

# WASHINGTON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2020

Online Meeting

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## Invasive Species Council Members Present:

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Ray Willard, Chair	Washington State Department of Transportation
Blain Reeves, Vice Chair	Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Joe Maroney, Vice Chair	Kalispel Tribe of Indians
Pat Stevenson	Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians
Andrea Thorpe	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
Todd Murray	Washington State University
Pat DeHaan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Heidi McMaster	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Anna Lyon	Okanogan County
Kendall Farley	Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Ian Sinks	Columbia Land Trust
Karen Ripley	U.S. Forest Service
Steve Burke	King County
Brad White	Washington State Department of Agriculture
Ahren Stroming	Puget Sound Partnership
Lizbeth Seebacher	Washington Department of Ecology
Clinton Campbell	United States Department of Agriculture
Allen Pleus	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Luca Furnare	U.S. Custom and Border Protection
Mary Fee	Washington Noxious Weed Control Board
Shaun Seaman	Chelan County Public Utility District

## Guests:

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Sven-Erik Spichiger	Washington State Department of Agriculture
Karla Salp	Washington State Department of Agriculture

## Recreation and Conservation Office Staff:

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Justin Bush	Executive Coordinator
Wyatt Lundquist	Board Liaison
Julia McNamara	Administrative Assistant
Alexis Haifley	Community Outreach & Environmental Education Specialist

## Opening and Welcome

**Chair Ray Willard**, Department of Transportation, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed participants and viewers to the new webinar platform. **Wyatt Lundquist**, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Board Liaison, summarized etiquette for the webinar-based council meeting followed by roll call and quorum determination.

**Motion:** Approval of June 17, 2020 Agenda

**Moved by:** Member Thorpe

**Seconded by:** Member Sinks

**Decision:** **Approved**

**Motion:** Approval of March 2020 Minutes

**Moved by:** Member Lyon

**Seconded by:** Member Maroney

**Decision:** **Approved**

Following the motions, Chair Willard spoke to unprecedented challenges everyone is facing in light of COVID-19 and how this in turn affects the interagency approach to preventing and stopping invasive species. He encouraged everyone to remember the great progress and successes of the council over the past year and expressed his thanks for the remarkable work of Justin Bush and the entire RCO team. He presented photos of the Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC) 2019 events and commended the council for the work they had done and spoke highly about the future work of the council.

## Item 1 Executive Coordinator's Report

**Justin Bush**, WISC Executive Coordinator, gave an update on WISC staff activities from the past quarter, noting the high level of productivity, even in the face of COVID-19. From the numerous meetings and events that WISC staff had attended or convened, Mr. Bush highlighted the April 14, Northwest Power and Conservation Council, Aquatic Invasive Species Response Panel meeting. Eric Anderson, WDFW, presented and Member Kendall Farley served as the facilitator. Mr. Bush also highlighted the May 15<sup>th</sup> initial meeting of the Oregon and Washington port interception work group. The meeting purpose was to establish a response action plan that would highlight locations

and points of contact if or when a port interception occurred. The work group was made up of 22 members, including state and federal agencies. Together, the working group will increase interagency capabilities to quickly and effectively respond to new invasive species found at ports.

The two events that Mr. Bush highlighted included The Great Scotch Broom Census that occurred the entirety of May and the three-day Scotch Broom Ecology and Management Symposium that began on June 2. Through the iNaturalist app and the WA Invasive app, Mr. Bush relayed that there was a total of 1,102 Scotch broom reports collected throughout Washington state. Through this data, environmental agencies working to combat the invasive species will now have a better idea of how widespread it is, and the negative economic effects Scotch broom can have. Notably, some reports caused removal action in addition to discussion about new volunteer-based groups to control Scotch broom where it is widespread. Following the census was the educational Scotch Broom Symposium where over 300 people per day learned about new research on impacts and management and collaborated to highlight and share successful models for combatting Scotch broom.

While the invasive species outreach using social media continues to increase, Mr. Bush relayed that this last quarter increased significantly due to the Scotch broom events and the public's response to the Asian giant hornet. Mr. Bush expressed that there was a 28 percent increase in Facebook followers, a 19 percent increase in Instagram followers, and an increase of 70 followers on Twitter.

Concerning sighting reports via the [InvasiveSpecies.wa.gov](https://www.invasivespecies.wa.gov) website and the WA Invasive app, there were 1,316 reported sightings of invasive species, with the majority being Scotch broom. Even with that majority, Mr. Bush explained that the animal and diseases reports from this quarter alone were higher than 2019's reports combined—highlighting that outreach about a common noxious weed was instrumental in raising awareness of all invasive species. A few of the reports included what was thought to be an Asian giant hornet, feral swine, and alligator gar. Mr. Bush also featured an American bullfrog outreach poster created by a first grader named Ranger Rivard from Ellensburg, WA after viewing the council's school lesson plans online.

Closing his update, Mr. Bush reported council business. WISC staff reached out to the Washington State Association of Counties to collect nominations for a council member representing counties east of the Cascade Mountains, as Member Lyon with Okanogan County will be stepping down from WISC. Due to the low response to the early June deadline, WISC staff reached out directly to county staff and extended the deadline to June 22, 2020. Mr. Bush also reported that a legislative request will be made for council

reauthorization, as the current sunset dates within RCW 79A.25.310 is June 30, 2022. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) hopes to extend the council into 2032 and are currently seeking letters of support.

## **Item 2: Invasive Species Program COVID-19 Adaptations**

**Chair Willard** invited each present council member to give a two-minute report of agency operation adaptations made due to COVID-19. The reports were based on the following four prompts:

1. Challenges presented by COVID-19 to invasive species programs.
2. Program adaptations considering COVID-19 challenges.
3. Notable successes or lessons learned.
4. Financial implications of COVID-19 to programs.

Overall, it was found that many of the agencies were experiencing the same challenges. Agencies struggled to find clear guidance concerning field work and field work training, which lead to projects being left undone or slowed. For those that did receive guidance, there were adaptations to the number of individuals that could be in a vehicle together for travel, how closely people could work together in the field, and much of the time, masks had to be worn. While the adaptations are positive and help continue work, they have inevitably caused work to become less efficient.

Financially speaking, the members relayed that state agencies had received 15 percent general fund reductions and hiring freezes. Alongside those funding reductions implemented by the Office of Financial Management (OFM), agencies will also face a reduction of funding's through the Discover Pass, gas tax, park closures, and other revenue sources.

Concluding, Chair Willard expressed that one of the best lessons learned through this time was the council member's abilities to communicate and collaborate remotely using technology. He relayed that the long term financial implications surrounding COVID-19 will be the most difficult challenge facing our country and suggested that there may be an opportunity for the federal government to create a conservation- based public work program similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s..

## **Item 3: Early Detection & Rapid Response to Invasive Species**

**Justin Bush** gave a high-level overview of Early Detection and Rapid Response report created with the assistance of WISC's former intern, Daphne Condon. Through this internship, Ms. Condon studied the Incident Command System (ICS) and made strong network connections that would benefit her future. During her five months of work on

the report from December 2019 through April 2020, Mr. Bush relayed that Ms. Condon reviewed more than 28 publications concerning ICS and invasive species response and collaborated with the WISC and other subject matter experts to distill best practices. These interviews and discussions lead to the April 8<sup>th</sup> recorded webinar where 17 agency members and agency staff watched Ms. Condon present her work.

Following his briefing, Ms. Bush welcomed questions and discussion from the council. Member Ian Sinks commended the document as clearly and well written, with different perspectives that the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) could apply. Furthermore, Member Sinks asked how to differentiate when ICS was applicable and when it was not. Mr. Bush addressed the question, relaying that there was disagreement on how to apply ICS to any biological situation, whether it is a disease or an invasive species, as people tend to get lost in the structure of the system, sometimes leading to less than desirable outcomes.

Member Burke also commented, expressing that the document contains actionable procedures that can be applied with an assortment of invasive species. In continuation, Member Stevenson expressed that the WISC should consider creating an ICS chain of command for specific invasive species. Closing, Chair Willard suggested presenting this document at different conferences, such as the Washington State Weed Conference where a workshop could be convened.

**Motion:** Approval of Public Deployment of the Early Detection and Rapid Response to Invasive Species Document.

**Moved by:** Member Ripley

**Seconded by:** Member Lyon

**Decision:** Approved

#### **Item 4: Columbia River Alligator Gar Detection**

**Member Allen Pleus** gave a briefing concerning the two alligator gar caught in the Columbia river on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Member Pleus explained that the fish were caught by two licensed carp fishermen who released the specimens in accordance with their license and reported their finding to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). A staff member from WDFW's Aquatic Invasive Species unit explored the situation further determining that the report was credible. Member Pleus relayed that response efforts to capture the specimens were completed by the Yakama Nation as well as the Department of Interiors United States Geological Survey. Unfortunately, no specimens were collected, but it was likely that this was only a one-time release made by a pet

owner. Mr. Pleus also noted that there is a risk that intentionally released pets will also introduce parasites and disease.

As a result of the reporting, Mr. Pleus explained that WDFW modified commercial carp permits to mandate the retainment of alligator gar and northern pike. This modification addressed this policy gap, enabling permittees to retain future captured alligator gar.

### Item 5: European Green Crab Emergency Measures

**Member Allen Pleus** displayed a summary of European Green Crab (EGC) management and highlighted that COVID-19 had caused trapping difficulties, with difficulty varying with each different entity. Member Pleus described a timeline beginning with February when Governor Inslee requested emergency measures concerning EGC. These emergency measures led to the legislature giving \$780,000 to WDFW. Nearly half of this money was devoted toward agreements with the Washington Sea Grant, the Lummi Nation, and the Makah Tribe.

Mr. Pleus relayed that, shortly after receiving funding, on March 23, WDFW moved toward teleworking as COVID-19 cases rose in the state, but as of May 18<sup>th</sup> some staff were able to work in the field again. This led to the hiring of two field interns for Drayton Harbor who would assist with EGC capturing. Because of the general fund reduction and hiring freezes placed on state agencies by OFM, the remaining three intended interns were not able to be hired until the WDFW Aquatic Invasive species requested a hiring freeze waiver in June. As of the second week of July, these newly trained field interns will be able to enter the field and begin working.

WDFW had also been working with the Washington Coast Marine Resources Advisory Council to establish policy coordination for coastal work, but the implementation rate of this type of work has been slowed significantly.

In recent events, Member Pleus relayed that WDFW had authorized Northwest Straits Commission's green crab coordinator to do EGC work and DNR had also released some staff for the same purpose.

Closing, Member Pleus displayed the following chart depicting the number of EGC captures:

Salish Sea	2019 Captures	2019 CPUE*	2020 Captures (as of June 1)	2020 CPUE* (as of June 1)
Drayton Harbor	38	8.5	40	18.2
Lummi Bay	64	26.7	21	5.1
Dungeness Spit	57	2.3	2	0.2

Other Salish Sea Region	4 (10**)	0.10	0 (4**)	0
<b>Coastal</b>				
Makah Bay	1,441	60.0	279	89.3
Willapa Bay	177	N/A	>50 (est)	N/A
Grays Harbor	151	N/A	< 50 (est)	N/A

Member Pleus clarified that capture numbers had increased since June 1, 2020. Further information concerning ECG can be found in Member Pleus' memo.

When opened to discussion, Member Seaman moved the discussion back toward the alligator gar concerning outreach to commercial and recreational fishermen for the collection permits. Member Pleus explained that outreach had been done through local media in the Columbia Basin area and that WDFW's new fish pamphlet also relayed the permit information.

#### **Item 6: Asian Giant Hornet Response Update**

**Sven-Erik Spichiger**, Washington State Department of Agriculture, gave a briefing concerning the Asian Giant Hornet (AGH) after announcing that the U.S. Department of Agriculture Plant Protection Act Section 7721 funding suggestion period would be open in July. He also announced that Asian longhorn beetle was found in South Carolina and notified the council that there is a state regulatory gap concerning the honeybee law which lists only mites as predators.

When giving the program update on AGH, Mr. Spichiger covered the response funding and resources, the work plan summary, current pest status, program progress and a research update.

Mr. Spichiger explained that Washington State, the federal government, and Otis Laboratory had provided funding for the program: the state provided \$100,000 toward FY 20 and 21, the federal government provided \$321,987 worth of funding that would last through April 30, 2021, and Otis Lab also provided a modest amount of funding toward the program for trap and lure trials. Mr. Spichiger also relayed that the WSDA would be applying for further funding through the Plant Pest Act 7721 categories 6, 5 and 3.

While project funding is essential, Mr. Spichiger also recognized the importance of citizen scientists, community participation, and cooperative assistance by different state agencies which have helped cover more ground and establish over 400 traps.

Mr. Spichiger relayed that, to assist with the work plan, the WSDA had hired two agricultural technicians for survey and nest removal, one agricultural aide for trapping, one agricultural technician for survey processing, and one outreach coordinator.

When addressing surveying, Mr. Spichiger explained that WSDA crews were using a one kilometer by one-kilometer delimiting grid when setting traps. For areas with known detections, WSDA crews are searching within eight kilometers of distance. Within the grids, there will be a total of 594 traps that will need servicing weekly. State agency cooperators had promised to hang over 96 traps and the public will be hanging approximately 349 traps within Whatcom, Skagit, Clallam, Jefferson, Island, and San Juan counties.

If a trap collects a worker hornet, then WSDA will put its Nest Location and Removal Protocol into action. To determine the best way to locate nests, WSDA and Washington State University have been catching live yellow jackets and tracking them back to their nest. Once an AGH nest is generally located, Mr. Spichiger explained that the crews will go back at night and use thermal imagery to determine the exact location to avoid disturbing the nest. After the exact location is determined, the area will be restricted, and Tempo 1%® dust will be deployed to eradicate the hornets. All of this will be completed with safety precautions, including wearing a specialized protective suit that is too thick for the hornet's stinger to penetrate.

Mr. Spichiger noted that three specimens had been collected in 2020, two in Washington and one from Langley, British Columbia (BC). The captured specimens' DNA matches DNA of AGH in South Korea and Japan. While there are few confirmed specimens, there have been over 1,925 public reports coming from Washington, other US states and BC; 735 of these reports were negative, 1,154 were unverifiable and 30 remain unprocessed.

Concerning the overall program, most personnel had been hired, survey and eradication protocols had been completed, the environmental reviews were currently open for public comment, outreach was in progress, two queens have been destroyed and traps had begun being deployed.

Closing, Mr. Spichiger explained that during testing, sap traps were ineffective, but different lure traps were being tested.

### **Item 7: Asian Giant Hornet Communication Update**

**Karla Salp**, WSDA, gave an update on the WSDA communications team AGH outreach. Ms. Salp relayed that the AGH webpage has grown significantly since the last WISC



meeting. It included new web pages, new documents targeted toward specific groups, and new videos such as one made in collaboration with WISC staff in February. Ms. Salp highlighted a page of significance, which displayed different insects that the public may misconstrue as an AGH. The page also features a true AGH for comparison.

Ms. Salp expressed that the AGH had gained a lot of public attention due to the New York Times in-field interview that occurred on April 23, with the article running on May 2 using the term "murder hornets" in its headline. This term went viral, leading to more AGH reporting, interview requests from the media, and a greater social media/ website following to the WSDA's accounts. Ms. Salp reported that in May, 90,000 people visited the hornet webpage, WSDA had received 150 media requests, that more than 5,000 Facebook followers joined the WSDA AGH watch group, and that social media posts had reached over 1.2 million individuals.

Alongside the trapping postcards sent out to Whatcom County and Port Townsend area, Ms. Salp's team is also working on radio ads as means of outreach.

Concerning lessons learned, Ms. Salp relayed that her team had performed a virtual press conference, which was recorded and posted to YouTube for the first time. This new process was helpful in avoiding one off interviews with similar discussion. Ms. Salp also learned to pick a single agency point of contact for media interviews, to coordinate and to communicate, develop an issue-specific media contact list, and to create a communicators group of stakeholders and other agency points of contact.

Closing, Ms. Salp relayed that WSDA would be pushing information out to encourage citizen scientists to trap and report. WSDA will also relay outreach concerning proper AGH identification as to not kill native species such as bumblebees.

When opened to discussion, Chair Willard relayed how impressed he was with the public attention to AGH and WSDA communications. Member Sinks also asked about high-risk areas for AGH spread, to which Mr. Spichiger relayed that WSDA will be keeping a close eye on the Puget Sound area and the edges of forested areas. Member Strohmung asked about lessons learned that would apply to other species and how to get high levels of engagement from the public, to which Chair Willard suggested this be a topic for the next meeting.

### **Item 8: Future Meeting Planning and Closing Remarks**

**Chair Willard** requested meeting topics for the September meeting. He then listed potential topics which included feral swine, an interagency response plan that is being worked on, flowering rush in Lake Roosevelt and a new biocontrol for knotweed.

Before the meeting closed, Wyatt Lundquist relayed that the 2021 WISC calendar dates had been created and the draft calendar will be sent out to WISC members. After getting feedback, Mr. Lundquist would create a final calendar to be adopted by WISC at the September meeting.

*Public Comment: no public comment.*

**ADJOURN: Meeting adjourned at 12:33PM.**

*The next meeting will be September 24, 2020 in-person, but due to COVID-19 it is subject to change.*



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Ray Willard, Chair

September 24, 2020

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Date