



Washington Invasive Species Council 2023-2024 Biennial Report to the Legislature



WASHINGTON STATE
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE
Washington Invasive
Species Council



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Council Members and Staff..... | 1 |
| Letter from the Chair | 2 |
| At a Glance and Vision..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Leadership and Coordination | 5 |
| Innovation and Research | 7 |
| Education and Outreach | 9 |
| Prevention | 14 |
| Early Detection and Rapid Response | 18 |
| Containment, Control, and Eradication | 21 |
| Looking Forward..... | 23 |

Cover Photographs

Sandwich board advertising the Clean, Drain, Dry campaign to prevent quagga and zebra mussel infestations, courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife scientific technician Megan Bungum (left) and European green crab regional biologist Rachel Flannery (right) document green crabs trapped at Johns River Wildlife Area in December 2024, courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Fin, the mussel-sniffing dog, courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

The council looking at invasive plants along roadsides at its June 2024 meeting in Walla Walla



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Letter from the Chair

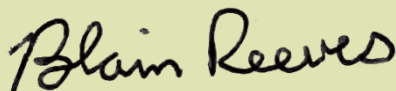
It has been an honor to serve as the chair of the Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC) these past two years. I am extremely proud of the new partnerships we have built, old collaborations we have maintained and enhanced, and the ongoing efforts by members and staff to educate the public and protect Washington from constantly evolving and increasing threats from harmful invasive species.

During the past two years, we have worked diligently to formalize and adopt bylaws and key operational procedures to ensure the council functions smoothly and predictably into the future as members and issues change. We have worked closely with the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to build a stronger connection to the council and the extremely important work it does. I am especially grateful to RCO director Megan Duffy and her Executive Team for recognizing WISC's significant value and contributions to habitat protection, conservation, and restoration broadly in Washington, and especially for their commitment to ensure the work of the council is adequately supported by RCO staff into the future.

To highlight a few of many contributions mentioned in this report, the council continued to provide key coordination on invasive species issues including facilitating a European Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group for statewide response, participating in regional and international response exercises, and convening working groups to address new priority species. The council continued to serve as the state's forum for invasive species education and outreach, ranging from creating school curriculum to implementing significant educational campaigns to highlight the importance of prevention. The council continues to support ongoing critical management efforts related to the European green crab emergency and the flowering rush cost-share program.

Council membership is not a career-long appointment, and members change. I would like to extend my gratitude to those continuing to serve, those departing, and those new members we welcomed. Specific thanks to those who left the council in past two years including Roy Hamblin, Heidi McMaster, Allen Pleus, Lizbeth Seebacher, Brad White, and our previous executive coordinator, Justin Bush, who we welcomed as a new council member, along with Luca Furnare, Wes Glisson, and Cory Sandow.

In closing, it has truly been an honor serving as chair and I am confident I hand over the gavel to the next chair on solid ground and fully staffed with incredibly intelligent people motivated and willing to do all they can to protect our beautiful state from harmful invasions of non-native plants and animals.



Blain Reeves

At a Glance

Invasive species are non-native organisms that cause economic or environmental harm and can spread to new areas of the state.

Invasive species harm Washington State's landscapes, ecological systems, agriculture, commerce, recreation, and sometimes human health. The damages from invasive species translate into economic losses for communities and businesses.

Quick Facts

- Invasive species can damage both the environment and the economy. From habitat, to agriculture, to five types of infrastructure—power, water, transportation, development, and military readiness—invasive species can harm many aspects of daily life.
- More than two hundred invasive species are known to be present in Washington. Scientists estimate that just twenty-two of these species could cause billions in economic loss and damage without prevention or management.
- Of all potentially impacted sectors, dams and irrigation are most at risk. If invasive species, such as quagga or zebra mussels establish in Washington's waters, it will cost at least \$100 million a year to keep water flowing. This does not include potentially irrevocable impacts to fish and habitat.
- The council's reporting and notification tools, such as its app (WA Invasives) and website (InvasiveSpecies.wa.gov) provide quick response to invasive species detections. These systems are efficient, effective, and provide the greatest opportunity to stop invasive species early.

Vision

The vision of the council is to sustain Washington's human, plant, and animal communities and our thriving economy by preventing the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species.

The council works to achieve this vision by providing policy-level direction, planning, and coordination that will empower those engaged in the prevention, detection, and eradication of invasive species.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

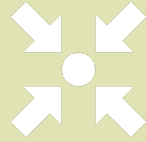
The state Legislature created the Washington Invasive Species Council in 2006 to reduce risks to Washington's economy and environment. The council is a partnership of tribal, local, state, and federal governments, as well as private sector and non-governmental interests. The council provides policy-level direction, planning, and coordination support to public and private entities managing invasive species prevention and response throughout Washington State.

In 2021, the Legislature voted unanimously to continue the council for ten years with a sunset date of June 30, 2032. The council sets the path for how each organization addresses this shared issue by developing a statewide strategy, determining the highest priority invasive species, managing the state's invasive species reporting system, and maintaining the state's website: [InvasiveSpecies.wa.gov](https://www.invasivespecies.wa.gov).

The council has been implementing its most ambitious strategy to date, and as it approaches revising the current strategy for its 2026-2030 update after a change in executive coordinators, there has never been a more important moment to celebrate and reaffirm the progress and successes, and to boldly move forward in the council's following key areas of work:

- Leadership and Coordination
- Innovation and Research
- Prevention
- Education and Outreach
- Early Detection and Rapid Response
- Containment, Control, and Eradication





Leadership and Coordination

Fortifying the Foundation

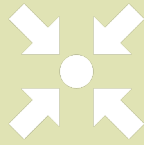
After reauthorization in 2021 and a change in executive coordinators in 2023, council staff have begun to synergize and document past and present processes and build out the infrastructure of the council to make it consistent and more resilient to change moving forward. Starting with the adoption of the 2023 bylaws, the council has set out to revisit its prioritization process, reassess its priority species, and continue to improve the bylaws, which will be revised in 2025. This work is ongoing and will ensure continuity between staff, keep the council's strategy and focus between changing emergencies, maintain transparency, and build on the already strong foundation between now and council reauthorization in 2032.

Filling Gaps on a Destructive Insect

Emerald ash borer, a destructive wood-boring insect, deservedly earned its widespread status as a poster child for invasive species after it swept across thirty-seven states since its first detection in the U.S. in 2002. By 2017, it was estimated to have killed 7.5 billion trees, as noted in the [Economic Impacts of Invasive Species report](#). Most recently, it was detected in Portland, Oregon in 2022, and in Vancouver, British Columbia in 2024. Due to its proximity to Washington and the number of entities, including state, federal, and local partners, who have a role in emerald ash borer response, the council convened a statewide working group. This group is focused on defining roles and responsibilities, consolidating educational resources, and serving as a hub for coordination. To support these efforts, the Washington Department of Natural Resources secured an additional \$47,000 from the U.S. Forest Service and plans to enter into an interagency agreement for the council to facilitate the development of Washington's emerald ash borer resource and management guide, a critical tool for a coordinated response.



The emerald ash borer, courtesy of David Cappaert, Michigan State University and Bugwood.org



Leadership and Coordination

Increasing Washington's Response Capacity with Transboundary Partners

The Washington Invasive Species Council and the Washington Department of Agriculture partnered with Sandia National Laboratories to host a Transboundary Feral Swine Tabletop Exercise. Sponsored by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Office of Health Security, through the Health, Food, and Agriculture Resilience (HFAR) Directorate, the exercise was a way to prepare first responders in both the United States and Canada for an invasive species or transboundary disease detection along the border. The exercise also was a way to test communication and incident coordination measures. Canadian planning team partners include British Columbia Ministry of Land, Water, and Resource Stewardship; British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food; and Animal Health Canada. The exercise saw 42 players and 105 observers, and a total of 147 registered participants from more than sixty international, federal, state, provincial, local, tribal, and academic organizations.



Chris P. Bacon, a feral swine pelt, served as an excellent outreach tool to raise awareness.

Maintaining Regional Partnerships

The council continues to stay involved in regional, federal, and transboundary working groups, including but not limited to the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, Columbia River Basin Aquatic Invasive Species Team, and Northwest Regional Invasive Species and Climate Change Network. The council also regularly meets with and presents to regional Canadian invasive species councils and societies, as well as other state forums such as the Oregon Invasive Species Council and the Montana Invasive Species Council. This strengthens communication across jurisdictions, helps scan the horizon for upcoming threats, and provides new opportunities for collaboration.



Stephanie Helms, the council's executive coordinator, speaks on feral swine efforts at the annual Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's annual conference.



Innovation and Research

Highlighting and Working with Tribal Communities

Understanding that tribes are crucial partners, co-managers, and teammates in statewide invasive species work, the council has broadened its workshop offerings to focus on invasive species education, projects, and accomplishments of tribes on a variety of virtual platforms. With funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the council partnered with Washington State University, the Columbia River Inter Tribal Fisheries Commission, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest Regional Office to organize and host the 2024 Invasive Species Workshop and Webinars for Tribal Audiences. Topics included updates on priority species, impacts to cultural resources, invasive species management, and resources for funding. The series had 280 attendees and helped develop an important partnership, to result in a 2025 virtual summit for tribal audiences, funded by Washington State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



**REGISTRATION OPEN:
2024 Invasive Species Workshop
and Webinars for Tribal Audiences**

**March 26 and March 28
8:00am - 12:00pm PDT**

March 26: Workshop Day 1
Session 1: Updates on Priority Invasive Species
Session 2: Success Stories in Reducing Impacts

March 28: Workshop Day 2
Session 3: Monitoring and Detection
Session 4: Management of Invasive Species

**April Webinars
9:00am - 10:30am PDT**

April 2nd: Northwest Quagga Mussel Detection and Response
April 9th: Impacts on Cultural Resources
April 16th: Preparing and Planning for Invasive Species
April 23rd: Funding and Resources

**Register at
<https://extension.wsu.edu/invasive-species/workshops/>**

WASHINGTON STATE
Washington
Invasive Species
Council





Advertisement for highly successful tribal training event.

Revising the Council's Prioritization Tool

To understand the biggest threats in and near Washington and to determine how to best allocate resources to combat them, the council developed an assessment tool in 2009 to evaluate each priority species' impacts and the ability to prevent them. The prioritization tool includes scoring criteria on agricultural, economic, recreational, and ecological impacts to help understand how detrimental these invasive species could be to many different sectors of Washington's economy and way of life. The scores were plotted on the invasive species management priorities grid, which is being used as a tool to guide council action.

The council recognized that impacts to cultural resources were missing from the prioritization tool, and therefore tribal impacts were missing from the analysis. Council staff, with guidance from the council, are working with partners to understand which cultural resources most likely are impacted by invasive species and how to incorporate new scoring criteria into the prioritization tool. The council is looking forward to working with partners to finalize and incorporate the new criteria and use it to review the council's priority species.



Innovation and Research

INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

Adapting Outreach Opportunities and Materials for Different Languages

The council has strived to reach new audiences by offering training opportunities and outreach materials in different languages. Council staff have worked to educate agricultural communities through a first-of-its-kind Spanish language Pesticide Applicators Workshop in partnership with the King County Noxious Weed Program, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, and Washington State Department of Agriculture. Participants received instruction in Spanish about pesticide safety and invasive insects. Free Washington pesticide applicator's license recertification credits were offered to attendees.



CALLING ALL PESTICIDE USERS

FREE WORKSHOP
for Pesticide Recertification Credits

📍 Online - live webinar

📅 November 30th, 2023

🕒 1 - 4 pm

ALL PESTICIDE USERS WELCOME
If you have a pesticide license and need credits to **avoid re-testing**, here is your opportunity.

TAUGHT IN SPANISH!

Advertisement for a free workshop taught in Spanish where attendees can receive Washington pesticide applicator's license recertification credits.



Education and Outreach

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Overview

In the past two years, the council issued eight news releases and led or participated in seventy-one events statewide, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The council reached 724,727 people through social media, 134,572 people through its website, and 14,692 people at events.



A map of Washington showing event reach. Larger bubbles indicate events with higher numbers of attendees.

Engaging People Through Social Media

The council continues to enrich the quality of social media engagement, an important task in an ever-changing online landscape. Social media quality has improved as staff have broadened the types of content posted, such as including job openings, advertising events, links to other social



A map shows the locations of website users throughout the globe. Darker colors indicate higher user count.



Education and Outreach

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

media accounts, and even an occasional meme. Most excitingly, council staff have seen increased engagement in countries outside the United States, as seen in the graph above.

Council staff noted a drop in viewers, followers, and engagement after the change from Twitter to X, which led RCO to stop posting on X. Council staff continue to explore new platforms to expand the council's already sizable footprint online.

Educating Through News Releases and Media

The news releases below resulted in fifty-three articles, radio broadcasts, and television news features on invasive species.



Executive Coordinator Stephanie Helms interviews on Fox 12 about the 'Buy It Where You Burn It' news release.

- Governor Proclaims the Week of February 20 as Invasive Species Awareness Week (February 13, 2023)
- State Asks People to Clean Gear and Pets to Minimize Invasive Spring Plants (June 5, 2023)
- Student Designs Wanted for Invasive Species Art Contest (November 14, 2023)
- Boot Brushes to Protect the Shrub-Steppe from Noxious Weeds (January 11, 2024)
- Governor Proclaims February 26 to March 3 Invasive Species Awareness Week (February 8, 2024)
- State Asks Campers to Not Move Firewood (May 22, 2024)



Education and Outreach

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- State asks boaters to Clean, Drain, Dry To Prevent Spread of Invasive Species (July 3, 2024)
- State Asks Public to Check Trees for Invasive Pests this August (August 6, 2024)
- Invasive Species Council Recognizes Leaders (December 9, 2024)

Educating Through Creative Contests

The council partnered with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to host an invasive species poster contest for school-aged children. Participants designed and submitted an educational poster on one of the council's priority invasive species. A student from each of three categories was honored with first place. In all, ninety-four entries were submitted. The winning posters were displayed on the council's social media accounts and during the staff report at the quarterly council meeting. The winning posters are displayed in an educational trailer that travels statewide to schools, libraries, and events, educating people about invasive species that threaten Washington's natural resources, economy, recreation, and ecology.

Council staff also have used social media to mobilize and educate the public, most notably through the Halloween Invasive Species Pet Costume Contest, which raises awareness on the Don't Let It Loose campaign. Other engaging contests included an Invasive Species Poetry Contest with winners featured during the 2024 Washington Invasive Species Awareness Week. Participants in these social media contests had to demonstrate their knowledge on priority species, pathways, and what they can do to be part of the solution, further deepening the educational aspect of participation and adding to the fun.



The first-place winners from 2023 (left) and 2024 (right). The 2023 first-place winner wears a crocheted zebra mussel costume made specifically for the contest. The 2024 first-place winner struts in a brown marmorated stink bug costume hand designed and created.



Education and Outreach

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Promoting Invasive Species Awareness Week in Washington

In both 2023 and 2024, Governor Jay Inslee proclaimed Invasive Species Awareness Week in Washington in solidarity with National Invasive Species Awareness Week to raise awareness and find preventative solutions for invasive species. In both of those years, the council worked with the Governor's Office, RCO, and the Departments of Agriculture and Fish and Wildlife, to raise awareness through an interagency news release. It also organized a series of webinars to raise awareness of invasive species and connect experts with the public. In 2024, topics included the Department of Agriculture's success at keeping spongy moth out of Washington for fifty years; updates on aquatic invasive species, such as invasive mussels and European green crab; the emerging Mediterranean oak borer threat; the Don't Pack a Pest campaign; and the European green crab emergency that featured speakers from the Lummi Nation, the Governor's Office, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Council members, staff, and volunteers from member agencies raised awareness at the Capitol Building during 2024 Washington Invasive Species Awareness Week.

Expanding the Teacher Toolkit

The lack of invasive species content in outdoor educational programming was one of the gaps identified by a council-led interagency working group. Council staff researched the needs of local outdoor education organizations, interviewed their staff, and compiled findings to create invasive species programming for use in informal education. The council partnered with IslandWood, a nonprofit environmental organization serving Bainbridge Island, Seattle, and Woodinville.



The African clawed frog specimen always draws interest and excitement from students.



Education and Outreach

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Together, staff from the council and IslandWood adapted the council-created middle school lessons to pilot during a summer camp in July 2023 at the Brightwater Center in Woodinville. Before the camp, council staff trained the summer camp staff in delivery of the invasive species curriculum. Specimens and invasive species fact sheets were loaned to the summer camp. During the camp, IslandWood staff delivered the content to nine fifth- and sixth-grade camp students. Feedback from both IslandWood and the campers was overwhelmingly positive.

Recognizing Invasive Species Efforts through a New Awards Program

In 2022, the council recognized the efforts of volunteer Doug Adams for his work saving more than two thousand Seattle trees from invasive English ivy. Seeing the importance of highlighting invasive species contributions, the council moved forward with forming an awards committee under the direction of past chair Joe Maroney. Three award categories were created: Distinguished Leader, Valiant Volunteer, and Outstanding Organization. The council held its first formal recognition ceremony at the December 2024 meeting, with award winners in attendance to speak about their experiences and work. Award winners also will be recognized during programming for the 2025 Washington Invasive Species Awareness Week and are featured on the council's new [Awards](#) web page.



Stephanie Helms, the council's executive coordinator, presents the 2024 Distinguished Leader Award to Representative Mary Dye.



Prevention

PREVENTION

Protecting Critical Sagebrush Habitat by Changing Public Behavior

In September 2023, the council received \$133,000 of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding through the U.S. Forest Service to work with landowners and partners to buy fifty [Play Clean Go!® boot brush stations](#) for placement at recreational areas in Washington's sagebrush biome. The goal of the project is to prevent boots from spreading hitchhiking noxious weed seeds. An advisory committee developed a boot brush interest form and sent it to land-managing organizations in central and eastern Washington. Council staff reviewed the returned forms and awarded thirty boot brush stations in 2024. Twenty additional boot brushes will be distributed in 2025 to further prevent the spread of noxious weeds in this fragile habitat.



Council staff visited the sites of two boot brushes installed in Wenatchee as part of this project.

Expanding Prevention Resources through Webinars

Council staff prepared and hosted a first-of-its-kind virtual Invasive Snail and Slug Workshop, which provided a deep dive into the world of mollusks and covered information about pathways of introduction, risks, impacts, and identification. This webinar was extremely well received and was attended by more than five hundred people across North America and beyond. With giant African land snail introductions in other parts of the country, training practitioners is incredibly important in preventing this highly damaging agricultural pest from breaking past first defenses and establishing in Washington. Adding to this success, the council was awarded additional funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to bring regional experts together for a virtual invasive ant identification workshop scheduled for 2025.

The council also held a first-of-its-kind virtual Urban Forest Pest Summit, which brought together 139 urban forestry, arboriculture, and municipal experts to learn about priority pests that could severely impact urban tree canopies across the state. The summit was a culmination of many successful in-person



A local graphic designer created the marketing materials for the Invasive Snail and Slug Virtual Workshop.



Prevention

PREVENTION

urban forest pest identification workshops held in Monroe, Tacoma, and Vancouver, all of which were done with funding from the U.S. Forest Service through an interagency agreement with the Department of Natural Resources' Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Council staff don't just organize and host virtual events, but attend them, too. The council had a presence at the 2023 Northwest Regional Invasive Species and Climate Change Symposium, 2023 Master Gardener's State Conference, 2023 North American Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System Summit, 2024 International Invasive Species and Climate Change Network Conference, and more.

Building On Successful Workshop and Trainings

Hosted in Astoria, Oregon, the Coastal Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop brought together more than eighty natural resource professionals and invasive species managers from coastal Washington and Oregon counties to network with regional colleagues, learn successes and challenges with management, and become familiar with invasive species on the horizon. Building off this momentum and focusing on specializing content for practitioners in different parts of the state, the council received funding for a Puget Sound Invasive Species workshop to be held in 2025. The council also continues its work hosting urban forest pest workshops in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, with four completed in 2023 and 2024, and two more to go. The effort will culminate in an in-person Urban Forest Pest Summit in 2025.



An entomologist with the Washington Department of Natural Resources presents some urban forest pests of concern at an October 2024 workshop.



Prevention

PREVENTION

It's Never Been More Important to Clean, Drain, and Dry Your Boat and Equipment

The council and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife completed a pilot project funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to empower boaters to proactively engage in aquatic invasive species movement prevention. Three Clean, Drain, Dry, Dispose (CD3) units were installed at recreational water access points, and a fourth mobile unit was made available upon request for events or other use. All cleaning stations are free to the public and the council monitored their use through 2023. Preliminary studies for this project indicated that boaters would use Clean-Drain-Dry standard protocols but were lacking important infrastructure to do so. Data from the CD3 units showing increased use over time supports the concept that boaters will comply with and perhaps even embrace aquatic invasive species prevention protocols when the tools to do so are provided in convenient locations and at no cost.

Of particular note are the high use numbers for the plug wrench, air blower, and vacuum tools on each unit, indicating that ballast water tanks—a notorious pathway for movement of aquatic invasive species—are being emptied on site, and that the “Dry” component in Clean-Drain-Dry is being taken seriously.

Building on this successful pilot project, Wildlife Forever, a national nonprofit and leader of the national Clean Drain Dry Initiative, purchased fourteen additional CD3 units for Washington boat access points. The units were donated to stakeholders for long-term operations and significantly increased aquatic invasive species prevention infrastructure in Washington State.

To continue raising awareness of these units, the council has increased its education and outreach to boating communities to spread the word of Clean, Drain, Dry campaign. Council staff attended the 2023 States Organization for Boating Access, the 2023 Seattle Boat show, and the Lake Padden Triathlon in Bellingham, and have presented at numerous Washington State University events to increase awareness of aquatic invasive species among irrigators and other agricultural professionals.



Invasive Species Council staff Jessica La Belle and mussel-sniffing dog Puddles (now retired) stand in front of a CD3 unit.



Prevention

The Safeguard Our Shellfish Campaign Goes Live on the Council Website

Recognizing that Washington leads the nation in the production of shellfish, the council partnered with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to raise awareness of shellfish diseases. This partnership culminated in a new council campaign web page and outreach materials branded "Safeguard Our Shellfish." The web page displays information about the threat and impact of invasive shellfish diseases and simple actions people can take to protect Washington's shellfish from these micro-invaders that cause widespread shellfish deaths. Some simple actions highlighted in this campaign include shucking oysters on the beach and leaving the shells when harvesting oysters recreationally and never releasing live or dead shellfish into Washington waters for any reason. Finally, this campaign reminds Washingtonians that storing shellfish in state waters without a permit from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is prohibited. This campaign has been incorporated into outreach presentations delivered by council staff.



The logo for the Safeguard Our Shellfish campaign



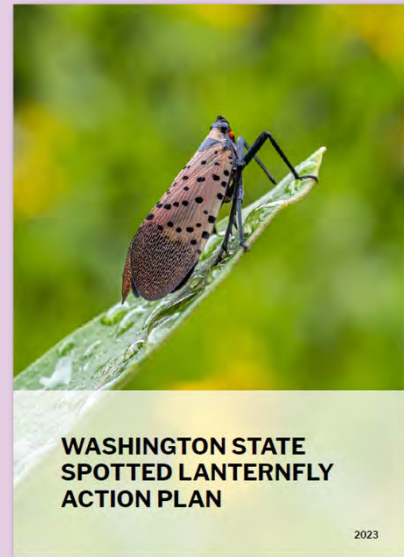
Early Detection and Rapid Response

EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE

Continuation of Spotted Lanternfly Action Plan Work

The spotted lanternfly is an invasive insect that has spread to more than nineteen states after first found in Pennsylvania in 2014. While not established in the West, it has been intercepted in both California and Oregon. The lanternfly feeds on agricultural commodities such as apples, cherries, and grapes, which have a value in Washington of more than \$2.6 billion annually. In addition to agricultural damages, it poses a risk to ornamental trees and Washington's nursery industry. Spotted lanternfly's preferred host trees, such as walnut, ash, dogwood, pine, maple, and willow, are critical to Washington's urban and wildland forest health.

To prevent these widespread impacts, the council received funding in 2022 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop and execute a state action plan to prevent spotted lanternfly from establishing in Washington and to prepare for rapid response if it is found. The *Washington State Spotted Lanternfly Action Plan* was completed in 2023 to improve the knowledge, response options, and capabilities before the onset of a spotted lanternfly emergency. The plan was collaboratively written and guided by a preparedness advisory group that included nineteen representatives of tribal, state, federal, and local government agencies, and industry associations. The plan is unique in that it directly addresses potential impacts to Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities by detailing culturally significant ethnobotanicals that would be placed at risk if spotted lanternfly was to establish in Washington. This aspect of the plan has generated interest from Tribal Nations and invasive species management organizations nationwide, and has been promoted as a template for the inclusion of cultural impacts in invasive species management and outreach.



The cover of the action plan

Supporting Invasive Species Detection at Ports of Washington

Invasive species threats are changing constantly, and it is up to port employees and partners at the Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Program to be the first line of defense for hitchhiking invasive species in international trade. In 2023, the council offered an invasive pest workshop to new employees at the Port of Tacoma; with fifteen employees in attendance. Presenters from Washington State Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service covered priority invasive pest identification content. The council then received additional funding from the U.S. Department of



Early Detection and Rapid Response

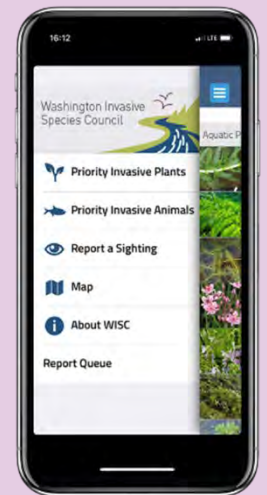
Agriculture to host a virtual port interception workshop geared toward port employees at international ports in Washington and Oregon. The workshop highlighted the chain of command structures, roles and responsibilities, priority pests of federal regulatory significance, and how to report suspicious sightings. The council received additional funding to hold another virtual workshop in 2025.

Building Response Capacity through Research

Responding quickly to invasive species threats often requires modern technology to be successful. The council has used funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to research different equipment for containment systems and plan a 2025 rapid response exercise. The goal is to attract different responders from surrounding states to increase capacity and preparedness if zebra or quagga mussels are detected in Washington, and to be able to deploy a containment system if that management option is chosen.

Improving the WA Invasives App

With funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, council staff hired an intern, Marissa Dallaire, to work with partners and the University of Georgia to update the invasive species field guide information on the WA Invasives mobile and website app. Marissa has worked with the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board staff and other partners to update photographs, distribution information, and descriptions of high-priority pests to help the public make high-quality reports. As the council's reporting app is a crucial tool in prevention, early detection, and rapid response, having current information is critical to keep the public involved and help staff in different agencies who review and verify the reports.



The app allows the public to report sightings of plants and animals on their phone.

Increasing Awareness and Capacity Using Proven Models

Building off the successful European Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group model, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has signed an agreement with the council to hold a similar training and workshop focused on invasive mussels. The 2025 event, funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation through the Department of Fish and Wildlife, will be an Incident Command System training and workshop focused upon both coordination group members and/or unified command officials who have legal jurisdiction or resources to address a detection of invasive mussels in Washington. As invasive



Early Detection and Rapid Response

EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE

species don't respect jurisdictional boundaries, this exercise will build capacity and awareness for a regional rapid response necessary to protect waters and aquatic resources under the jurisdiction of tribal or federal governments, and the shared waters between Washington and Oregon.



Containment, Control, and Education

Continuing Support for the European Green Crab Governor's Emergency

The council has supported the Governor's emergency declaration in 2022 about the exploding population of European green crab in Washington waters, most notably in the Lummi Sea Pond. As the council is a good convener, it was a perfect match to help organize and facilitate the European Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group, compile and report progress to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and even assist with related events such as regional strategic action plan workshops and the European Green Crab Manager's Symposium in 2023 and 2024.

The council, RCO, and Department of Fish and Wildlife jointly developed an interagency agreement to provide funding quickly to public entities with the capability to support response. In 2023, RCO distributed \$1.3 million of the European Green Crab Emergency Measures Fund. Funded organizations include Grays Harbor Conservation District, Pacific Conservation District, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State University. A total of 361,293 European green crab were removed from Washington waters in 2023 by these organizations and trapping partners. In 2024, \$1.5 million was made available through the same fund to the Grays Harbor Conservation District, Pacific Conservation District, University of Washington, and Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. As of this writing, more than one million European green crab were removed from Washington waters by these organizations and trapping partners in 2024 alone. Of the current fiscal year funding, \$233,280 remains unobligated and available for additional rapid response agreements before June 30, 2025.



Council intern Marissa Dallaire holds a European green crab molt.



Containment, Control, and Education

Expanding the Statewide Flowering Rush Cost-Share Program

Flowering rush is an invasive plant that significantly damages aquatic ecological systems. It clogs irrigation pipes and dams, harbors salmon predators, destroys habitat, and limits recreation. In 2023, the Legislature provided RCO an ongoing \$25,000 a year to match federal funds from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to address flowering rush.

With this funding, the Washington State Flowering Rush Cost-Share Program has grown significantly and includes a variety of tribes and local agencies. Funding has increased 325 percent from \$209,283 in 2021 to \$681,244 in 2024. In 2023 and 2024, non-federal funds leveraged a nearly equal amount of federal funds to survey for and remove flowering rush in Washington. Work is underway and will be completed in June 2025.



Flowering Rush, courtesy of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board

An Eradication Success Story

The Washington State Department of Agriculture, a member of the council, announced the successful eradication of northern giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) from Washington State and the United States effective December 5, 2024. This year marked the third year of survey with no detections, which is the requirement for declaring this species successfully eradicated.

The initial report was made to the council by a resident in Whatcom County. Council staff acted quickly, forwarding the report to the Department of Agriculture and supporting lead agency efforts through education and outreach, raising awareness on this first-of-its kind detection in the United States. The rapid response to the northern giant hornet report was led by the Department of Agriculture's Pest Program and was an extensive collaboration between county, state, federal, and international government agencies. In addition, significant support from local communities contributed to the eradication success. The council is proud to have supported this monumental effort by the Pest Program and continues to point to the northern giant hornet response as an effective model for cross-agency collaboration.



Washington Department of Agriculture staff opened the section of tree containing the first hornet nest detected in the United States at a Washington State University facility during the COVID-19 pandemic in October 2020.



Looking Forward

LOOKING FORWARD

Much Work Ahead

The council has achieved so much since 2006, but there is more to do. The council and its partners know how to stop and are stopping invasive species, but new problems are always on the horizon. Through adaptation, collaboration, and being bold to find new solutions in an ever-changing landscape, the council will continue to be successful in protecting all that the public holds dear in Washington State. The council is excited to meet these challenges together and invites everyone to join as it continues this ever-important work.