
UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION

STRATEGIC WORK PLAN

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2020-2023

Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Strategic Work Plan

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AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES POSE SOME OF THE GREATEST RISKS TO OUR WESTERN WATERS

- Invasive species are known to be the second greatest cause of **biodiversity loss**, second only to habitat destruction.
- Introductions of aquatic invasive species can lead to a **loss of recreation access** for many communities that depend upon tourism.
- Invasive species can cause major and irreversible **changes to our aquatic ecosystems**.
- There are **serious economic implications** of aquatic invasive species infestations, which could result in impacts as high as \$234M in Montana alone.

About the Commission

The mission of the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC³) is to protect the aquatic environment in Montana tributaries to the Columbia River from the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS) to protect water resources, downstream interests, and the economic and ecological vitality of the region.

The UC³ was created in the 2017 legislative session by House Bill 622. This commission was established to foster close cooperation and coordination between international, federal, regional, state, tribal, and local water resource managers to develop and implement comprehensive Upper Columbia River Basin prevention and management measures to prevent the introduction and/or further establishment of AIS.

The UC³ meets quarterly and strives to enhance coordination, communication and AIS prevention and management activities within the Upper Columbia River Basin. The UC³ focuses on leveraging partnerships across the basin to support and augment the state's AIS program and to best protect our waters from the threats posed by harmful AIS.

The UC³'s membership consists of 13 voting members appointed by the Governor of Montana, four non-voting legislative members (two from each party and House/Senate) and several 'ex-officio' (non-voting) state and federal agency representatives. The Governor-appointed voting members represent:

- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- Conservation Districts
- Electric cooperatives
- Hydroelectric utilities
- Members at Large
- Montana Invasive Species Council
- Private landowners
- Private industry
- Five sub-basins of the watershed (Upper/Middle Clark Fork River Basin; Bitterroot River Basin; Blackfoot/Swan River Basins; Kootenai River Basin; and the Lower Clark Fork River Basin).

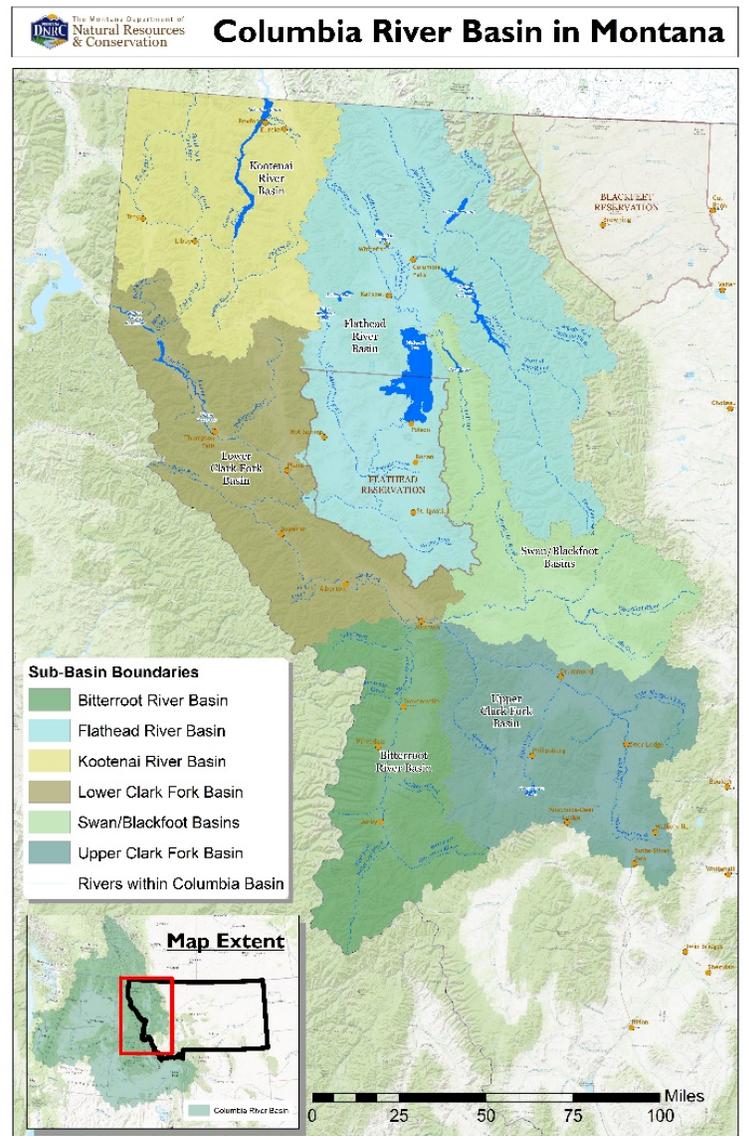


Figure 3: Upper Columbia River Basin in Montana

The UC³ also aims to play a primary role in partner coordination and communication on AIS efforts in and adjacent to the basin. The UC³ works with partners to encourage involvement in AIS issues, identifies needs, and helps ensure consistent and coordinated AIS efforts. These efforts are demonstrated in UC³'s Education and Outreach Strategy. The table below describes some of the critical partners in or adjacent to the Montana portion of the Upper Columbia Basin that conduct AIS prevention activities and programs to protect Montana's waters.

TABLE 1: Partners in AIS in the Montana Portion of the Upper Columbia Basin

Partner	Organization Description	Website Links
Blackfeet Nation	The Blackfeet Indian Reservation is home to the 17,321-member Blackfeet Nation, one of the 10 largest tribes in the United States. Established by treaty in 1855, the reservation is located in northwest Montana.	<u>Blackfeet AIS Website</u>
Clark Fork Coalition	The CFC is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Clark Fork basin in western Montana. A CFC staffer is currently representing the 'Upper & Middle Clark Fork River Basins' on the UC ³ as a Governor-appointed member.	<u>CFC AIS Website</u>
Clearwater Resource Council	The Clearwater Resource Council is a non-profit organization that works to engage the community and facilitate efforts that will enhance, conserve, sustain, and protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Clearwater Watershed for present and future generations. A CRC staffer is currently participating on the UC ³ 's Early Detection & Monitoring Committee.	<u>CRC AIS Website</u>
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe (CKST)	The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation are a federally recognized tribe in the U.S. state of Montana. The government includes members of several Bitterroot Salish, Kootenai and Pend d'Oreilles tribes and is centered on the Flathead Indian Reservation in northwest Montana. They also manage the southern portion of Flathead Lake. A Tribal Council member serves on the UC ³ as a Governor-appointed member representing CKST.	<u>CSKT AIS Website</u>
Conservation Districts	Conservation districts are units of local government designed to help citizens conserve their soil, water, and other renewable natural resources. Montana's 58 conservation districts cover all counties and include more than 70 municipalities included within district boundaries. A Conservation District representative currently serves as a Governor-appointed member (and chair) of the UC ³ .	<u>Montana Association of Conservation Districts Website</u>
Canadian Columbia Basin AIS Steering Committee (BC)	A network of partners collaborating to minimize the impacts of invasive species on the ecosystems, communities, and economy of the Central Kootenay region of BC.	<u>CKISS website</u>
Crown Managers Partnership (CMP)	The Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) is a multi-jurisdictional partnership amongst federal, state, provincial, tribal, and first nation agency managers and universities in Montana, Alberta, and British Columbia. Since no single agency has the mandate or resources to address regional environmental issues, they work across borders to address common ecological challenges throughout the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.	<u>CMP AIS Website</u>
Flathead Lakers	The Flathead Lakers are a non-profit organization working for clean water, healthy ecosystems, and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.	<u>Flathead Lakers Education</u>

Partner	Organization Description	Website Links
Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS)	The Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS) is a Center of Excellence and administrative unit within the University of Montana system. They are an ecological research and education center located on Flathead Lake. For over 100 years, they have conducted college courses, graduate programs, and research focused on the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.	<u>FLBS Website</u>
Glacier National Park (GNP)	Glacier National Park is located in northwestern Montana, on the Canada–United States border, adjacent to the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The park encompasses over 1 million acres and includes parts of two mountain ranges (sub-ranges of the Rocky Mountains), over 130 named lakes, more than 1,000 different species of plants, and hundreds of species of animals. An ex-officio representative sits on UC ³ and serves as the chair of the Early Detection & Monitoring Committee.	<u>Glacier National Park AIS Website</u>
Hydroelectric Cooperatives	Electric cooperatives are private, independent electric utilities, owned by members, and serve over 400,000 Montanans. The cooperatives' service areas cover all 56 Montana counties. Each cooperative is customer-owned, locally controlled and not-for-profit. Both hydroelectric utilities (Avista) and cooperatives (Flathead Electric Coop/Montana Electric Cooperatives Association) are Governor-appointed members of the UC ³ .	<u>Montana Electric Cooperatives Website</u>
Hydroelectric Utilities	Hydroelectric utilities are companies that produce hydropower. Hydroelectric utilities (Avista) are represented on the UC ³ as a Governor-appointed member. Avista is an energy company involved in the production, transmission and distribution of energy as well as other energy-related businesses. Avista Utilities is the operating division, providing electricity to nearly 340,000 customers and natural gas to about 300,000 customers across 30,000 square miles and four northwestern states.	<u>Avista Environmental Stewardship Website</u>
Missoula County Weed District (MCWD)	The Missoula County Weed District works to promote and maintain healthy vegetation by minimizing the ecological and economic impacts of noxious weeds through public education, technology transfer, monitoring, and facilitating the involvement of landowners and land management agencies to control invasive species in Missoula County. A MWCD staffer currently participates on the UC ³ 's Early Detection & Monitoring Committee and MWCD is currently developing the state's first 'AIS District.'	<u>Missoula County Weed District Website</u>
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks oversees hunting, fishing, parks and recreation, non-game and exotic species in the state. FWP leads the state's Aquatic Invasive Species Program including watercraft inspections, early detection monitoring, response planning and education and outreach.	<u>FWP AIS Website</u>
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)	The DNRC provides support to two invasive species administrative attachments, the Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC) and UC ³ .	<u>DNRC Invasive Species Program Webpage</u>
Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC)	The Montana Invasive Species Council is a statewide partnership working to protect Montana's economy, natural resources, and public health through a coordinated approach to combat invasive species. They focus on multi-taxa (terrestrial, aquatic, pathogens, forest pests) invasive species and administer the AIS grant program.	<u>MISC Website</u>

Partner	Organization Description	Website Links
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	NRCS emphasizes voluntary, science-based assistance, partnerships, and cooperative problem solving at the community level through the locally-led conservation process. NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources including soil, water, air, plants, and animals.	<u>NRCS Montana Website</u>
Province of Alberta (Ministry of Environment and Parks)	Lead AIS Program for province of Alberta (policy & program development, education/outreach, monitoring, response, watercraft inspections and share duties of enforcement with another agency).	<u>Alberta AIS Website</u>
Province of British Columbia (BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy)	Lead AIS Program for province of BC (policy & program development, education/outreach, monitoring, response, share duties of watercraft inspections and enforcement with another agency).	<u>British Columbia AIS Website</u>
Sanders County Aquatic Invasive Plant Task Force	The Task Force monitors and assess conditions related to aquatic invasive plants in Sanders County waterways - specifically in Noxon and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs - and develops and implements strategies to manage those populations for the health of the aquatic resource.	<u>Sanders County AIS Task Force Website</u>
Swan Valley Connections (SVC)	Swan Valley Connections is a non-profit organization committed to conserving the intact ecosystems within and surrounding the Swan Valley and to strengthen the connection between people and the natural world through collaboration and experiential learning. A SVC staffer is currently representing the 'Swan & Blackfoot River Basins' on the UC ³ as a Governor-appointed member.	<u>Swan Valley Connections AIS Webpage</u>
Trout Unlimited (TU)	Founded in 1964, Montana Trout Unlimited is a statewide grassroots organization comprised of 13 chapters representing approximately 4,500 TU members. It is governed by volunteer directors from each of the state's local TU chapters. A TU chapter president is currently representing the 'Bitterroot River Basin' on the UC ³ as a Governor-appointed member.	<u>Montana TU Website</u>
US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)	Established in 1902, BOR is best known for the dams, powerplants, and canals. Reclamation has constructed more than 600 dams and reservoirs including Hoover Dam on the Colorado River and Grand Coulee on the Columbia River. Today, they are the largest wholesaler of water, distributing water to more than 31 million people. Reclamation is also the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States. A BOR ex-officio representative sits on UC ³ .	<u>US BOR Website</u>
US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)	The USFWS is the oldest federal conservation agency, tracing its lineage back to 1871, and the only agency in the federal government whose primary responsibility is management of fish and wildlife for the American public. The Service helps ensure a healthy environment for people by providing opportunities for Americans to enjoy the outdoors and our shared natural heritage. A USFWS ex-officio representative sits on UC ³ .	<u>USFWS Invasive Species Webpage</u>
US Forest Service (USFS)	The USFS is responsible for managing public lands in the nation's 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands that cover more than 193 million acres of public land. The agency also oversees 80 experimental forests and ranges, five research and development stations, and 18 job corps centers. A USFS ex-officio representative sits on UC ³ .	<u>USFS Invasive Species Webpage</u>

About the Upper Columbia River Basin

The prevention of AIS introductions and spread provide significant benefits to the environment, state and local economies, and industries dependent on water such as hydropower generation and irrigation. The natural resource benefits that can be attained as a result of AIS prevention in the Upper Columbia Basin are significant.

The Columbia River Basin covers nearly 260,000 square miles. It includes the headwaters portion or 'Upper Columbia,' which consists of western Montana and southeastern British Columbia. These headwaters move downstream into the states of Idaho, Washington and Oregon. The Columbia River pours more water into the Pacific Ocean than any other river in North or South America. Many states, communities, economies and industries rely on the river for benefits such as low cost and reliable hydroelectricity, flood control, irrigation, navigation, recreation and fisheries. All these benefits are at risk due to the threat of AIS.

The UC³ is in a unique position to not only augment existing AIS prevention efforts in the state, but also to assist in the protection of all the bountiful downstream benefits. The management agencies, stakeholders and citizens of the entire Columbia River Basin are looking to Montana to help protect them from an introduction of zebra or quagga mussels, especially given the 2016 detection of larval mussels in two Montana reservoirs east of the Continental Divide. The longer an introduction can be curbed, the more protected the native species, the less funding spent on response efforts, and the longer we collectively have to augment the science and develop control methods that are more likely to be effective.

Strategic Priorities 2020-2023

The following UC³ strategic priorities are divided into categories based on the Commission's mission and duties outlined in [statute](#) as well as roles and responsibilities to date:

- Education & Outreach
- Monitoring & Citizen Science
- Coordination & Collaboration
- Programmatic Policy & Legislation
- Business & Administration of the Commission
- Research & Funding

The specific priorities were established at a UC³ planning meeting (January 2019) to provide strategic direction for staff and to focus Commission efforts for a three-year period. They will be reevaluated and updated in 2023.

Education & Outreach

Goal: Increase public awareness in the Upper Columbia Basin related to AIS impacts, State AIS program rules and personal responsibilities.

Strategies/Actions (see table below for more detailed actions):

- Maintain and utilize detailed tactics outlined in a **three-year (2020-2023) Education & Outreach Strategy** for the UC³
- Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and other partners in the basin to create and update an **annual media plan/schedule** focused on FWP's AIS and 'Clean, Drain, Dry' campaign messaging
- Carry out annual **industry outreach project** to engage water-based recreation industry (marinas, boat shops, angling/fly shops and outdoor retailers) in AIS prevention
- Provide leadership and support on **public, youth and stakeholder engagement** in coordination with FWP and other partners
- Explore options for conducting, promoting and communicating results of a Montana-based **AIS Program Evaluation** via survey every other year
- Enhance understanding of **UC³ work, roles and responsibilities**
- Encourage activity and engagement of **Education and Outreach Committee**



Figure 4: Big Sky Watershed Corps Brant Dupree tables at a boat show in the basin

TABLE 2: Education & Outreach Strategic Priorities & Tactics

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Maintain and utilize 3-year Education & Outreach Strategy (per statutory duties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure primary UC³ E&O activities promote the goals and priorities outlined in strategy • Utilize existing FWP materials and messaging (in all products) • Identify and implement tabling and outreach opportunities in the basin 	Staff; Commissioners	E&O Strategy finalized winter 2020; addition of partner E&O effort and media plan (fall/winter 2021).
Develop annual media plan for UC ³ E&O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with FWP and AIS partners • Utilize existing materials and develop new where needed • Ensure that messaging and advertising is clear, high quality, includes accurate content, and covers various mediums • Develop fly fishing/wading PSA 	Staff; E&O Committee	Develop annual media plan by April of each year.
Conduct annual industry outreach project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage water-based recreation industries in AIS prevention annually • Video for industry staff (training for seasonal and new employees) 	BSWC; Staff	Visited 70+ businesses in 2020; BSWC continuing for 2 nd term; presented at 2 conferences on project. Applied for federal grant to cover next 3 years of project.

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Provide leadership & support on public, youth and stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staffing, materials and resources for relevant events in/adjacent to the basin • Enhance 'Don't Let It Loose' campaign in the basin • Provide support for AIS curriculum • Explore options for enhancing targeted messaging to out-of-state visitors & traveling Montanans • Promote 'good news stories' • Facilitate/coordinate with partners on the creation of AIS training videos (monitoring, industry, PSAs) • Explore interest/options for conducting additional educator (or other) training 	Staff; BSWC; E&O Committee	Due to COVID, most events cancelled in 2020, but were able to staff a few with BSWC: State Park Jr. Ranger Day, boat shows, county fair, 'Virtual Field Trip' interview for FLBS.
Assess partner E&O efforts in basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually engage and assess partners to better depict, characterize and identify gaps in AIS outreach efforts 	Staff; BSWC	Conducted in 2020; will modify survey and continue in future.
Explore options/need for conducting AIS Program assessment via online survey biennially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders whose evaluation could be best utilized and carried about • Explore options for best response methods (if warranted) and reporting 	Staff; BSWC; E&O Committee	Conducted in 2019 but results not published (workload).
Enhance knowledge & understanding of UC ³ 's work, role and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/maintain quarterly Listserv • Develop one-pager briefing, pop-ups, and other materials to promote awareness of Commission • Follow roles and responsibilities delineated in the current Interagency MOU for AIS • Build relationships with additional Columbia River Basin partners (downstream, adjacent, etc.) • Clearly articulate the shared roles and responsibilities of AIS prevention and coordination in Montana within FWP, local, regional and national programs • Ensure coverage at events/activities to promote Commission knowledge and exposure • Maintain and update website regularly with meeting information, projects, mapping efforts and annual reports 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners	Website developed in 2019 and updated regularly. Add partner E&O map, strategic work plan, monitoring plan & E&O Strategy.

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Encourage active engagement of E&O Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out additional members (orgs who are conducting AIS outreach) • Hold quarterly or as needed meetings to solicit feedback on media plan, materials, website, etc. • Update E&O Strategy every three years (2023) 	Staff; Chair; Committee members	Committee approved as 'standing' but needs to be revamped and tasks delineated.

CLEAN.DRAIN.DRY. PROTECT OUR WATERS

HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Your watercraft must be inspected if:

- ▶ You encounter an open inspection station.
- ▶ You are coming into Montana from out of state.
- ▶ You are traveling west over the Continental Divide.
- ▶ You are launching anywhere within the Flathead Basin and your watercraft last launched on waters outside the Flathead Basin.

CleanDrainDryMT.com

Protect Our Waters Montana 406.444.2440

UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION

PHOTO BY NASH COOPER

Figure 5: AIS Messaging Targeting Non-Motorized Recreation in the Upper Columbia Basin

Monitoring & Citizen Science

Goal: Provide supplemental coordination, communication and resources to ensure adequate coverage of AIS monitoring in the Upper Columbia Basin.

- Develop **annual monitoring plan** to guide and map efforts in the Upper Columbia Basin and communicate results
- **Monitor the condition of aquatic resources** in the tributaries to the Columbia River Basin (per statute).
- Ensure continuity of **Upper Columbia Lake Network (UCLN)**
- Provide support and information about how to **report suspect AIS**



Figure 6: Upper Columbia Lake Network (UCLN) AIS Monitoring Training on Flathead Lake

TABLE 3: Monitoring & Citizen Science Strategic Priorities & Tactics

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Develop annual monitoring plan (per statutory duties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to include a cooperative AIS strategy among all water management agencies within the Columbia River basin in Montana • Plan to delineate what is monitored, where, when and by whom • Include mapping component • Finalize by February/March annually • Publish plan on website and note in Listserv (annually) • Explore options for developing inventory of all waters in Upper Columbia Basin with risk assessment (which waters are being monitored, level of effort, organization monitoring, species detections). Emphasize notable gaps in coverage (geographical, species, etc.) 	Early Detection & Monitoring Committee; Staff, FWP staff	Annual monitoring plan developed and on website (spring 2020). Held AIS monitoring workshop (Jan 2020).
Monitor the aquatic resources of the Columbia River Basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow and track all information, news and issues related to AIS • Coordinate with partners in the Columbia River Basin and work towards collaborative projects and building a stronger network 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners	Follow and attend CRB/100 th Meridian work/meetings; work with and maintain communication with partners in the basin.
Ensure continuity of Upper Columbia Lake Network (UCLN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand UCLN • Coordinate with all partners in basin • Explore options for increasing citizen science year-round • Create AIS monitoring training videos for use by UCLN, FWP and partners across the state • Work with FWP to provide training and expertise of network to help partners with monitoring support (water quality monitoring, AIS identification, and plankton sampling, etc.) • Provide clear link between UCLN and UC³ • Ensure continued funding for UCLN 	Staff; Executive Committee; Early Detection & Monitoring Committee	Applied for federal grant to continue UCLN activity for next three years. Exploring options for training video.
Provide support and information on how to report suspect AIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear messaging directing stakeholders and the public to FWP AIS mapping and reporting resources • Promote more citizen science across the Upper Columbia Basin, including building awareness for what to look for and how to report • Work with FWP on reporting communication/systems 	Staff; Early Detection & Monitoring Committee, FWP Staff	Work with FWP in 2020-21 on reporting communication and include in outreach.

Coordination & Collaboration

Goal: Provide a forum to share information, improve communication and enhance partner coordination for AIS issues in the Upper Columbia Basin.

- Strive to be a source of **reliable information** on the status of all AIS in Upper Columbia Basin
- **Connect with partners and stakeholders beyond the basin** to increase information-sharing, networking, collaboration, and building relationships around AIS prevention and management.
- Encourage the **close cooperation and coordination** between federal, state, regional, tribal, and local water resource managers for establishment of comprehensive monitoring, data collection, and interpretation ([per statute](#)).
- **Emphasize appreciation** and acknowledge the hard work of staff and partners in AIS prevention and management.
- Provide **support and assistance as needed to the state's Watercraft Inspection Stations and general AIS program**.
- Provide a **cooperative and open environment** that promotes communication and coordination among all Upper Columbia Basin (and beyond) stakeholders.
- **Explore options for research** of value to AIS program(s) in the Columbia River Basin.

TABLE 4: Coordination & Collaboration Strategic Priorities & Tactics

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Strive to be a source of reliable information on status of AIS in the Upper Columbia Basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and monitor Montana and CRB species detections and information • Provide CRB information to Commission and stakeholders • Manage and provide pertinent updates to Commission & Listserv on a quarterly (or more) basis 	Staff; Executive Committee; FWP	Follow CRB news and send relevant info on to Commission and/or Listserv on regular basis.
Connect with partners and stakeholders beyond the basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to partners in Central & Eastern parts of state to build relationships and express gratitude for hard work preventing AIS • Remain connected with and encourage Commissioner participation with partners adjacent to and downstream of the Upper Columbia Basin (e.g. CRB/100th Meridian, BC and AB AIS programs, WRP, PNWER, etc.). • Track and attend (where possible) AIS events and conferences to follow emerging threats, new technologies and new partnerships. Provide relevant information to Commissioners/partners. 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners;	Communicate with partners beyond the basin to identify more opportunities to connect and collaborate.
Encourage close cooperation in AIS work among partners throughout the Columbia River Basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow, track and engage on AIS issues, news and information in the CRB • Encourage and work for international cooperation and coordination between the state of Montana and British Columbia and other CRB jurisdictions 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners	Follow and attend CRB/100 th Meridian work/meetings; work with and maintain communication with partners in the basin.

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Emphasize appreciation and recognize exemplary efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize FWP staff and partners conducting AIS prevention work on a regular basis Explore options for 'awards of recognition,' potentially named after people that are/were important to the organization. Awards could go to exemplary citizens or groups, other states protecting our waters, etc. 	Staff; Early Detection & Monitoring Committee	Share Governor's Award for AIS team (2020).
Provide support and assistance to state's AIS program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with FWP, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, the City of Whitefish, Missoula County Weed District and other entities operating watercraft inspection stations in the basin. Some of the topics highlighted at the AIS summit include quality control, increasing supervision on site, enhancing data app, etc. Provide letters of support as needed for grants or additional funding Provide Legislative Committee/hearing and/or Fish & Wildlife Commission testimony, support and advocacy for AIS Program (as needed) 	Chair; Staff; Commissioners	Coordinate with FWP and other partners on means in which the Commission can provide support and assistance.
Provide cooperative, inclusive and open environment to promote coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure openness, inclusivity and cooperative environment at Commission meetings, in communications and when engaging with partners, stakeholders and the public 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners	Provide notification for stakeholders & public at least three weeks prior to meeting dates; make accommodations for participants.
Explore options for research that adds value to AIS programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas generated to date include ballast water (veliger survivability), Community-Based Social Marketing and evaluation metrics Track progress of and request presentation from management entities involved in ballast research for overview and results (i.e. BOR ballast study 2021). Follow current and emerging research and provide input, value, support where possible/appropriate. Explore options for contracting with Community-Based Social Marketing expert on industry outreach program and/or Clean Drain Dry general approach to specific target audiences. Explore options for evaluation/measuring success of prevention (metrics) and slowing the spread of AIS. 	Staff; Commissioners	Request BOR presentation on ballast studies in 2021.

Policy, Legislative & Programmatic

Goal: Provide input, feedback and recommendations to the Governor and to federal, state agency directors and staff, tribal, provincial, regional and local agencies for reducing the threats from AIS and for conducting restoration and infestation control measures (per statute).

- **Explore and seek to address AIS gaps and challenges** for the enhancement of AIS prevention and management in the Upper Columbia Basin and/or the State of Montana
 - Explore options and address specific gaps and challenges noted in the Montana Invasive Species Law Review, discussed at the 2019 AIS Summit and further examined by the UC³'s Legislative Committee for action.
 - Priority Issues for Legislative Committee (2020-2023) include:
 - AIS list & FWP authority for aquatic invasive plants: Current list of AIS are in interagency MOU (not regulatory). The FWP listing process is inconsistent with other agencies listing (e.g. Dept. of Ag), unclear to many partners and only addresses wildlife species at this time.
STATUS (Dec 2020): Support from agencies (FWP, DNRC), Executive Planning Process and the Environmental Quality Council to proceed with agency bill in 2021 session. Language has been drafted and reviewed by all parties and the legislative committee. Discussions took place in the fall of 2020 to ensure that this effort would not result in unintended consequences or potential issues (e.g. aquatic invasive plants should not be removed from Noxious Weed List until FWP has a rule in place addressing importation, sale and possession and an AIS list is created). The UC³ voted unanimously to support this concept bill.
 - Making the AIS Trust Fund more functional: Currently capped at \$100M (can't utilize funds until this amount is reached). Concern that this is too high to be able to utilize in timely manner. This was modeled after Noxious Weed Trust Fund (capped at \$10M) where the interest is used to fund invasive species projects. A legislative option to lower the amount in statute and better define what the funds can be used for exists, but more information is needed (e.g. how are we currently funding and what is the investment strategy on this money? Federal funding that was matched by the state was put into the fund. Investment strategy is through the board of investors.)
STATUS (Dec 2020): UC³ legislators and agencies requested this item be pulled from consideration for the upcoming session given general concerns with opening statute related to funding mechanisms.
 - 'Pull the Plug' concept: Implement a pull the plug rule in Montana. Watercraft would have to have the drain plug pulled during transport. Model rule in western jurisdictions that helps to promote 'Clean, Drain, Dry' behaviors, provide an easier way to ensure compliance, and expediate watercraft inspections by better addressing standing water in vessels and enhancing the boater experience. Considering option to draft bill as 'secondary offense' (cannot be pulled over for this alone) to alleviate concerns with enforcement.
STATUS (Dec 2020): Due to opposition from various user groups, FWP will not pursue rulemaking at this time. Rep. Duram is planning to carry a Pull the Plug bill in the 2021 session. The UC³ voted unanimously to support this concept bill.
 - Increasing/setting minimum standard for 'Drive-Bys' at inspection stations: The perception among many stakeholders is that the current 'bond amount' (e.g.

ticket amount of \$85) is too low considering the possible damage from AIS, and does not provide a deterrent or send a message about how seriously the state is taking this threat. The recommendation was to set a minimum penalty (of which there is not currently one) higher than the current \$85 bond amount (though no amount was agreed upon to date).

STATUS (Dec 2020): FWP enforcement staff expressed concerns related to the establishment of a minimum penalty (primary objective of recommendation). At this time the UC³ voted to table the recommendation to move forward with a bill in the 2021 session and instead will work with FWP to incorporate language on potential penalties into existing outreach and messaging.

Non-resident boater prevention pass as stickers/decals: Currently only an online receipt (not a visible sticker as in several other states). The perception among some stakeholders is that this 'receipt system' is difficult to enforce if it is not visible on the vessel/trailer. Fish, Wildlife & Parks enforcement has indicated that the 'Non-Resident AIS Prevention Pass' can be checked through regular boater interactions on the water while checking fishing licenses and conducting boat safety inspections. Options for addressing concerns are to advocate to FWP to move to sticker system, or to specify in statute that it must be a sticker/decal.

STATUS (Dec 2020): In discussion with the agencies, FWP enforcement indicated that they are interested and currently investigating the cost of administration vs. value of implementation of moving to a sticker/decal system in the future. It was recently brought to the attention of the UC³ that FWP does not believe they have the authority (as the statute is currently written) to make a physical prevention pass (e.g. sticker/decal) mandatory. This issue to be discussed by the UC³ Legislative Committee in the future (missed the window for addressing this legislative session).

TABLE 5: Policy, Legislative & Programmatic Strategic Priorities & Tactics

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Provide input, feedback and recommendations to the Governor and to federal, state agency directors and staff, tribal, provincial, regional and local agencies for reducing the threats from AIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to recommend and encourage messaging to states/provinces with mussel infestations that pose a threat to basin's waters Work with FWP to identify and assess gaps to ensure that Montana can adequately prevent AIS introductions and spread 	Staff; Legislative Committee	Drafted letter to South Dakota and submitted to DNRC Director requesting that the Governor send (March 2020). Letter not sent due to crisis in addressing COVID.
Explore and seek to address AIS gaps and challenges for the enhancement of AIS prevention in the Upper Columbia Basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options and address specific gaps and challenges noted in the Montana Invasive Species Law Review, discussed at the 2019 AIS Summit and further 	Staff; Executive Committee; Legislative Committee	Created Legislative Committee to further explore specific AIS gaps/challenges. See updated status for each item in bullets (above).

Business & Administration

Goal: Ensure the orderly and optimal operation of the Commission.

- **Develop annual reports** and provide them to the Governor, DNRC Director and Environmental Quality Council with a summary of information gathered in fulfillment of its duties, including but not limited to monitoring activities occurring in the Upper Columbia Basin and an accounting of all funds received and expended in fiscal year (per statute).
- Provide **accounting and budgeting** services for the Commission.
- **Follow all open meeting and other applicable agency and board laws and requirements.**
- **Explore options for additional funding** for Commission work.

TABLE 6: Business & Administration Strategic Priorities & Tactics

Strategy/Activity	Specific Tactics	Responsible Party	Status (update annually)
Develop annual monitoring plan (per statutory duties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide to Governor, DNRC Director and EQC annually (by December 31) • Provide to Commissioners and interested stakeholders • Post on website annually 	Staff; Executive Committee	2019 annual report published on website (and hard copies); 2020 report to be developed and published by Jan 2021.
Provide accounting and budgeting services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare/approve line item budget for each fiscal year; seek amendments as needed • Track and report on all sources of funding and expenditures at quarterly meetings and in annual report • Research, apply for grants and implement grant projects 	Staff; DNRC	FY21 budget approved. Report on budget at each meeting.
Follow all applicable agency and board rules and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow open meeting laws and provide adequate notification of meetings in advance • Provide agendas/minutes to Commission in timely manner • Post approved agendas/minutes on website • Work with Governor's Office on appointment of members/terms • Enhance public participation in meetings/projects and promote AIS and UC³ awareness (including but not limited to virtual options) 	Staff; Executive Committee	All meeting laws followed to date. Website up to date with agendas/minutes. New member (CKST) appointed Sept 2020. Seek new CD representative and Chair. Explore options for future virtual and in-person options (video/teleconference).
Explore options for additional funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and apply for grants as needed • Explore options for donation system (allowed <u>per statute</u>) • Work through DNRC process for all budgeting and funds received 	Staff; Executive Committee; Commissioners	Have applied for and received two grants to date (BOR, DNRC AIS Grant).

