

***INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL***

***MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING***

March 15, 2012

Room 172, WA State Natural Resources Building  
Olympia, Washington

---

**WASHINGTON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL (WISC) MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kevin Anderson	Puget Sound Partnership
Clinton Campbell	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Chris Christopher	Department of Transportation
Raquel Crosier	Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Doug Daoust	U.S. Forest Service
Rob Fimbel	WA State Parks and Recreation Commission
Kathy Hamel	Department of Ecology
Pene Speaks, Vice Chair	Department of Natural Resources
Pat Stevenson	Stillaguamish Tribe
Mary Toohey/Brad White	Washington State Department of Agriculture
Bill Tweit, Chair	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
Lisa Younger	The Nature Conservancy
Vicki Yund	U.S. Customs and Border Protection

**GUESTS AND PRESENTERS:**

Lizbeth Seebacher  
Margaret Tudor  
Rick Boatner  
Mick Cope  
Susan Piper

**STAFF:**

Wendy Brown  
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

---

**CONVENE AND WELCOME:**

Bill Tweit opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with welcome announcements and facility safety information, introductions, and a review of the agenda. He also introduced the new council members: Andrea LaTier (EPA), Mike Mackey (Chelan County), Lizbeth Seebacher (Ecology alternate), and returning member Rob Fimbel (State Parks). The public comment portion of the agenda was moved to the end of the meeting. If that is inconvenient for attendees, they can let staff know and an earlier time will be arranged.

**HOT TOPICS:**

**Infested Boat**

Allen Pleus shared information about a quagga mussel-infested houseboat intercepted in Idaho last week that was heading to Washington from Lake Mead. The infested boat eventually arrived in Olympia and was decontaminated at Swantown Marina. A news clip of the decontamination aired on King5 News. The definition of decontamination varies by state – it can mean just killing the mussels or it can mean removing them completely. If a shell is found in a waterway, it is difficult to know if they were alive or dead, and the

waterway would be closed or quarantined regardless. There are DNA tests to detect invasive species in waterways, and the shells can still emit DNA.

Allen shared some pictures from the inspection and showed that there was tissue left in the shells. The tissue can rehydrate when wet even after being dry for some time, so there was no way to know how long they had been out of the water. Each state has its strengths in the regional prevention effort. Washington is very good at decontamination. We usually get a controlled handoff from other states that have done the inspection; if a boat is heading to our waters then we are responsible for decontamination here. This recent boat had been checked in every state on the way here, so we were well informed about its arrival.

The incentive for self-reporting is that the driver will not be cited (\$500) and avoids a gross misdemeanor. There has been a targeted effort to educate commercial transport companies. The majority of fouled boats detected have come from commercial transports.

#### Ballast Water Meeting in Seattle

There will be more information about the ballast water meeting at the Council's June meeting. Permanent rules on treatment standards and enforcement should be released any day. These rules will assist in federal and regional cooperation. WDFW plans to develop a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard.

#### Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPPCC) Outreach to Lake Mead

Raquel Crosier has been making stakeholder calls to gain support for preventing zebra/quagga mussels from getting in our state water bodies. The NWPPCC has been asking for funding from Congressional delegates, tribes, and federal agencies and have been working with the 100<sup>th</sup> Meridian Group on distribution.

#### Japanese Eelgrass Permit

Kathy Hamel said eelgrass is found throughout Puget Sound and south to California. Japanese eelgrass has likely been here since the 1930's but was first documented in 1957. Given its similarity to our native eelgrass, Japanese eelgrass has been protected. Shellfish growers, however, have concerns that it could be a problem and asked the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board to list it as a noxious weed. The Weed Board did list the species as a Class C noxious weed on commercially-managed shellfish beds only.

Ecology had a public comment period to decide if a permit should be created for treating the eelgrass on shellfish beds. They received 56 public comments – 21 in favor of a permit and 35 against – which will be presented to management for a decision. If Ecology decides to write a permit, they will look carefully at how any allowable herbicides would affect native species and would likely restrict it to Willapa Bay.

#### Public Comment:

Robert Kavanaugh shared some documents about eelgrass. He has studied eelgrass around the world, has eaten eelgrass, and believes it to be a beneficial plant. He does not want to see it eradicated. He would like the science to be reviewed carefully.

#### Discussion:

- Shellfish growers can control Japanese eelgrass with mechanical methods.
- Shellfish growers are requesting to treat a portion of the shell beds chemically, not eradicate all of them. They are working to define commercial shellfish beds.
- Department of Agriculture has weighed in with the opinion that they are okay with Ecology moving forward with this permit.
- Bill Tweit would like updates as Ecology proceeds through this process and looks at the science.
- If there were any significant impacts, Ecology would pull the permit.

## NISAW

Wendy Brown is continuing to work with the PNWER Invasive Species regional work group. The next PNWER meeting is July 15-19, 2012 in Saskatchewan. Bill Tweit believes we are more effective as a council with greater regional collaboration.

## COUNCIL BUSINESS

### Action Item: Approval of December Minutes

Pene Speaks moved to **APPROVE** the December 1, 2011 minutes. Vicki Yund **SECONDED**. The Council unanimously **APPROVED** the December 1, 2011 minutes.

## PACIFIC EDUCATION INSTITUTE FINAL REPORT PRESENTATION

Margaret Tudor of Pacific Education Institute (PEI) gave a presentation on their final report, which is included in today's meeting packet. Their work focused on Puget Sound but has statewide applicability.

PEI investigated the species used in classroom science kits, developed protocols for their disposal, and developed invasive species curricula. On the science kit project, PEI staff worked closely with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Margaret reviewed the details of each of these projects and recommended that the council continue work with PEI on examining species used in kits, prepare a plan to replace the ones considered invasive, communicate best practices for disposal, and implement an invasive species campaign for project-based learning.

### Discussion:

- A council workgroup could address this issue and look at which species are regulated, which are misidentified, and which are in a grey area.
- The council could identify appropriate species for schools to purchase or appropriate places from which they could collect native equivalents.
- There are opportunities for close regional coordination on this issue – there are people in Oregon already working on this.
- The council could ask the nine regional science coordinators to be in charge of creating best practices for our review (through OSPI). The council would need to secure funding in order to implement a campaign on project-based learning. Some funding could come from OSPI professional development.
- There could be a “rewards campaign” for teachers working on this type of learning and awards for teachers doing the best job on invasives education (a plaque or certificate to the school and teacher).
- Teachers are compelled to reach “core competencies” required for students. We should look at how invasive species fits into that goal.
- The invasive species campaign could go through the conservation districts. The conservation districts have field guidelines and can work with teachers using those guidelines.

## **BREAK**

## SELECTING NEXT 15 PRIORITY SPECIES

Wendy reviewed the list of 15 priority species that were analyzed in the first baseline assessment project and a list of new species that have been suggested for the second project. She asked for Council feedback on the proposed list.

### Discussion:

- The council could add ISA salmon virus.
- The council should look at green crab especially for Puget Sound. Green crab has higher risk to our oysters than mitten crab.

- The council could look at “dead man’s fingers” marine algae, which is becoming a big issue on the east coast.
- Does the council want education for things not yet here? Should we look at the priority list only or species we have a lot of information on? How does the council want to prioritize? The council should be able to add to the priority list as we learn about new issues.
- The main criterion is that we add value by putting a species on that list, even if it is just heightening awareness.
- The list should work with multiple audiences and be kept in front of the legislature.
- Knotweed is a good example of a species where there is so much work already that we may not get added value by putting it on the list. However, many people asked why knotweed was not included in the first baseline assessment.
- There is value in a dynamic list, but the council should not drop or ignore species without a reason.
- The council can combine purple/garden loosestrife and do the same with the two crabs, clumping similar species.
- If the council adds butterfly bush, it should clarify that not all butterfly bush species are invasive.
- The council should be specific as to the type of marine clam and should have a dynamic list, so we can address an invasive species that suddenly shows up. The council should get the best bang for the buck by looking for species that share habitat types or life-stages.
- The council could remove tansy ragwort because they already get so much coverage.
- There were criteria used for the first 50 species and we are constantly going to be confronted with new species. If time permits, that criteria should be examined. It should lead us to a firm list, right now it looks like council members are advocating for different species. If the criteria work, Wendy could just come up with the next list based on it.

## **LUNCH**

### **FERAL PIGS IN TEXAS, HOW BAD CAN IT GET (WEBINAR)?**

Wendy shared a webinar designed for local landowners, about the pig problem in Texas. The webinar explains pig impacts and history and provides the council with a broader understanding of the issue. Texas has \$50 million in damage to agriculture pastureland alone each year. There is also vehicle damage, recreational field damage, and suburban yard damage. They eat roots, tubers, and grubs so they root in the soil. There are also ecological impacts to many native plants and species. It is estimated that pigs can be found in 46 states and many Canadian providences. Wild pigs have the highest reproductive rate of all mammals. Left unchecked, populations double every 5 years. There are 2.6 million feral pigs estimated in Texas.

### **FERAL PIGS IN OREGON**

Rick Boatner from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife gave a presentation on wild pigs in Oregon.

#### Presentation Notes:

- Hunters can hunt them freely and are a big help in controlling them.
- Feral swine are a walking disease factory.
- They cause large areas of damage.
- They can attack cows and sheep and eat eggs from ground-dwelling birds.
- Harvest rate by hunters is only 50% of the tags. Traps are a common tool. Corral traps seem most effective, but pigs (generally boars) can jump out. Trail cameras allow you to monitor these traps.
- In Oregon, the pigs belong to the landowner, but OFW monitors the catches. Sometimes they put collars (actually a harness, since pigs do not have necks) on the sows and release them (the “Judas” pig operation) so they can track sounders. It works well for aerial hunting and gunning; pigs will outrun you on the ground. Collars have lo-jack or satellite systems.
- If the pigs move into the Willamette Valley, there will be huge damage to the grass seed industry.

- The pigs are damaging restoration project lands, so that has led some of the focus in Oregon. Oregon Fish and Wildlife loans traps to landowners and teaches them how to use them. They also work with conservation districts. There is high demand for this sport among hunters.
- Mild winters make pig populations explode. Currently Oregon does not keep track of pigs harvested. They do not have to be reported by hunters because they are a predatory animal.
- They need a better definition of “confinement” for pigs in their state.

Allen Pleus asked if there was any pushback from the public on eradicating pigs. Rick feels most of the public does not believe the pigs exist yet.

### **PIGS IN WASHINGTON, A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Mick Cope is from the Montesano office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The current population of wild pigs in Washington is largely unknown. They have been reported in the Olympic Peninsula and Grays Harbor and have been spotted in other places like Cheney and Rainier, but sometimes these end up being pigs on farms. Last fall, a juvenile wild pig (about 30 pounds) was hit by an RV and brought in to the Montesano office. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is committed to removing any pigs found. Hunting will not be enough if there is a big population.

### **USFS FERAL PIG RISK ASSESSMENT**

Susan Piper from the Wildlife Botany and Invasive Plant Program, Olympic Forest, U.S. Forest Service is presenting for Shawna Batista, who was unable to attend. Susan believes reports of pigs in the national forests are currently folklore; but they are set on eradication if there is any sign of them. Two years ago, they did a survey with USDA - APHIS on Washington and Oregon forests, looking at biology and risks. There are seven national forests in Washington, but only a couple are considered to be high risk for pigs, including the Olympic Forest and Mt. St. Helens. The Forest Service has developed a draft action plan for early detection and rapid response. USDA - APHIS has the authority to do removal on public lands and nationally has an environmental impact statement. They are looking into the NEPA process to be sure they are prepared. They are also looking at other removal options and plan to work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. They hope to have a final plan late spring or early summer.

- They have surveillance cameras out for other species that can also be used for early detection of wild pigs.
- Pigs can swim the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington, but the biggest risk is for pigs to be “trailed” in by people. Outreach is the most effective prevention for Washington.
- Washington should get rules in place ahead of schedule so we are not reacting after the fact, and the state should address confinement rules. Most people are not realistic about removal of pigs. It can take 3-5 years to remove large populations because of the area a pig can cover.
- WSDA has a definition for feral pigs. All European varieties and javelinas, whether confined or not, are to be eradicated in Washington to prevent disease.

### **REPORT-A-PIG OUTREACH PROJECT**

Wendy Brown said Idaho has reported a small population of wild pigs near Boise. Oregon has feral pigs, but we are not sure if we do in Washington. They have been reported occasionally in places such as Aberdeen, Stevenson, and Rainier, but we have not found evidence of any established populations. Pigs are not considered wildlife in Washington, so you can shoot them if you want. The Report-a-Pig Outreach Campaign will be a 3-state effort (OR, WA, ID) like the firewood campaign. There is a call center already set up. The goal is to educate the public about threats, provide information and launch the campaign in April with press releases, radio stations, and local newspapers. The council would need cooperation with State Parks and other agencies to get messaging out.

- Outreach messages should be about damage and consequences. Disease prevention will also get people’s attention.

- We also need to look at released pets, domestic pigs released for hunts, and ear tag/notching issues for the pork industries.
- The council could collaborate with agriculture growers, other interest groups, and the state veterinarian.
- There could be outreach messaging at Cabela's about how pigs ruin other hunting.
- There is solid evidence in Texas about problems between deer and pigs. Oregon landowners are complaining about less elk with pigs but there is not any science behind it yet.
- Messaging could be added to the hunting pamphlet. Hunters are the best eyes in the field.
- The council could talk to Salmon recovery groups about the danger to riparian zones. Pigs also attack prairies and camas root. The camas-eating issue might also be of huge importance to tribes.
- The beauty of "report-a-pig" is that anyone can identify one; it is not confusing like other species.

**ZEBRA/QUAGGA DISCUSSION CONTINUED**

Chris Christopher says we could write a letter to the Governor's office about the specific problem and ask for some key things to happen such as federal investment around lakes on the lower Colorado River, mandatory checkpoint locations, and funding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for inspection and decontamination. Raquel Crosier says Phil Rockefeller has also been working on this, and the NWPC has been keeping the governor's office up to date on the issue. They are sending a letter to request money for Lake Mead. Washington is requesting six check stations, but they are not sure now is the time to fund \$30 million to set these up. They are looking for other funding sources, like stakeholders for hydropower and utilities.

**Discussion:**

- The council should look at what can be done in the current year with current resources.
- How will the council come up with those five or so recommendations? A workgroup or regional coordination group?
- Border check stations need to be combined with other states.
- The NWPC has a strong interest in this and wants to support the work of the 100<sup>th</sup> Meridian Initiative.
- The council will send a letter supporting the NWPC and include near term recommendations.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There was no additional public comment during this time.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m. Bill thanked everyone for attending.

Next meeting:

June 14, 2012

Natural Resources Building

Room 172, Olympia, WA

Invasive Species Approval:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Tweit, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date