go to: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/12/111226093008.htm>

Grant Opportunities

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP) is soliciting proposals for demonstrations of environmental technologies.

- **DOD ORGANIZATIONS:** The DoD Call for Proposals requests pre-proposals related to: (1) Environmental Restoration; (2) Munitions Response; (3) Resource Conservation; and (4) Weapons Systems and Platforms.
- **BAA and NON-DOD FEDERAL ORGANIZATIONS:** The



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Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) and Non-DoD Federal Call for Proposals request pre-proposals responding to the following topics only: (1) Management of Contaminated Groundwater; (2) Characterization, Control, and Treatment of Testing and Training Range Contamination; (3) Military Munitions Detection, Classification, and Remediation; (4) Watershed Management Models/Tools for DoD Installation Applications; and (5) Demonstration/Validation of Alternatives to Cadmium Plating in Manufacturing and Maintenance of Weapons Systems. The deadline is March 15, 2012. For more information, please visit www.serdp-estcp.org/Funding-Opportunities/ESTCP-Solicitations

Conferences

February 14, 2012: Capital Region Invasive Pest Symposium “A Thousand Points of Blight” is being held at the National Agriculture Research Center in Beltsville, MD from 10am—2pm. This is a networking opportunity to share and learn about current invasive forest pest eradication, suppression, and control. Please RSVP to Jack Baggett john.baggett@fairfaxcounty.gov, with your name, title and organization or call 703-324-5542 for more information.

February 26—March 3, 2012: Third Annual National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) is being held in Washington, DC. NISAW is a week of activities, briefings, workshops and events focused on strategizing solutions to assess invasive species prevention, detection, monitoring, control, and management issues at local, state, tribal, regional, national and international scales. Guests will be staying at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C. The last day to make your reservation is **January 31, 2012**. Please visit www.nisaw.org for more information.

April 24—27, 2012: Weeds Across Borders (WAB) 2012—“Meeting the Challenges of the Future” is being held in Cancun, Mexico. WAB is an international conference covering the interests of professionals and organizations involved in weed management and regulation. The Weeds Across Borders 2012 Coordinating Committee is now accepting abstracts for oral and poster presentations. Please visit www.weedcenter.org/wab/2012 to view the full request for papers. Abstracts must be submitted no later than February 20, 2012.

June 19—21, 2012: The Fifth Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Science Symposium (Call for Papers) is being held at the Sheraton Sonoma County in Petaluma, CA. It will provide a scientific update on the state of our knowledge about *Phytophthora ramorum* and SOD.

Call for Papers, Case Studies, Speakers, and Posters

We are seeking abstracts (up to 1-page) of proposed papers or posters by **February 17, 2012**. These should be submitted via email and **clearly state if you would like to present a paper or a poster**. Abstracts should be sent to:
Katie Palmieri, California Oak Mortality Task Force

email: kpalmieri@berkeley.edu
ph.: 510-847-5482 or 530-344-7530

Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Weeds Workshop 2012: The U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, California Department of Food and Agriculture, UC Cooperative Extension and the California Invasive Plant Council is hosting and sponsoring this workshop in California during the following dates, times and locations:

Exeter: Thursday, January 26, 2012; 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Los Angeles: Thursday, March 8, 2012; 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Sonora: Monday, April 9, 2012; 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Truckee: Wednesday, May 2, 2012; 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Participants will gain an understanding of how to incorporate prevention, best management practices and guidelines into work in the construction, aggregate production and maintenance fields. Valuable resource and materials, available at the workshop will assist participants in environmental stewardship planning and saving money by stopping invasive weeds before they move into a new area.

August 20—22, 2012: International Terrestrial Invasive Plant Species Conference—TIPS 2012—“Understanding Plant Invasions in a Changing World” will take place at the Delta Waterfront Hotel in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. TIPS Organizing Committee is accepting abstracts for oral and poster presentations. Abstracts must be submitted no later than February 10, 2012. Please visit www.tipsconf.ca to view the full request for papers.

Miscellaneous

The Weed’s News Digest is available online. Please go to: <http://invasivespecies.org.au>