

## **Alaska Invasive Species Working Group audio Conference**

December 12, 2007, 9:30 am

Hosted via NRCS bridge number. Minutes taken by Deena Jallen

### **Participants:**

Tammy Davis- ADF&G, Juneau

Gino Graziano- Alaska Association of Conservation Districts (AACD), Wasilla

Jeff Heys- National Park Service, Anchorage

Lisa Ka'ahue- PWSRCAC, Anchorage

Deena Jallen- UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Fairbanks

Larry Johnson- AKDOT&PF, Fairbanks

Denny Lassuy- USFWS, Anchorage

Dan Proulx- AK DNR, Division of Agriculture, Fairbanks

Joan Tovsen-UAA/UAF, Anchorage

### **Agenda: Items to discuss**

- Update on Activities
- Upcoming events

### **Additional Resources**

- Homer Soil and Water Conservation District website
- Link to KTUU story on re-routed trees from Hawaii
- Comment Period Opens on Environmental Assessment for restoring wildlife habitat on Rat Island.
- ISAC nomination Information
- Weed! Film information
- Invasive species definitions
- News stories from Hawaii about invasives on Christmas trees

## **Update on Activities**

Deena Jallen has gotten some funds from CNIPM to update the CNIPM website with conference proceedings. The funds should keep her on until mid-January. Conference proceeding from the AISWG Alaska Invasive Species Conference are available on the [www.alaskainvasives.org](http://www.alaskainvasives.org) website.

Dan Proulx met yesterday with the DNR commissioners. They have agreed that instead of tweaking the seed law list, they will add a chapter for noxious weeds to the regulations. This will allow noxious weeds and all their propagated parts to be regulated separately from the seed law. Non-propagative parts (like straw) would not be included. The wording is still being worked on. DNR has been looking at laws in other states for examples on what types of sections to add to the new chapter. Jamie Snyder had sent a letter to the commissioners with recommendations from CNIPM, and that letter was used in the argument for writing a new chapter. Stakeholder feedback has also been favorable. Throughout the process of adopting the new regulations, there will be opportunities for public commentary.

After the AISWG and CNIPM meetings, Bonnie Harper-Lore spoke at the Fairbanks DOT building. Larry Johnson said that it was a very good meeting. It was possibly the

first time DOT personnel from design, construction, and maintenance were in the same room, focusing on vegetation issues. Larry will likely meet with managers from the design group later this winter, and will review AISWG and CNIPM in those discussions.

Gino Graziano has sent a proposal for funding Early Detection and Rapid Response to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Pulling Together Initiative. The project focuses on citizen outreach and utilizing citizen scientists. The full proposal was recently requested. Gino has also started a CNIPM subcommittee to work on citizen outreach and putting together a one-stop shopping approach with one phone number and one email address for people to use for invasive species questions/information. The subcommittee plans to coordinate with the AISWG. Conservation Districts are working with CWMA's to write their strategic plans. The Homer district plan should be on the website soon, and could be used as template for other districts.

A recent news story about Christmas trees has been circulating. The trees were shipped to Hawaii, found to be infested with insects, and were re-routed to Anchorage, where they were sold. Gino Graziano, Doug Warner from AKDNR, and Representative Craig Johnson were interviewed by KTUU in Anchorage. They gave information on invasive species, and Rep. Johnson had the opportunity to talk about the new legislation on invasive plants. Gino said that the trees had a certification from the state of Oregon, which was sufficient for them to be allowed to come in to Anchorage. Jeff Heys said that if the species involved were federally regulated, then Homeland Security would be involved. If the species are not on a federal list, then he was not sure who would be in charge of intercepting them. Denny Lassuy will get in touch with his contacts at Customs and Border Protection and ask them about the matter.

Denny Lassuy said that the environmental assessment for eradication of rats on Rat Island is due to be released. He worked on the fact sheet and Q&A. USFWS is already getting some comments on the plan. People wishing to comment can email [rat\\_island@fsw.org](mailto:rat_island@fsw.org) (see additional resources for link to the plan and supporting documents).

Jeff Heys provided an update on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting in Anchorage after partaking in discussions with the Invasive Species Advisory Council steering committee. They decided to focus on the themes of prevention and conservation; prevention in regard to industry, and conservation of the natural conditions in Alaska. The members are excited to travel to Alaska and address state concerns such as climate change, rats, shipping as a vector, CNIPM and AISWG collaborations, and citizen involvement. The meetings will take place May 12-16. Presentations will be 15 minutes, and focus on concerns at the national level and action drive (i.e. how invasives should be addressed on a federal level).

The meetings will be indoors at the National Park Service Building in Anchorage for 2 to 2.5 days, with additional day or ½ day field trips planned in the Anchorage area (potentially to look at bird cherry trees along Anchorage streams, whirling disease at a local hatchery). A trip to Valdez is under consideration, but logistics, lodging, and funding have not been settled. A boat tour would allow more time for presentations. ISAC members may take a Valdez trip individually, as an optional activity.

All of the ISAC meetings will be open to the public, space permitting. Discussions will be geared towards national policy. They are also open to having a poster session. The committee members will primarily rely on their binders for in depth background and additional information. Kelsey Brantley (Logistics Coordinator for ISAC) will be assembling the binders. Lisa Ka'aihue has a copy of a binder used in a previous meeting if folks in the Anchorage area would like to look at one and get an idea for content.

Nominations are also being accepted for ISAC membership until January 14. (The .pdf announcement was sent out over the listserv on 12/10). Towards the end of January, ISAC will be finalizing the agenda and speakers for the May meeting.

Lisa Ka'aihue has been busy working on the hull fouling project, helping with ISAC arrangements, and putting together the invasive species film session for the Alaska Forum on the Environment meeting in February. The hull fouling project is running into bureaucratic snags with University of Washington, but the partners are enthusiastic about starting the work.

One of the films submitted to the festival is Weed! The Real Threat to Our Natural Environment, which Lisa recommended highly (see Additional Resources for more info).

Joan Tovsen is continuing work on her graduate project. She had a discussion with Professor Gerald McBeath, who had said that the definition used for invasive species was too narrow. Joan mentioned this to Jeanne Ostnes (from Rep. Johnson's office), who thought it would be a good issue to raise now, before the new proposed regulations get further action. McBeath is the Northern Studies and Political Science departments at UAF, and raised issues of crop seeds not native to a region being classified as invasive. He had done some work in China sorting out beneficial non-native species from harmful invasives. Denny Lassuy pointed out that the proposed legislation uses wording based on the national definition of invasives, as stated in Executive Order 13112 (see Additional Resources). Jeff Heys said that in the E.O. 13112, agricultural seeds are not considered invasive, because they are not causing harm. Exotic would go in the big category, and invasive in the smaller subset that cause harm. Dan Proulx mentioned that the state currently doesn't regulate invasive weeds, just noxious weeds. Native species could also be classified as noxious and be restricted.

Joan also said that on a recent trip to Tokyo Gardens in Anchorage, she found 'green crabs' in the buffet. The owner confirmed they were 'green crab', and was excited to hear they could soon be in Alaska so her shipping costs would be cheaper. Deena Jallen would like to get some green crab specimens for photographs, and is also interested to know if the crabs have been shipped up alive, or already dead. (Denny Lassuy subsequently visited this restaurant and was able to determine that the crabs were in fact not *Carcinus maenas* (European green crabs).)

Tammy Davis recently learned that ADF&G did not get any NISA (National Invasive Species Act) funds for State fiscal year 2008. The reason given was that the draft of the proposal they based their decision on included projects that were not focused on aquatic species (e.g., starlings and rats). A later version removed these species, but was apparently not reviewed. In response, ADF&G decided that its remaining funds will be dedicated for aquatic (marine and freshwater) invasives. They do have some remaining

money for rat projects, but will not be funding other terrestrial projects, including the Alaska Natural Heritage Program plan to rank non-native species (similar to their plant ranking). Tracey Gotthardt, who would have been doing the ranking, said they will need other sources of funds to continue the work. This is a disappointment, as it is inevitable that more non-native species will be coming into Alaska. The repercussions from the decision for ADF&G to only focus on aquatics will take a while to become evident.

In the meanwhile, ADF&G will continue to fund green crab work with Kachemak Bay Research Reserve. Tammy Davis also commented on the Christmas tree issue. She spoke with Jamie Snyder and Sheila Waughtal (Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security). Sheila said this is not the first time a shipment denied from another area has been sent to Alaska. There is a question of whether regulations should be enacted to restrict such transfers from occurring. Tammy Davis hopes that Ann Ferguson (USDA-APHIS) and the AKPRAC (Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee) will discuss this issue at their next quarterly teleconference.

### **Upcoming events/teleconferences**

#### **CNIPM**

January 9th, 9:00 am

For the rest of 2008 the audios will take place on the FIRST WEDNESDAY of each month at 9am. Call in to: 907-271-1405, allow line to ring until another party picks up. Long distance charges apply.

#### **Marine Subcommittee**

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am

To attend, call into 907-586-7060. Allow line to ring until another party picks up, long distance charges apply.

#### **AISWG**

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am

Call in to: 907-271-1405, allow line to ring until another party picks up. Long distance charges apply.

### **Additional Resources**

#### **Homer Soil and Water Conservation District**

<http://www.homerswcd.org/index.htm>

#### **Link to KTUU story on re-routed trees**

<http://www.ktuu.com/Global/story.asp?S=7484631>

#### **Comment Period Opens on Environmental Assessment for restoring wildlife habitat on Rat Island. (posted to listserv 12/13)**

The Refuge is seeking public comments on the recently completed Environmental Assessment for Restoring Wildlife Habitat on Rat Island.

This Assessment analyzes the consequences of two alternatives, a no action alternative and the proposed action of eradicating rats from Rat Island to allow the native ecosystem to recover. Uninhabited Rat Island, located in the Aleutian Island chain about 1300 miles west of Anchorage, is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

The Environmental Assessment and other informational materials can be viewed or downloaded at

<http://alaskamaritime.fws.gov/news.htm>.

If you need a paper copy of the Assessment or have trouble downloading it, contact us at the above e-mail or call us at (907) 235-6546.

Written comments will be accepted on the Environmental Assessment through January 11, 2008, and can be submitted by e-mail to [rat\\_island@fws.gov](mailto:rat_island@fws.gov) or by fax to (907) 235-7783 or by mail to:

Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge  
95 Sterling Hwy., Suite 1  
Homer, AK 99603.

#### **ISAC Nominations Information (.pdf posted to listserv 12/10)**

##### **Office of the Secretary, National Invasive Species Council; Request for Nominations for the Invasive Species Advisory Committee**

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Department of the Interior, on behalf of the interdepartmental National Invasive Species Council, proposes to appoint new members to the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC). The Secretary of the Interior, acting as administrative lead, is requesting nominations for qualified persons to serve as members of the ISAC.

**DATES:** Nominations must be postmarked by January 14, 2008.

**ADDRESSES:** Nominations should be sent to Lori Williams, Executive Director, National Invasive Species Council (OS/NISC), Regular Mail: 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240; Express Mail: 1201 Eye Street, NW., 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20005.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Kelsey Brantley, Program Analyst, at  
(202) 513-7243, fax: (202) 371-1751, or  
by e-mail at  
[Kelsey\\_Brantley@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Kelsey_Brantley@ios.doi.gov).

### **Weed film info**

"Weed! The Real Threat to Our Natural Environment" -- "This 30 minute documentary highlights the most notorious of aquatic invasive weeds in Western Washington waterways. Among the Most Wanted of the plant world are parrotfeather, purple loosestrife, yellow floating heart, milfoil and others. You will learn what these pretty plants look like and what ugly things they can do once they take over a pond or lake. In addition, meet Joe & Jane Gardener, also Most Wanted for unknowingly aiding and abetting these botanical bullies in their own backyard. You will witness what gives these plants the upper hand and how the impacts are felt by everyone. And, you'll learn what small things you can do to make a big difference in preventing their spread."

For more information on the film:

Laurel Baldwin - Coordinator, Noxious Weed Control  
Whatcom County, Public Works Department  
360-676-6700, extension 50680  
[www.co.whatcom.wa.us](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us) <<http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/>>

### **Invasive species definitions**

The following definitions are from Executive Order 13112, a Presidential statement of national policy:

**"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.

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

### **News stories from Hawaii about invasives on Christmas trees (posted on the listserv 12/7)**

DENNIS ODA / [DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM](mailto:DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM)

Agricultural officials inspecting more than 3,100 Oregon-grown Christmas trees aboard a Boeing 747 aircraft yesterday found insects amid the trees. The inspectors included Dennis Nagatani, left, Elliot Nakashima, Edward

O'Callaghan, Kanani Lai, scooping up an insect into a collection bottle, and Arseno Esteban. The planeload was returned to the mainland.

Wasp discoveries sting sales

Two schools were planning to sell the trees to raise funds

#### STORY SUMMARY »

They arrived late Thursday, but the journey wasn't quite over for a planeload of Christmas trees from Portland, Ore., which were intended for Oahu school and church fundraisers.

The 747 jet loaded with 3,150 Douglas, noble and grand firs was sent back to the mainland yesterday after the discovery of several types of wasp, two of which are not found in Hawaii.

The Department of Agriculture said it did not have the proper decontamination facilities for the first large-scale air delivery of Christmas trees to the state, so the plane was rerouted to Anchorage, Alaska.

Five churches and schools and one wholesaler were affected. One of the schools, which planned to sell the trees as a part of a fundraising project, said it stands to lose \$10,000.

McMinnville, Ore.-based cargo shipper Evergreen International Aviation Inc., which handled the shipment, said it will lose \$1 million from the operation.

#### STAR-BULLETIN

#### FULL STORY »

By Jennifer Sudick

[jsudick@starbulletin.com](mailto:jsudick@starbulletin.com)

A planeload of Christmas trees intended for sale by isle fundraisers and wholesalers was sent back to the mainland yesterday after the discovery of several types of wasp, two of which are not found in Hawaii.

The Boeing 747, which arrived in Honolulu Thursday night, contained 3,150 Douglas, noble and grand firs, marking the first large-scale air delivery of Christmas trees to the state. Five churches and schools and one wholesaler were affected.

The plane was diverted to Anchorage, Alaska, late yesterday afternoon,

said David Rath, president of Evergreen Agricultural Enterprises, a division of McMinnville, Ore.-based cargo shipper Evergreen International Aviation Inc., which handled the shipment.

"We've shipped to Japan, Puerto Rico, Mexico and China and haven't had anything like this happen before," Rath said. "We asked if we could pay a charge or incinerate them there or fumigate them, but they are not allowing any of that. They wouldn't allow us to offload them at all."

Evergreen stands to lose \$1 million from the diversion because the flight had to be rerouted, delaying a scheduled textile shipment out of Asia and incurring additional fuel costs. Rath said the company hopes to sell the trees at cost or give them away in Alaska.

Kailua Christian Academy and Waialua High and Intermediate School had arranged to purchase the largest portion of the trees, said Hollie Spivey, Evergreen's Christmas tree sales manager. Evergreen's aviation and ground logistics unit planned to sell 1,000 trees. Spivey declined to name the other affected buyers. Any money paid to Evergreen for the fundraisers will be refunded, Rath said.

Ben Abraham, an administrator at Kailua Christian Academy, said he purchased 1,300 trees for what was meant to be the school's only fundraiser of the year.

"This was a major fundraiser for our school, and we stand to lose \$10,000," he said.

The school planned to make \$40 to \$60 a tree, he said, with a 6- to 7-foot Douglas fir selling for \$75. He had paid to advertise the fundraiser and for a refrigerated truck to pick the trees up from the airport.

"Most were pre-sold," he said. "We have to refund the funds."

The trees were cut Wednesday at Evergreen's 800-acre tree farm and shipped out of Portland International Airport in Oregon on Thursday.

DENNIS ODA / [DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM](mailto:DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM)

These were some of the insects found yesterday during an inspection of Christmas trees.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture sent a team of 10 inspectors to the plane yesterday morning, where they found three yellow-jacket wasps, including two live queens, along with two other genera of wasps, one

tentatively identified as a dolichovespula, which was found alive, and a vespa, which is a type of hornet. Both are not currently found in Hawaii, said Domingo Cravalho Jr., chief of the state Department of Agriculture's Inspection and Compliance Section, which inspects all imported trees. "The unusual thing about the entire air shipment was that many of the insects that were found in the air shipment were not found in maritime inspections of Christmas trees," he said.

Evergreen secured a certificate from the Oregon Department of Agriculture clearing the trees, meaning that they were all shaken to remove insects, Cravalho said. "Evidently it wasn't shaken enough, or it was staged in an area where it could get re-infested," he said.

Flies, parasitic wasps and other pests also were found, as well as dirt and rocks that could carry microorganisms, Cravalho said. No trees were removed from the plane during the inspection, he said.

The department was unable to clean the plane because the state's cleaning and inspection facilities are made for surface containers, he said, not large aircraft.

"It's best that the shipment move out of Hawaii and go to another destination that accepts these types of pests," he said. "We're at a greater risk because of the fact that we have warmer weather and some of these species might take hold here."

The majority of the state's 150,000 imported Christmas trees this year are shipped by sea, with the last of four Matson Navigation Co. shipments expected to arrive today.

A Boeing 747-200 can hold up to 4,500 trees, said Spivey, but some buyers backed out after wasps were found on three surface containers last month. Spivey said Evergreen plans to fly Christmas trees to Hawaii next year in containers so they can be removed and dealt with separately.

"We had such a tremendous response," she said, adding that more than a dozen cars were lined up this morning at Evergreen's airport site waiting for a tree. "Phones were ringing off the hook -- that's encouraging."

**BACK TO TOP**

Leapin' lizards! For holidays in Hawaii, no thanks

By Nelson Daranciang  
[ndaranciang@starbulletin.com](mailto:ndaranciang@starbulletin.com)

Bianca Matthews-Inofinada and her children had just arrived at their Kalihi home with the family's Christmas tree in the back of their truck Wednesday night and were about to unload it when they noticed a large lizard on it.

"We thought it was huge. It wasn't like a normal lizard," she said.

When they tried to catch it, the lizard disappeared into the tree's branches still wrapped in netting. So they unloaded the tree, cut the netting and shook it.

One of Matthews-Inofinada's daughters spotted the lizard on the ground. They were able to capture it by forcing it into a container.

"At first we thought it was a salamander. The kids called it Sala," she said.

Whatever it was, Matthews-Inofinada knew it probably did not belong in Hawaii. So she called the state Department of Agriculture the next morning.

"The person did the right thing in containing it rather than just screaming and running off," said Domingo Cravalho Jr., chief of the agriculture Inspection and Compliance Section, "so they did really the right thing, containing it and calling the proper authorities."

JAMM AQUINO / [JAQUINO@STARBULLETIN.COM](mailto:JAQUINO@STARBULLETIN.COM)

This foot-long southern alligator lizard was found in a Christmas tree Wednesday night by a Kalihi family.

State agriculture officials identified the creature as a southern alligator lizard. It is an adult of unknown sex and measures 12 inches long.

The lizard's normal habitat range is the western coast of North America, from Baja California to Washington. They are allowed in Hawaii only under permit for exhibition in zoos.

State agriculture officials have captured two other southern alligator lizards in recent years, one in a shipping container for nonagricultural cargo and one in a storage container on Kauai. They are not sure how the second one made it to Kauai.

Southern alligator lizards can grow to 16 inches long. They feed on insects, slugs, snails and young mice. They pose a direct threat to native

birds because they can get into bird nests in trees and eat unattended eggs, Cravalho said.

Matthews-Inofinada said she bought her 5-foot Douglas fir at Don Quijote's Pearl City store.

Cravalho said he will send staff to the store to find out whether anyone has seen anything else from the container in which Matthews-Inofinada's Douglas fir arrived. He urged people who find or spot alien pests to call the Agriculture Department's hot line at 643-PEST.

He said the department will keep the lizard and use it for educational purposes until the Honolulu Zoo makes a shipment of excess or unwanted creatures to the mainland.