



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEE DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Chair: Eric Sutton (FL)
Vice-Chair: Kim Bogenschutz (IA)

Date: Tues Sept. 20th, 2022

Time: 9:15-12:15 pm CDT

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/afwa-committees/invasive-species-committee>

Agenda

Call to Order/Introductions/ Review of Agenda; in-person

Eric Sutton, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Committee charge: To provide a national forum for exchange of information and to identify and coordinate needs and actions among state, federal, and tribal agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to strategically address high priority invasive species threats and to promote sound policies.

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) Blue-Ribbon Aquatic Invasive Species Commission- in person

Tanner Johnson, Van Ness Feldman, LLP tajohnson@vnf.com

Tanner has worked for more than two decades on coastal conservation and restoration, resilience policy at the federal, state and local levels. In his current position at Van Ness Feldman, LLP, a DC based law and public policy firm, he works with a diverse set of clients with interests in energy transition, environmental sustainability, and coastal resilience.

TRCP and partners have convened leading scientists, conservationists, anglers, boaters, business leaders, and policy experts to assess the continuing challenges of AIS and identify more effective solutions – centered on these key principals:

- *Federal policies to address AIS should be clear, cross-cutting, and comprehensive.*
- *Federal funding to address AIS should be strategic and targeted, providing States, Federal and Tribal agencies with effective tools to combat AIS at a regional and watershed level.*
- *Laws, regulations, and policies that address AIS should maintain access to responsible boaters, anglers, and other users of our waterways.*
- *Interstate and regional, and tribal collaboration, communication and planning is critical to slowing the spread and mitigating the impacts of AIS.*
- *The recruitment and education of recreational anglers and to target invasive species should be prioritized in State and Federal plans and funding opportunities.*

In Fall 2021, the steering committee convened and worked on organization goals, recruitment, engagement, and surveys. In Spring 2022, the committee provided a congressional briefing, and by May 2022, they held their first commission meeting. Several listening sessions have been held over Summer 2022, and the next step is to convene the commission in late September with a goal of providing an external listening session on October 4th, 2022 and completion of a commission report by late fall 2022.

A question was asked if this effort would extend beyond aquatic invasive species, and the answer was that the committee would like to see where this effort leads and if expansion will be possible in the future. One goal is to educate companies and manufacturers while also providing industry incentives to reduce AIS spread.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Update- in person

Timothy Birdsong, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Timothy.Birdsong@tpwd.texas.gov

Tim is Deputy Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife's Inland Fisheries Division, providing strategic direction for the management and conservation of freshwater fisheries resources in 191,000 miles of streams, creeks, and rivers and over 1,100 public impoundments. Tim serves as Chair of the Department's Aquatic Invasive Species Working Group, which guides nearly \$4 million annually toward the management of aquatic and riparian invasive species in Texas.

Tim provided an update on Texas' invasive species program which manages species such as giant salvinia, tilapia, grass carp, and Arundo (texasinvasives.org). TPWD employs around 10 fulltime employees to work on aquatic and riparian invasive species.

Two active AIS campaigns in Texas are the "Protect the Lakes You Love" and the "Never Dump Your Tank" campaigns. These campaigns use a combination of prominent signage, social media pushes, digital, and print messages. The Protect the Lakes You Love campaign incorporates "Clean, Drain, Dry" and a survey found 91% of boaters surveyed have heard or seen the "Clean, Drain and Dry" message.

Tim also presented on the "Pull.Kill.Plant." initiative which has been a model for successful management of Arundo through partnerships with riverside landowners. In 2021, the Pull Kill Plant program began a new project to manage Arundo along San Felipe Creek in the city of Del Rio. The first step toward success involved outreach and communication with downstream landowners, city staff, and citizen groups. Treatments were conducted on 6.5 acres of Arundo on city-owned land and several private properties.

Early Detection and Rapid Response

Craig Martin, USFWS- in person and Dr. James English, USGS- virtual

Craig Martin is the Chief of the Branch of Aquatic Invasive Species within the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program. The Branch's work includes co-chairing the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, implementing the injurious wildlife provisions of the Lacey Act, and working to

implement a national program for aquatic invasive species at national, regional, and field-station levels.

Dr James J. English has a diverse professional background including applied research in animal ecology, Public Health Integrated Pest and Vector Management, biosurveillance, conducting ecosystem preservation and working in a One Health context. In these areas, Dr. English has worked with Universities, the US Department of Defense, Federal Agencies, governments of Allied Nations, and Native American Tribal Governments. In January 2021, Dr. English joined US Geological Survey (USGS) in the Biological Threats and Invasive Species Program where he serves as the Biosurveillance Network Coordinator. In this position Dr. English serves as staff technical expert and science advisor responsible for developing and fostering the National EDRR Program by planning, advocating, coordinating, and integrating activities focused on the surveillance of Biological Threats.

Craig and James provided an update on the new EDRR Framework. The new EDRR framework targets priorities to focus on greatest risk species and highest risk locations. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains \$100 million for invasive species. A portion of these funds was directed to help fund the framework in Fiscal Year 2022. Additional resources are being sought in Fiscal Year 2023 and beyond.

The EDRR framework was preceded by publications of 12 articles on Biological Invasions in 2020 which outlined different components of the framework. Those articles and supplemental materials can be found here: <https://www.doi.gov/invasivespecies/early-detection-and-rapid-response>

The framework will include different components such as a rapid response fund, working on aquatic invasive species detection at ports of entry, forecasting and global horizon scanning, and an eDNA library expansion. A video of a previously recorded presentation can be found here: <https://www.doi.gov/file/national-edrr-framework-projects-final-video-mp4>

- *National Horizon Scan & Terrestrial Hot Spot Mapping led by Wes Daniel: wdaniel@usgs.gov*
- *Increase EDRR Capacity for Terrestrial Plants led by Catherine Jarnevich: cjarnevich@usgs.gov*
- *Developing Molecular Detection Tools at Points of Entry led by Jon Amberg-jamberg@usgs.gov*
- *Develop Genetic Material Repository & Sharing Network led by Cheryl Morrison cmorrison@usgs.gov*
- *Develop eDNA toolbox led by Jon Amberg, Maggie Hunter, and Adam Sepulveda-asepulveda@usgs.gov*

Roles for states include the following: inform and contribute to development of the national EDRR framework, conduct early detection, participate in decision-making, lead rapid response efforts.

Grant Burton asked if eDNA library would include native species as well to assist with repatriation of seized wildlife. Dr. English mentioned this is important feedback and suggested reaching out. Grant also mentioned this could be used for wild caught species being laundered in trade as well.

Michael Ilellini mentioned that the Forest Service houses National Genomics Center for Wildlife and Fish Conservation that might be helpful to tap into.

10:15 Partner Updates

USFWS – Craig Martin- **in person** craig_martin@fws.gov

Mossballs w/ Zebra Mussels

Largely status quo from last update. All mossballs imported into the US must be done so under permit and phytosanitary certification and be inspected at USDA plant inspection stations at JFK or LAX. Once they go through the inspection, they can be referred to the USFWS to document any infestations. Any detections will be seized and destroyed.

After FY 2023, USDA's Plant Protection Quarantine cannot restrict mossball import permits to only JFK or LAX which may complicate things, but they are working on that now. An after-action report has been funded to examine the effectiveness and timeliness of actions taken and to provide future recommendations to mitigate risk. The report will be done by Oregon State University.

Carp Population Assessment

There are 6 invasive carp sub basin partnerships in the Mississippi River Basin. Each are working to understand the extent of the problem and to identify management actions and effectiveness. An ad-hoc group was formed across each sub basin to discuss how to work best together. The result was to update the invasive carp advisory committee under MICRA to oversee the effort and formation of a sampling approaches work group and a data and analysis work group. The committee and work group memberships are nearly finalized.

American Rescue Plan Act

Congress instructed USFWS to strengthen inspection and interdiction of risky animal imports and to prohibit importation of species that pose a risk to human health. Congress appropriated \$10 million to leverage this authority to prevent the next pandemic. USFWS contracted with the Smithsonian to conduct a global horizon scan to evaluate zoonosis not found yet in the US and to evaluate risk management options. USFWS is expected to receive a priority list of mammals and birds by 2023. Fish, mollusks, crustaceans, reptiles, and amphibians will be added later in 2023.

Large Landscape Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

A \$1.8 million NOFO was released earlier this year. Four grants were funded out of 40 applications. Two (#1 & 2) were looking at awareness campaigns and moving to behavior change.

1. *Wildlife Forever- Clean, Drain, Dry*

2. *North American Invasive Species Management Association- Play, Clean, Go.*
3. *The Nature Conservancy- Strengthening the California Island's Biosecurity*
4. *National Sea Grant Law Center- action plan to mitigate risks of AIS examining trade and transport through commerce*

USGS – Dr. Cindy Tam- virtual

Dr. Cindy Tam is the Coordinator for the Biological Threats & Invasive Species Research Program with USGS. Her work focuses on improving detection, awareness, decision support, and control of invasive species.

This year, Congress provided Biological Threats program with \$44 million, \$27 million for invasive species, \$11 million of which was spent on invasive carp. In the 2023 FY, there will be an increase of \$5 million to look at wildlife disease, climate change, and invasive species.

For invasive carp work, they work to prevent, contain, and detect. Work is guided by internal strategic framework, and a recent update was led by Patrick Kocovsky. The updated framework is in the publication stage and should be available by the end of the year. Lock 19 underwater acoustic deterrent system in Iowa had some repairs and maintenance in April this year. Over 200 individuals of 10 native species were tagged, and about 500 invasive carp were implanted with acoustic tags to determine if they move through the barrier. Fewer grass carp were removed from Lake Erie and tribs this year, even with the same effort.

A document on Burmese Python management will be released in October, and it includes vital rate information to improve population models.

Finally, many science and products have come out in the last year relating to invasive terrestrial plants with particular emphasis on reducing threats associated with fire and climate.

Currently, there is a lot of work occurring with national databases for invasive species. Received money from ARPA to develop a repository for data on disease outbreaks in aquatic systems and will be included in the NAS database (nas.er.usgs.gov). Please register with NAS to upload your data and to receive alerts.

USDA/APHIS - Dr. Dana Cole- in person dana.j.cole@usda.gov

Dana Cole is the Coordinator of the APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management Program (NFSDMP). She started in this role in February 2022. Prior to joining APHIS Wildlife Services, Dr. Cole served as Associate Director and Acting Director of APHIS Veterinary Services' (VS) Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health where she served as a VS liaison to the NFSDMP.

Last week, the USFWS Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland hosted an event to celebrate the eradication of nutria from the Delmarva peninsula. The project began in 2002 and protected over 250,000 acres of marsh and removed over 14,000 invasive nutria.

<https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2022-09/decades-long-partnership-eradicates-destructive-nutria-rodents-maryland>

Work continues on brown treesnake on Guam and Cocos Island. Around 15,000 snakes have been removed annually from critical control points. They are using canine detector dog program to help strengthen inspections conducted by Mariana Islands. Working on new technologies for suppression found in unfounded landscapes. Have taken operational lead on discovery of new incipient population found on Cocos Island.

In the last year, African Swine Fever (ASF) discovery in Hispaniola has put Caribbean Islands at high risk for possible introduction. Puerto Rico is considered vulnerable. APHIS has established a protection zone around Caribbean territories. Since Hurricane Maria, there has been a problem with urban feral swine on the landscape. A 5-yr plan to remove swine was accelerated with discovery of ASF. In addition, APHIS worked with Veterinary Services to identify high risk states for pathways of entry in the continental US. Four states and 70+ counties have been identified and surveillance has been added to the national surveillance plan.

Outreach component continues. Most recent video wrapped up in the Feral Swine in America series. [Feral Swine in America](#)



There was a question about ASF in Hispaniola and what is being done since the disease is not always fatal. Dr. Cole said surveillance and removal have been key as well as research on what is the appropriate circle to focus our eradication efforts.

ANS Task Force – Kim Bogenschutz- in person

In May 2022, the ANSTF approved the MN ANS Management plan. Once approved, states can get up to \$90,000-95,000 in funding to implement the plan.

The Prevention Committee is facilitating a discussion with appropriate agencies and NISC to encourage the use and adoption of guidelines to prevent AIS transport with wildland fire

operations. Discussions will also continue to talk about the possibility of reestablishing a Boating Ad-Hoc committee to examine boat design.

The TF has a 5-year strategic plan that helps to guide its focus. The current plan spans 2020-2025. One focus is on Prevention, and the 2022 work plan seeks to identify priority pathways and species of concern as well as encouraging implementation of measures to manage high priority species and their pathways. Part of the latter measure included formation of an Organisms in the Trade Hitchhiker workgroup.

The EDRR work plan covers the EDRR framework which the IS Committee heard about earlier today.

The Control and Restoration work plan was focused on reassessing all the management plans, and they determined several such as the European green crab plan needed to be updated. Along with the Research, this group has identified gaps in control. The Committee has developed a framework for determining the need for AIS control and management plans. Stony coral tissue loss disease is one priority and is on the agenda for the Fall 2022 meeting.

The Research work plan has goals to identify research priorities and prospective partners. They also want to focus on facilitating activities that support AIS research needs and to track and disseminate study results to incorporate into management decisions and actions.

The Education and Outreach Committee had presentations on outreach campaigns like Clean, Drain, Dry as well as changing the use of alien language to be inclusive.

There is a new Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force website here:
<https://www.fws.gov/program/aquatic-nuisance-species-task-force>

Wildlife Forever – Pat Conzemius - **in person** pconzemius@WildlifeForever.org

Pat Conzemius is the President & CEO of Wildlife Forever. Wildlife Forever facilitates the national Clean Drain Dry Initiative, a coalition of state, federal and industry partners working to prevent invasive species through coordinated media, marketing, public education and outreach.

Wildlife Forever is involved in a number of projects, including working on developing an Infrastructure Enhancement Protocol (IEP) guidebook to provide site-specific recommendations, cleaning equipment, user led instructions, and cohesive signage to modernize public access points.

Wildlife Forever was selected by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management as an awardee of FY22 funding for the purpose of deploying invasive species prevention infrastructure. Wildlife Forever will be deploying watercraft cleaning stations, performing site evaluations, and preparing for critical access enhancements throughout the Columbia River Basin region before expanding this model nationwide.

B.A.S.S., Yamaha Rightwaters, Major League Fishing, American Sportfishing Association, US Angling & Wildlife Forever signed a national agreement to fight invasive species. The

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will raise awareness, educate professional anglers, and implement best practices to prevent invasive species.

The final program is the FishArt program which is hosted by 7 states within their agency as a youth conservation education and recruitment program. They are looking for more state partners for the program which is free to the agencies.

Feral Swine Working Group – Dr. Jim LaCour, DVM- **in person**

Dr. LaCour is a graduate of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. He has owned and operated a large animal veterinary practice for a number of years and taught Ambulatory Large Animal Medicine and Surgery at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for two years.

Dr. LaCour has been the State Wildlife Veterinarian for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries since 2008 where his responsibilities include statewide wildlife disease investigation and research.

Feral Swine Working Group met this week, and there were about 45 attendees in person and virtual. Dr. Tomeček presented on his work testing Kaput, a feral swine toxicant. Testing indicates it is effective, but questions still surround cost effectiveness and how to avoid non-targets with the current delivery system.

Dr. Dana Cole also provided updates on the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services Feral Swine Damage Management Program. The goal of this program is to eliminate feral swine in states with lower feral swine numbers and reduce damage in states with larger feral swine populations. This program continues to monitor for African Swine Fever to assure that it does not enter the U.S, and to test various toxicants and delivery systems.

A sodium nitrate toxicant is also being examined, and if research goes well then it might be available for use in 2025.

SEAFWA, through BearWise, will be field testing Toxicant Delivery Devices (TDDs) that are designed to selectively feed toxicant baits to feral swine with minimal impact to non-target species such as bears, raccoons, raptors, etc. <https://wildlifemanagement.institute/outdoor-news-bulletin/july-2022/bear-resistant-container-and-toxicant-delivery-device-testing>

An international Wild Pig Conference was held virtually and had good attendance.

They will be working on a pamphlet for hunters to talk about negative aspects of feral swine on native wildlife.

Two surveys are in queue. One is the National Agriculture Survey which is looking at agricultural damage by feral swine.

11:10

EPA eDNA

Dr. Anett Trebitz, EPA Office of Research & Development, Great Lakes Toxicology & Ecology Division – virtual trebitz.anett@epa.gov

Dr. Trebitz is a research ecologist at US EPA ORD's Duluth MN laboratory. Her work focuses on Great Lakes-area aquatic ecosystems, including invasive species early detection monitoring and biological condition assessment.

Dr. Anett Trebitz provided an overview of EPA/ORD development and use of DNA-based tools to support assessment of aquatic resources. Projects include development of a DNA barcode library with a particular focus on invertebrate taxa and a fish eDNA survey pilot in MN lakes & OH reservoirs. With growing interest in and use of eDNA technology for invasive species management, we will be sharing this information and ways to partner with our committee.

There was a question about the use of DNA in a lake setting – can the DNA be used for a presence/ absence or to help quantify distribution and density? There are quantities involved with DNR via copy numbers, but how those numbers relate to quantity of taxa in a system is unclear at this point. They are hoping to use other sampling points to get past just presence/absence in the future.

11:30

Government Affairs Updates w/ Q & A

Kurt Thiede, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies- in person

Kurt Thiede is the Government Affairs Director for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Kerry will provide a copy of the Legislative Affairs update to the Committee.

Invasive species funding is in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Part of the funding is the America the Beautiful Challenge grants. In this first year, there was \$85 million that was available, and invasive species had a place in the program. There were over 500 proposals, amounting for over \$1 billion worth of need.

In the IRA, there was a \$121 million in there for invasive species, climate resiliency and ability to address extreme weather events on national and state wildlife refuges. There are not clear sideboards in place, yet, but as information becomes available, we will share that information.

The COMPETES Act was a potential vehicle for amending Title 18 under the Lacey Act. The Senate version did not have the Lacey Act language, but the House version did. During the conference committee, the COMPETES Act became the CHIPS Act, and the Lacey Act language dropped out in the process. We will continue to monitor other potential ways to address the Lacey Act.

11:40

State, Federal & Partner Roundtable

One representative per state agency highlights a couple of legislative and policy initiatives or issues

11:55

Committee Work Plan Discussion- All

Review of 2021-2022 Objectives:

1. Continue tracking of invasive species legislation and opportunities for the committee to engage. Coordinate with Government Affairs staff on Lacey Act.
2. Assemble a list of state projects related to Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
3. Conduct a review of states with marbled crayfish listings and determine if coordination is needed to prevent introduction and spread.
4. Strengthen coordination between federal agencies, states, territories, federally-recognized tribes, and other partners to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.
5. Establish quarterly (or as needed) committee member calls.

12:10

Wrap-up

12:15 pm

Adjourn