

Alaska Invasive Species Working Group audio Conference

Thursday November 21, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Hosted via NRCS bridge number

Participants:

Tammy Davis- ADF&G, Anchorage

Larry DeVilbiss-AK Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture, Palmer

Michele Hebert- UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Fairbanks

Jeff Heys- National Park Service, Anchorage

Deena Jallen- UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Fairbanks

Larry Johnson-AK Dept. of Transportation, Fairbanks

Denny Lassuy- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage

Rosemarie Lombardi- AK DEC, Anchorage

Shelly Morgan- The Nature Conservancy, Anchorage

Steve Seefeldt- USDA/ARS/SARU, Fairbanks

Linda Shaw- NOAA-NMFS, Juneau

Michael Shephard- Forest Service, Anchorage

Jeanne Standley- BLM, Anchorage

Agenda: Items to discuss

- AISWG MOU update
- Discussion of the AISWG Needs Assessment
 - Appendices
 - Highlighted Species List
- Draft Assessment Table of Contents
- Outline for Agency Summaries
- AISWG Communications (website and Newsletter) and general info
- Next teleconference for the AISWG

Additional Resources

- Schedule of Deadlines
- Needs Assessment Table of Contents (Draft)
- Agency Information draft (Questions for agencies)
- Agency Information Example from US Forest Service
- MOU Signatories as of 11/28/06

AISWG MOU update

19 Signed MOU's present in Fairbanks, as of 11/28/06. See Additional Resources for list of signatories.

Discussion of the AISWG Needs Assessment

The AISWG plans to create a Needs Assessment for Alaska within the next 6 months. The size should be limited to 10-20 pages, and targeted towards decision makers,

landowners, and general public. It will serve as an information piece to identify what Alaska needs to do to effectively address invasive species concerns.

Part of the plan will be used to highlight the 'sexiest' invasive species; those that have the most impact, and are the most attention getting. The 7 species categories are: Fish and Aquatic Invertebrates, Reptiles and Amphibians, Mammals, Birds, Terrestrial Arthropods (Primarily insects), Plants, and, Animal & Plant Microorganisms/Diseases. These categories are based on the Federal funding categories for Invasive Species (found in the Union of Concerned Scientists Invasive Species Alaska publication).

Members of the AISWG will identify which species should be highlighted

Fish and Aquatic Invertebrates: Denny Lassuy, USFWS

Birds, Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians: Tammy Davis, ADF&G

Terrestrial Arthropods: Michele Hebert, UAF-CES, and Michael Shepherd, US-FS

Animal and Plant Microorganisms/Diseases: Michele Hebert, UAF-CES and IPM program

Plants: Jeff Heys, US-NPS

The species will focus on efforts in Alaska in the areas of Control, Early Detection, and Prevention. There is overlap in these categories, and people entering species in the excel table were asked to highlight 'Prevention' species.

Select species can also be used as case studies to show how invasive species affect Alaska economically. Holes in management, and data gaps can also be addressed. Needs assessment documents from other states (Idaho, Florida) have used a similar approach in writing their plans, using highlighted species as a way to focus interest on invasive species issues.

Draft Assessment Table of Contents

Michele Hebert and Deena Jallen from UAF-CES have drafted a Table of Contents for the Needs Assessment. Interspersed throughout the document will be text blocks with photos for the highlighted invasive species.

An important part of the introduction will be to explain what invasive species are, and to stress that not all non-indigenous species are invasive. There should also be explanations for the terms 'noxious', 'invasive', 'non-indigenous', 'introduction', etc.

The audience will be the general public, and decision makers. In addition to stressing economic impacts (Green crab would compete with native Dungeness crab, and impact shellfish populations), some of the species can highlight the potential for invasive species to change the ecosystem (example: Spartina would change the species composition of mudflats and salt marshes, impacting a wide array of species).

It will also be very important to stress the impact invasive species can have on subsistence. Sudden Oak Death may not sound like much of a problem in Alaska, until you know that it can infect blueberries, cranberries, salmonberries, etc.

In addition to including appendices with the plan, additional information can be included on the website. There also needs to be a section for listing preparers, and acknowledgements.

Outline for Agency Summaries

Jeff Heys from the National Park Service drafted an agency summary form with information filled in for the NPS. We would like to have agency summaries from all the AISWG MOU signatory agencies to put in the Needs Assessment to inventory what invasive species activities are underway, and where gaps exist in research, management, prevention, etc. An effort needs to be made to include Native Alaskan landowners and private landowners.

The target date for the forms to be filled out and returned is January 1, 2007.

Depending on the size of the needs assessment, the Agency Summaries may be presented in appendices, or further summarized. Florida presented its information from all Federal sources in an overview, with additional information in the appendix. Concerns exist with the separation of state and federal entities. The Federal agencies would be uncomfortable with giving recommendations to the State. However, given that the Federal agencies control a large part of Alaskan land, their summaries may take up a larger prominence in the plan, in contrast to plans from states with less federal land ownership. Federal agencies should be able to help with outlining 'Needs and Options' for invasive species management.

The goal of the agency summaries will be to outline what needs to be done in terms of improving state response to invasive species issues, getting state funding for a more formal council, changing/adding laws, and increasing/improving cooperative efforts with non-state organizations. Information from other states can be included as examples of how they are getting funded, and how coordinated efforts are being used.

AISWG Communications (website and Newsletter) and General info

The next edition of the newsletter will be coming out for November. This issue will highlight management efforts. Organizations are encouraged to submit a paragraph and photos of recent management programs highlighting what is being done in Alaska to control invasive species. The newsletter will also introduce a section for Highlighted Invasive Species, and Highlighted Publication.

ALASKAINVASIVES.ORG continues to be updated with more information and resources. Suggestions for links, calendar items, corrections, etc. should be sent to fndmj@uaf.edu.

The ADF&G representative on the AISWG Marine Group is no longer available; we would like to find another person from ADF&G to be involved.

Next Meeting for the AISWG:

NRCS Bridge number 907-271-1405.

9 am, Friday December 1

Species List, length estimates for plans

10 am, Monday December 11

Topics: Needs Assessment

Additional Resources:

Schedule of Deadlines

Needs Assessment Table of Contents (Draft)

Agency Information draft (Questions for agencies)
Agency Information Example from US NPS
MOU Signatories as of 11/28/06

Schedule of Deadlines

- 12/1/06 9am Teleconference: Highlighted invasive species table discussion
- 12/11/06 10 am Teleconference: Needs Assessment drafting, schedule next teleconference
- 1/1/07: Deadline for agency summaries. Submit by email to fndmj@uaf.edu or ffmah@uaf.edu

Needs Assessment Table of Contents (Draft)

Executive Summary – one page

Introduction (The problem)

What is an invasive species?

Not all non-indigenous species are invasive and harmful.

How do we bring invasive species into Alaska (pathways)

Why be concerned i.e. environmental, economic, health

Industries affected.

Highlighted species (two page spread)

Rat- control

Northern Pike - control

Atlantic salmon – early detection

Gypsy moth – early detection

Purple loosestrife – prevention

Potato blight – early detection

Green crab - prevention

Current efforts to manage and control invasive species in Alaska

Summary

State agency effort overviews (ADFG, ADEC, ADOT, ADNR)

CNIPM

AISWG

CWMAAs

Private groups

Federal agencies

Recommendations (What is needed)

Stable funding

Early detection and rapid response

Educational programs

Coordinate efforts

Set priorities for action

Enact Changes in state law

Identify research needs

Strategic plan development

Appendices:

Governor's letter
Taxa/Species list and ranking
Species profiles
Agency questionnaires and summaries
Legal references/statutes
Map of land ownership
CWMA map
Reference and resources list
Contact directory
Funding and management cost global, national, local

Agency Information draft (Questions for agencies)

Alaska Invasive Species Working Group
Agency Report

Your Agency Here

Please refer to National Park Service report for general idea as to length/detail

Role and Mandate

Scope of work

Funding, Staffing, and Organization

Activities and Accomplishments

Prevention

Detection

Control

Monitoring

Restoration

Education

Research

Planning

Collaboration

Information Management

Agency Information Example from US NPS

Alaska Invasive Species Working Group
Agency Report
National Park Service (NPS), Alaska Region

Role and Mandate

The mission statement of the NPS is "...to promote and regulate the use of the...national parks...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

This means that our primary role with regard to invasive species in Alaska is to protect the 16 NPS units from threats to resources and values, as articulated by ANILCA, Executive Order 13112, and NPS Management Policies. We are also directed to work with partners on invasive species research, information-sharing, and education.

Scope of work

The 16 NPS units in the Alaska Region encompass about 54 million acres of land and some marine areas, spanning much of the state (see map below). While we must manage any invasive species found, our focus has been on plants thus far, because of our funding source (see next section) and due to their substantial documentation on NPS lands.

Funding, Staffing, and Organization

The main source of funding for our invasive species management activities is the national Exotic Plant Management Team program, initiated for the Alaska Region in 2003. The program's focus is invasive plant control, to help parks deal with problems beyond their management capacities. Currently, the program provides a little less than \$160,000 per year to the Alaska Region. This amount covers:

- Program Manager (Liaison) salary
- Data Manager salary
- partial payroll for 5-10 seasonal technicians each year
- travel, supplies, and printing of publications

Beyond this funding source, an additional \$125,000 was contributed toward Alaska invasive plant management in 2006 by the NPS units, the Regional Office, and internal funding sources. The equivalent of \$75,000 was contributed in the form of in-kind volunteer services. Finally, our Regional Wildlife Biologist would provide the technical expertise to address invasive animal populations as needed.

Activities and Accomplishments

Prevention

In terms of on-the-ground prevention practices, Denali NP&Pr has taken the greatest steps towards appropriate measures during construction projects, including washing heavy equipment before it arrives on-site, writing into contracts that new projects must not bring in new weeds, and rejecting hay bales for bank stabilization. In addition, buses that travel out the park road are washed daily. In Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr, it was recently written into regulation that any forage brought into the park must be certified weed-free. And in Sitka NHP, native plantings have recently been used for landscaping where non-native species had previously been planted.

Detection

Detection is an ongoing priority for all 16 NPS units in Alaska. We use Trimble GPS units to precisely map infestations and uninfested areas to provide baseline data for monitoring, ensure relocation, and promote planning. With a couple of exceptions, non-native plant surveys began five years ago. Currently, all but the most remote parks have been surveyed, with annual surveys of the areas at greatest risk of invasion (refer to map). The data from these surveys are entered into AKEPIC (the statewide exotic plant database) as well as internal GIS and Access databases, with multiple data fields that provide detail on infestation characteristics. We have been assisted with species identification by the Alaska Natural Heritage Program and have made collections for documenting new species and range expansions.

Control

To date, we have only used manual and mechanical means to control invasive plants, although we are currently in the midst of exploring other options (see planning below). In 2006, our field employees controlled 1200 infestations by hand, most of which are very small in size. For the larger infestations, we bring in volunteer crews to provide the labor needed. We control the species of highest priority and feasibility by park, such that in a park with 25 species of non-native plants, we might manage 15, while in a park with less than 10 species, we are likely to manage all of them.

Monitoring

The use of GPS units with sub-meter accuracy enables us to evaluate population changes each year, to gauge control effectiveness and rates of spread. The control effectiveness monitoring in particular is valuable to invasive plant management in Alaska because we are determining where manual and mechanical methods work and where they fail. Our monitoring efforts also document new species in many parks each year to complement our baseline surveys, and park employees are trained in reporting as well.

Restoration

Our restoration efforts are most advanced at Denali NP&Pr, where native plant seeds are collected each summer for revegetation of disturbed lands. In Dyea, Klondike Gold Rush NHP, a degraded slough has been the focus of both exotic plant control and restoration efforts.

Education

Over the past few years, we have made over 50 presentations to internal and external audiences about invasive plants in Alaska and developed a website, kiosk display, and brochure specific to the NPS. In addition, we have cooperated with other agencies in the production of the Invasive Plants of Alaska spiral-bound book and several smaller publications. We are always working to raise awareness within the NPS.

Research

We have served on the review panel for the invasive plant ranking project coordinated by the Alaska Natural Heritage Program. A current project is underway with NASA to model the spread of white sweetclover, bird vetch, and narrowleaf hawksbeard across burned lands in Interior Alaska.

Planning

We are in the midst of developing an Invasive Plant Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for all 16 Alaska NPS units. The plan will consider the use of herbicides where other methods fail or are unlikely to control aggressive plants. The process includes public involvement, impact analysis, and strategic planning, all of which should prove valuable to other land managers in Alaska.

Collaboration

We are working with several Cooperative Weed Management Areas around the state to promote proactive management beyond park boundaries. Each summer we work on cooperative weed pulls with adjacent landowners for species of mutual concern. We also assisted in the development of the AKEPIC database as a statewide tracking mechanism for exotic plants and have contributed to interagency training sessions and the annual Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management workshops.

Information Management

Over the last year, we have developed a geodatabase for the central storage and analysis of GPS-collected data from the parks. This database houses nearly 5,000 precise spatial records of inventory, control, and monitoring efforts and is serving as a nationwide model for NPS invasive plant data management as well as for Alaska.

MOU Signatories as of 11/28/06

Kurt Fredriksson, Commissioner, AK DEC

McKie Campbell, Commissioner, ADF&G

Michael Menge, Commissioner, AK DNR

Mike Barton, Commissioner, AK DOT

Steve Jones, Chancellor, UAF

Paul K. Brewster (for Dennis E. Bschor), USDA Forest Service

Robert N. Jones, State Conservationist, USDA National Resource Conservation Service

Arthur E. Brooks, Rear Admiral, USDHS Coast Guard

Niles Cesar, Regional Director, USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs

Debbie A. Hollen (for Julia Dougan, Acting State Director), USDI Bureau of Land Management

Thomas O. Melius, Regional Director, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service

Leslie Holland-Bartels, Director, USDI Geological Survey

John Goll, Regional Director, USDI Minerals Management Service

Marcia Blaszak, Regional Director, USDI National Park Service

Sharry Miller, Executive Director, Prince William Soundkeeper

David Banks, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Alaska

John S. Devens, PhD., Executive Director, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Steven Sumida, Executive Director (Acting), Alaska Inter-Tribal Council

Al Poindexter, Executive Director, Alaska Association of Conservation Districts