

INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING

December 1, 2011

Room 175, WA State Natural Resources Building
Olympia, Washington

WASHINGTON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL (WISC) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Clinton Campbell	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Chris Christopher	Washington Department of Transportation
Raquel Crosier	Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Alison Halpern	Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board
Lisa Macchio	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Tom McDowell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Chris Parsons	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
Pene Speaks, Vice Chair	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Pat Stevenson	Stillaguamish Tribe
Brett Thompson	U.S. Coast Guard
Bill Tweit, Chair	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mary Toohey/Brad White	Washington Department of Agriculture
Lisa Younger	The Nature Conservancy
Vicki Yund	U.S. Customs and Border Protection

GUESTS AND PRESENTERS:

Richard Little
Teagan Ward
Ray Willard

STAFF:

Wendy Brown
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

CONVENE AND WELCOME:

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

HOT TOPICS:

Ballast Water Update

Bill Tweit explained that the ballast water program had been funded with state general fund dollars, but those funds are removed in the Governor's current budget fixes. The alternative is to fund the program with the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. Regarding a ballast water fee, there is concern that with fees shippers may bypass Seattle's ports and go to Portland or Canada, but Oregon and California are already charging fees. Each port has its own challenges and possibilities and fees should be a very small factor. Chris Parsons would like to argue for uniformity in interstate commerce by possibly looking at federal options.

Capitol Lake

There will be a drawdown of the lake today to freeze New Zealand mud snails. Drawdowns will continue throughout the winter, when possible, to control the population.

PNWER Update

Following the PNWER meeting in July, a work plan was developed to begin working more regionally and a workgroup was created to start completing the tasks in the work plan. Currently, they are writing a white paper on the economic impacts of invasive species in the region. Washington has provided Spartina data. Idaho is taking a lead on invasive species education for state legislators. The next PNWER summit will be in July 2012, in Saskatchewan, Canada. PNWER is a good opportunity for regional and federal invasive species collaboration. Wendy will continue to participate on the workgroup and possibly attend the July PNWER meeting.

SEPA Update

Wendy is working with the Department of Ecology on invasive species revisions to the SEPA guidance. The draft guidance should be complete by the end of December. Wendy will send out a copy of the guidance to the council when it is complete. Our council's annual report is due December 15, 2011, and this council action will be included in the report for the Legislature. The council could work with the Department of Commerce to add the invasive species guidance to development regulations for city and county ordinances.

The Vetiver Grass Incident

Pene Speaks received a call from an east-coast consultant who was developing a vegetation plan for the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. The consultant was looking at grasses used for erosion control and wanted to know if the vetiver grass would be okay to use in Washington. Pene did some research online and learned that, once planted, the grass has very deep roots and is difficult to remove. Pene discouraged the consultant from including it in the plan. Being a Navy project, it will not have state review, but would instead go through National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. Pene will speak with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife regarding this project. To prevent similar issues, NEPA staff at the EPA could receive updated invasive species training. Following up with the council's federal agency members is a good idea. Pene and Wendy offered to organize a conference call with the appropriate staff at each agency.

2011 Weed Listings and New Web Site

The Weed Board had a hearing on November 1, 2011, on changes to the noxious weed list. The approved changes include: Oriental clematis as a "class A" weed, Tree of Heaven as a "class C" weed, and Japanese eel grass as a "class C" weed on commercially-managed shellfish beds only. The Weed Board also updated the Washington Administrative Code with current information about the listing process and guidelines. The new website, www.nwcb.wa.gov, has been launched, though there are some problems with displaying the website on Apple web browsers. They added a new search tool to assist with plant identification. Currently there are 143 species in the database. They will soon add some weed look-alikes. They will also add the quarantine and monitor list species. The monitor pages will be interactive to allow for reporting sightings.

WSDOT Weed Mapper Program

Ray Willard is working to connect best practices and management with the WSDOT maintenance field crews. They have 24 maintenance areas each with its own vegetation maintenance plan. The plans are seasonal to correspond with vegetative cycles. An interactive map to identify special constraints in each area will go online this year. They will coordinate with county weed boards annually. They also have a prescription database for operators to confirm they are using the correct herbicides. They are trying to be as open and transparent as possible for herbicide use. By implementing these plans, they have reduced herbicide use by 70%. We will link this web page to the invasive species council web site.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Action Item: Approval of September Minutes

Pene Speaks moved to **APPROVE** the September 15, 2011 minutes. Vicki Yund **SECONDED**. The Council unanimously **APPROVED** the September 15, 2011 minutes.

Mike Mackey, Chelan County Noxious Weed Coordinator, will be joining WISC in 2012 as a new member from the east side of the state. Wendy will take suggestions and follow up on adding a new member from the west side of the state.

UPDATE ON TRAINING PROTOCOLS

Bill Tweit received a call from Regional Fishery Enhancement Group (RFEG) staff regarding protocols. He gave a presentation at their meeting and shared Fish and Wildlife's decontamination protocols, as well as the Invasive Species Council's baseline assessment work. Bill will share the RFEG presentation with Wendy. They feel they have the basic message of "Clean, Drain, Dry." Bill has many brochures and outreach materials about "Clean, Drain, Dry" for anyone who needs them.

BREAK

REGIONAL COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

Bill Tweit and Wendy Brown shared a draft handout showing options for collaborating with Idaho and Oregon. Some of the options include:

Feral Swine

As far as we know in Washington, we have feral swine, but it is not a big problem yet. Having a three-state push on education and outreach may open us up for other funding and grant opportunities and could tie into efforts such as protecting salmon recovery areas. Wendy feels we should start having conversations with the Farm Bureau and began informal education to reach out to partners on this issue. Pigs have a lot of public engagement potential (compared to plants and bugs). Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement officers may be good partners. Please send any suggestions for partners and outreach to Wendy.

Regional Invasive Species Hotline

Wendy discussed having a three-state regional hotline number with the Oregon and Idaho invasive species coordinators, but the coordinators all agreed that the logistics make this very difficult to accomplish. They will continue the discussion at PNWER meetings. They also discussed a three-state action plan, but there was not a lot of interest unless it is brought to PNWER and includes Canada.

Regional Vector Messaging

Regional messaging on vectors like firewood is a good idea and worked well for the "Don't Move Firewood" program. Other possible vector messaging could be for the pet trade, farmers and others releasing domestic animals, or teaching about avoiding bucket biology. There are some problems with anglers purchasing fish species on the web and putting them in their own private ponds, which is illegal, and adds to the spread of invasive species. This could be handled with broader messaging around "think before you bring in something new."

Discussion

This is a chance to spread more positive/proactive messages "look and tell" vs. "don't do something," allowing us to appeal to the public for help instead of sending a message that we want to stop them from doing things. Wendy will continue looking into this with the other states. The states could work together on risk assessments or on a regional management assessment. We could open the assessments up to the

academic community as a chance to partner. The council can reconvene the top 50 invasive species workgroup and have them suggest partners for further risk assessments. It would be more efficient to do these assessments regionally than to have each state do their own. We are already collaborating with other states on QZap.

LUNCH

ASIAN CLAMS IN LAKE WHATCOM

Teagan Ward from Whatcom County gave an update on the Asian clam invasion in Lake Whatcom – a lake that provides drinking water for 95,000 people in Whatcom County. County staff are monitoring invasive species around the lake and working to prevent new species from entering their water. They have an invasive species plan in place and are working on education by conducting boater surveys and boat check demonstrations. Asian clams are native to Asia, Australia, and the eastern Mediterranean. They were first discovered on the Columbia River in Washington in 1938. They alter nutrient cycles and out-compete native species. They can release phosphorous while burrowing, which is a concern in Lake Whatcom. There are three well-established colonies at high-use recreation areas in Lake Whatcom and two smaller colonies in Lake Padden and Whatcom Creek. Lake Whatcom staff are working with staff at Lake Tahoe and Lake George on response options for Asian clams.

There is public concern for the drinking water, and this issue has brought about a lot of public education that may not have happened otherwise. Lake Whatcom staff have worked with Western Washington University on water monitoring since the 1960's and would like to incorporate some of the invasive species monitoring into some of the existing water monitoring. Their invasive species prevention planning assisted in finding this Asian clam infestation. It would be helpful to have an invasive species list for species other than plants. They are still looking for funding for invasive species response.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Bill Tweit went over the 2012 work plan handouts reviewing which actions were started and which have been completed. He asked the council what they feel the biggest needs are to prioritize for 2012.

Council Discussion

- A group could work on a handbook that defines the responsibilities of the different agencies, including a rapid response plan around pigs for 2012 and then branching out to other species. This will help us see what needs to be addressed. We may have had trouble moving forward in the past because it was too broad of a concept. Starting with pigs may be more useful than starting a top 50 species workgroup again.
- For recommendation #5 in the strategy, enhancing our ability to rapidly respond, we could look at the funding issue and what pots of funds are available. We should also determine what resources exist within agencies (e.g., programs, staffing).
- Our strategic plan is five years old. We need to focus on the parts of the strategic plan that are still current, including the need for outreach and strengthening our coordination with tribes and private entities. Many items on the work plan are really about coordination. The executive committee could review work plan information and refresh the list. We can look at what has been done, what is core ongoing work, and then decide what we need to focus on.
- One unfinished item in 2011 was writing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between agencies to clarify invasive species response. We could combine this with our pig outreach, or we could drop the MOU and just have a response plan. The MOU has no real authority attached to it and may just need to be a flow chart of action-oriented steps. The work plan needs to be our task list. We began work on this with our “are we ready to respond” papers.

- WISC can work with the other states on common educational outreach materials for pigs and common flowering rush. Continuing PNWER efforts should remain high on the list. Flowering rush could just be a species that we put on our regional monitoring list, while feral swine becomes the poster child of 2012. Currently flowering rush is not on our website at all, one action plan could be to re-examine our top 50 list. Distribution of some species has changed since our list was created. We may just need to edit the list or add to it..
- WISC needs to keep information useful, but also needs to look at what is possible in 2012 in the current budget climate. The council may want to focus on items visible to the public and constituents this year so we have quantifiable results. We need to keep the council website from getting stale.
- WISC can look at NEPA this year with our federal member agencies. We can use the completed SEPA document as a model.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no public comment today.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m. Bill thanked everyone for attending.

Next meeting:

March 15, 2012

Natural Resources Building

Room 172, Olympia, WA

Invasive Species Approval:

Bill Tweit, Chair

Date