

**WASHINGTON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL (WISC)**

**MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING**

May 12, 2011

Room 172, WA State Natural Resources Building  
Olympia, Washington

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**INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kevin Anderson	Puget Sound Partnership
Clinton Campbell	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Chris Christopher, Chair	Department of Transportation
Rob Fimbel	WA State Parks and Recreation
Kathy Hamel	Department of Ecology
Lisa Macchio	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Tom McDowell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pat Stevenson	Stillaguamish Tribe
Mary Toohey	Washington State Department of Agriculture
Bill Tweit, Vice Chair	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
Lisa Younger	The Nature Conservancy

**GUESTS AND PRESENTERS:**

Lisa DeBruyckere  
Karen Lippy  
Clover Lockard  
Kathy Lucero  
Steve McLellan  
Jennifer Parsons  
Ray Willard

**STAFF:**

Wendy Brown  
Lori Lawrence  
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

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**CONVENE AND WELCOME:**

Chris Christopher opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with welcome announcements and facility safety information, introductions, and a review of the agenda.

**HOT TOPICS:**

**Pacific Education Institute (PEI)**

Karen Lippy, from the Olympic Education Service District 114, reported on her work with biological suppliers on short and long-term solutions for classroom kits. Karen is also creating a larger invasive species curriculum, which she will present to 300 agricultural educators in Wenatchee in June. She is working to improve current curricula by making it possible for classrooms to go out and actively address invasive species. Karen is working on removing Brazilian elodea from science kits, which she said is more complicated than replacing the invasive animals because it has become such a standard in science programs. Margaret Tudor is working on FOSS (Full Option Science System) kits at the national level to make replacement species less expensive and native species work in the classroom. Bill Tweit asked how the pilot program to use native crayfish is working. Karen said in her region they are having trouble with the aggression, size, cost, and survival rate in native crayfish and that teachers would prefer a different animal altogether, especially if there was a species they can go out and gather on their own.

### Commercial/Scientific Diving Issue

Jenifer Parsons and Kathy Lucero said there was a recent issue with divers pulling invasive plants. Labor and Industries (L&I) is questioning whether the work is categorized as scientific or commercial diving – each of which has different standards and safety requirements. For many years, underwater noxious weed control work has been considered scientific diving, but recently L&I decided that if you hire a contractor to do weed removal, the work is commercial. Last year, L&I fined a dive team in Thurston County \$80,000 for not meeting commercial diving requirements. Now there is confusion in the dive community and fears of receiving similar fines. It costs much more to run weed removals as commercial work (\$5-10,000 more just in set up costs), but there is no increase in safety. Jenifer and Kathy asked for council involvement to see where to go from here and to investigate if other states have dealt with this issue. One idea is to have a new exemption for habitat restoration work.

There council agreed that there is value in addressing this issue such that the weed removal work can continue and safety is appropriately addressed. The council could do research to see what other state councils are doing. Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, Department of Natural Resources, Nisqually tribe and the weed boards should be on a committee to work on this because they have a lot at stake and would get a lot of benefit from this. For the most part the issue with L&I is resolved, but it would help to coordinate with OSHA. A safety board and manual should be a standard. It would be good for agencies to work on this, but it is not likely that there will be a flat exemption.

Chris Christopher is willing to write a letter to L&I and pull a committee together with L&I to look into the issue, but does not want the council to lead this. Chris will follow up with Kathy after the meeting and get a list of people to pull this together. Bill Tweit feels that a federal agency should lead this. Pat Stevenson says several tribes will be interested and he will assist in making a connection.

### Washington State Department of Transportation Weed Mapper Project

Ray Willard says the Department of Transportation is coordinating highway work with weed boards to map weed locations. He is working with field staff to make sure they get the right information. The discussion on this topic was tabled until Alison Halpern and others involved are present.

### Invasive Species Permits Update

Kathy Hamel says the Department of Ecology just reissued the Aquatic Plant and Algae Management permit, and there were no appeals. The Aquatic Invasive Species Management permit was issued on April 20, 2011. The appeal period ends on May 20, 2011. She is now working on the permit for noxious weeds, which should be released sometime in early 2012.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

### Keith Stavrum from Independent Shellfish Growers of Washington State

Mr. Stavrum commented on the shellfish aquaculture section of the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda. He requests that we not use pesticides near working farms. He is getting chemotherapy and has been told that chemicals in Willapa Bay caused his cancer. He wants the wording on the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist to be clear when discussing vegetation to be removed or altered. He wants to know if the green sturgeon is being considered when pesticides go in the water. It is on the federal endangered species list.

Kevin Anderson asked Mr. Stavrum to go to the Puget Sound Partnership website to comment on the Action Agenda. Rob Fimbel said that in the more detailed SEPA guidance there are clear details on vegetation.

### Fritzi Cohen

Ms. Cohen wants to know if the scientific community is looking at invasive species from a less aggressive standpoint. She says some scientists see invasive species as part of evolution and helpful to the

environment. She is concerned that there may be a knee jerk reaction to use pesticides because they are cheap and easy. She is concerned that we are further burdening the environment, especially in Willapa Bay. She is concerned with how pesticides used for invasive species might affect bees. She discussed a few different chemicals and why they were banned in other countries. She is concerned with how our approach towards invasive species and pesticides affects global warming. She read a quote “Genetics loads the gun, and the environment pulls the trigger.” She also shared that there is a new book called “Invasive Plant Medicine.” She feels invasive species have a purpose, and instead of just destroying them, we should use them in a positive way.

#### Steve Bova

Mr. Bova does not want all Spartina species and dune grasses eradicated. He is concerned with erosion and climbing water levels and feels it is still a good habitat for birds. He would like to see tax dollars used only for mechanical methods of removal. He also feels that money spent on treating invasive species would be better spent on education.

### **2011 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

#### Washington Invasive Species Council, House Bill 1413

Steve McLellan said this bill extended the life of the council to June 13, 2017. He saw tremendous support during the legislative process. This bill had unanimous passage by the legislature and will be signed by the governor. Chris thanked Steve McLellan, Kaleen Cottingham, Wendy Brown and other Recreation and Conservation Office staff for their hard work on this bill.

#### WDFW/Ecology Fees, Substitute Senate Bill 5036

This bill removes the sunset date on the vessel registration fee for invasive species and expands its use to non-native marine algae. The fact that this bill passed during a tough session shows the strong support for invasive species work.

#### Weed List, Substitute House Bill 1169

This bill requires specific guidelines, studies, and consideration of economics when deciding to list a species as a noxious weed. It becomes effective July 22, 2011.

### **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

#### Approval of February Minutes

Bill Tweit moved to **APPROVE** the February 17, 2011 minutes. Kevin Anderson **SECONDED**. The Council unanimously **APPROVED** the February 17, 2011 minutes.

#### Council Work plan

Wendy reviewed the current plan, including work continued from last year. All fact sheets for priority species have been written. They will be reviewed and then posted on the website by the end of June. The information clearinghouse, “WISE” website, will be online by the end of June. The Pacific Education Institute contract also ends in June. The firewood contract was extended through December.

### **COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

#### Approval of Council Elections

Wendy Brown moved to **APPROVE** Bill Tweit as council chair. Kathy Hamel **SECONDED**. The Council unanimously **APPROVED** Bill Tweit as council chair.

Wendy Brown moved to **APPROVE** Pene Speaks as council vice chair. Lisa Younger **SECONDED**. The Council unanimously **APPROVED** Pene Speaks as council vice chair.

Chris says he has enjoyed being a part of the council and is happy to see the council extended for several years. He will remain on the council as a participant.

## **BREAK**

### **PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP**

Kevin Anderson says that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided \$12 million to four Lead Organizations (LOs) in federal fiscal year 2010 and expects to provide an additional \$20 million to these groups in federal fiscal year 2011. The money will implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda. In FFY 2010, Lead Organizations set aside \$135,000 to manage invasive species. LOs prioritized management of the hull fouling pathway for year 1 marine and nearshore funds.

The Puget Sound Partnership is updating the Action Agenda this year. The Action Agenda is the Partnership's roadmap for cleaning up Puget Sound, and it will be a web-based, living document. They adopted 18 ecosystem recovery and pressure reduction targets to guide the strategies and actions of partner agencies and entities to protect and restore Puget Sound by 2020. The Partnership did not identify invasive species targets. This remains an option for future consideration. They have upcoming workshops on strategy setting. He would like council input by mid-June. The revised Action Agenda will be adopted in mid-December; the draft will be out for review by August.

The revised Action Agenda will catalog ongoing programs, identify enhancements to existing programs, and identify new programs to protect and restore Puget Sound, including work this council has been doing on education and outreach. The council has an important role to provide policy-level direction and planning needed to update the Action Agenda to manage invasive species in the basin. He also asked what science questions the council wants to answer to advance invasive species management. These questions will be addressed in the Puget Sound Partnership's biennial science work plan that is being updated on the same schedule as the Action Agenda. Kevin asked the council to identify which key strategies the Action Agenda should address to prevent and respond to invasive species in the Puget Sound basin.

### **Discussion**

- West coast standards for ballast water should be released by November, 2011. These efforts still need strong support at the state level. The standards follow the invasive species priorities in the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda.
- The near term actions in the current Action Agenda are somewhat sparse. A new approach would be to go back to the strategic goals from the council's *Invaders at the Gate* strategy.
- The council should be consistent in all of our messaging. We should continue with our strategy and priorities we have presented to the legislature. We need to build on our hard work.
- When they are focusing on marine and terrestrial, why are they looking at "new" issues and not current ones? Kevin says ongoing projects are just as important. This is a wording issue and not meant to show only prevention efforts.
- Long-term planning should be within 10 years; near-term should be within the next biennium.
- What is the process for deciding what will fit into the budget, should it be considered in our action items? Kevin says invasive species work will be continued in the Action Agenda no matter what.
- The council is happy with our list of short-term actions (from our timeline handout), so how do we bridge it into the Action Agenda? Kevin says we can include those actions as the near-term actions providing council agencies are willing to get behind the projects.
- What amount of funding do the four lead organizations and tribes have and are administrative costs included? Kevin says much of the money will go to nearshore projects and watershed. He does not know the overhead amounts.

- The goal is to make sure the information the council provides assists the Puget Sound Partnership in completing the Action Agenda. We need to look at projects that affect people's health, the economy and environment.

### **State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)**

Bill Tweit and Wendy were looking at whether we could work with the state SEPA group to incorporate invasive species into the SEPA process. Council staff made initial inquiries of possible coordination, and the SEPA group was welcoming. Bill and Wendy met with them, and they showed an example of how they have modified checklists in the past to work with preservation of historical properties. Changes to the SEPA checklist require legislative action. Another option is to provide invasive species information and instruction in the SEPA checklist guidance. The guidance is included with each checklist questionnaire and can suggest modifications to reduce risk. Our goal is to let them know what the issues are and what actions we recommend. The more complex part is what to do with the information they gather in the SEPA process.

### **Discussion**

It will be tricky to spot when a project increases risk (like bringing in fill soil) but does not focus on a specific species. How will they know there is something to look at that may need follow-up? The agencies will need to step up at this point. For example: "How far away will you get the gravel? How far are you moving it?" If agencies do not follow up, what is the point of asking for further information?

The information will raise the red flags so that the agencies know to step in. We need to be cautious about information overload. We do not want to make their job harder, we need to look at how to make it easier. We do not want the people filling it out to get checklist fatigue, rather we want them to know the information they are providing will be used in a good way.

The council may need to provide training on who to contact for more information. The SEPA checklist is not just for the agency review but may guide the project leads' actions if they realize "whoa, I should be careful about the gravel." The SEPA checklist will alert local coordinators, who may ask that gravel is sprayed before it is moved. Kathy Hamel, Wendy, Bill, Chris Christopher, Rob Fimbel and Randy (from Rob's office) will work on guidance questions and look at agency sources for information that comes from the checklist.

### **Emergency Response Memo of Understanding (MOU)**

Ray Willard is adapting the MOU for wildfires into one for invasive species, so there is something in place before a rapid response is required. We need to include how equipment, resources, liability and communication will be addressed. The protocol should be clear so everyone can just pull out the agreement and get started in an actual event. The MOU should give direction on how state, federal agencies and private property owners would work together.

### **Discussion**

- A shorter, two-page document will be more useful than a very large document.
- This MOU would fit in with QZAP. Agencies should have equal authority, much like QZAP.
- The MOU should be generic so it will work with many agencies and circumstances.
- It does not have to be perfect in the first draft, but we need to ensure that the right players are focused on invasive species and what needs to be done.
- Each agency will need its own specific preparedness beyond what is included in the generic MOU.

- There should be flexibility to know when to trigger a rapid response for specific species, and we should clarify what the trigger is for each agency.
- It is still unclear how federal agencies and tribes might fit into this. There may be something besides the fire MOU to use as an example, perhaps the oil spill MOU. Lisa Macchio will look at their agreements. Pat Stevenson says the Coast Guard has done a lot of work and tabletop exercises for oil spills and some of that can be used.

## **LUNCH**

### **COUNCIL RECOGNITION**

Bill Tweit thanked Chris Christopher for his leadership as council chair and presented him with a council gavel to show our appreciation. Chris spoke about his belief in the importance of invasive species work. Recognition was also given for the councils' continuing work with the passage of House Bill 1413. Chris recognized Bridget Moran and Clover Lockard for their early council work. Clover spoke about how much the council has accomplished.

### **ARUNDO DONAX IN OREGON UPDATE**

Lisa DeBruyckere explained how the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC) became involved with giant cane. On November 2010, Portland General Electric (PGE) gave a presentation about growing giant cane for biofuel at a statewide summit, and OISC discussed it with a panel of experts in February. A judge gave PGE approval to grow it within specific guidelines to prevent its spread. PGE must have an annual survey and coordinate with the OISC. If they stop production, they cannot leave any giant cane alive.

In April, PGE began planting in Morrow County, and they plan to expand to a second county. OISC is concerned that the bond amount is too small, based on similar projects. It may not be enough money to clean up the Columbia Basin if something goes wrong. Giant cane is on the "100 worst global invasive species list." PGE has followed the guidelines and has a draft control plan. The Oregon Department of Agriculture's legal counsel is reviewing everything. OISC wants Washington and Idaho to join in an advisory position.

This project is interesting because they must make the cane grow as well as possible for biofuel and be able to control it if something goes wrong. They are unsure of how this will affect local economies. PGE hopes to have enough biomass by 2012 or 2013 to test it in the Boardman plant. They need to pile this material outside the coal plant to prepare for the test. The U.S. Forest Service has strong concerns about this plant; it is very large, the rhizomes can get as large as a human thigh. Giant cane is a grass that grows much taller than an adult person. OISC will be commenting on the size of the bond and the control area. OISC has not taken an official stance since this is an experimental process. They want to weigh in where it will have the most impact. PGE is looking at how cane will grow at this latitude and how much water it needs. Cane is not listed on Oregon's invasive plant list because it has never been grown at that latitude, though some giant cane has been found in Oregon. They suspect feral swine spread it. They are not sure how it would grow in Washington's climate. Clinton Campbell says there are some giant cane populations in Yakima and possibly other places in Washington including private gardens as an ornamental plant. Experimental plantings in Walla Walla and at Washington State University's Prosser Station were removed.

### **Discussion**

- This could qualify as renewable energy depending on production. If the giant cane grows in sufficient quantity, PGE would convert the power plant by 2025. They do not think it will reproduce by seed, and they are not sure how it will reproduce in fertile soil, though it can grow in sand.

- It is being farmed in Florida and Texas. In Florida, they are growing it in a county that is already overwhelmed with invasive species.
- The 180-day comment period began in April. There should be more council discussion before we decide to comment on this project. PGE could give WISC a formal presentation.
- Do we want to do a joint letter with the Oregon council? What will the OISC letter discuss? It will discuss control area, size of bond, and distance from waterways at length.
- Mary Toohey says Washington State Department of Agriculture is a regulatory authority and this is a regulatory action. She is very concerned about the crop, but it is also good for the economy so a decision should not be made lightly.
- OISC feels giving comment during the comment period is separate from taking regulatory action.
- Washington has a weed and a quarantine list. Giant cane would likely fall on the quarantine list, but has not been designated yet. The Washington Department of Agriculture has jurisdiction over this issue. The Council should not submit testimony until we are ready to take a position on it.

WISC will send council representatives to OISC's field trip to the Boardman plant. The council should not do much on this issue until WSDA checks into it as a candidate for the quarantine list. WSDA and the Weed board will have representatives at the field tour and presentation in Oregon. Lisa Younger will attend for The Nature Conservancy.

#### **BASELINE ASSESSMENT NEXT STEPS**

Chris Christopher discussed the gaps found in the baseline assessment. The information is on the council website and electronically available. The Puget Sound Partnership will be interested in the web link. Some of the current gaps are in legislation and will need to be addressed during session in the coming years. Kevin said we could make closing these gaps near-term actions in the Action Agenda. We could use undergrad students to look into other species for the database. Recommendations in red should be on the shortlist and be prioritized. Lisa Macchio wonders if we should try to fund a baseline assessment on the rest of the Puget Sound species. Kevin Anderson agrees, but is unsure of how to fund it. We need to target gaps by giving agencies authority to work on fixing them. Wendy says another question is now that we have the baseline assessment, where do we go from here. Chris feels expanding it across the state and to the rest of the 50 priority species is important. Bill Tweit would like to do this from a vector standpoint instead of from an individual species standpoint, a vector might be fuels used for bio-fuel.

#### **Discussion**

- The council should have a press release about the baseline assessment.
- We have access to the GIS layers by species. To give people access to the shape files for GIS, we can have our people contact their people. It is not likely to be a large file and can be downloaded.
- If we are going to release the information, we should have a way to keep it updated. Presently, there are not financial resources to update it.
- The baseline is not a current snapshot, but a compilation of the last several years. This data layer is useful for many things.

## **OTHER PROJECT UPDATES**

### **Decontamination Protocol**

Wendy Brown received great comments from council review, and the council is ready to pass the decontamination protocols – now called prevention protocols – to the Natural Resources cabinet. To follow up with agencies and make sure this happens, the council will have a point person for each agency and will follow up with them. Wendy will let everyone know when this goes to the Natural Resource Cabinet, and draft letters will go to council members so that they can brief their directors.

### **Information Clearinghouse**

Lori Lawrence updated the council on the WISE website, which will be published soon. Bill Tweit asked if the council could do a news release about the baseline assessment and WISE website at the same time. U.S. Fish and Wildlife could also tweet about it.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Bill Tweit says we should have an update on Oregon Invasive Species Council and PNWER.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m. Chris thanked everyone for attending.

Next meeting:

September 15, 2011

Natural Resources Building

Room 172, Olympia, WA

Invasive Species Approval:

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Bill Tweit, Chair

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Date