

Montana Invasive Species Council - Summary Report

Science Advisory Panel: Assessing the Invasiveness of a Species

May 5-6, 2025



Summary

Montana is proactively addressing and considering invasive species assessment tools to better inform management actions and potential legislative needs. By examining the language for invasive species found in legislative code used by Montana agencies a better alignment of actions can be realized. Further, there are globally accepted tools used to assess species invasiveness which may also be well suited for application in Montana. The use of these assessment tools can advance our confidence and priorities for invasive species management across Montana.

Goal

Explore current assessment tools and legal language for invasive species determination to understand preparedness in climate or regional changes in capacity to manage invasive species effectively.

Panelists

Panelists were drawn from a broad range of expertise in invasive species, climate change and species assessment from across the United States. The four panelists also ranged in focus work that spanned terrestrial and aquatic species.

Dr. Eva Colberg is a research scientist at the Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC). **Dr. Alisha Davidson** works as a contractor for the Great Lakes Commission and The Nature Conservancy. **Dr. Deah Lieurance** is an Assistant Professor of Invasive Species Biology and Management at Penn State. **Dr. Elliott Parsons** is a specialist with the Pacific Regional Invasive Species and Climate Change (Pacific RISCC) Management Network.

Key Recommendations

- Consider multiple suggested changes to the current MISC definition (see full Report).
- Apply available robust tools to assess species invasiveness. In conjunction with the current work by the Montana Natural Heritage Program, specific tools may be explored for adoption and use to conduct multiple species analysis.
- Focus on pathways rather than species as a strategy to address more than one species at a time.

Current Language: MCA 80-7-1203 “*Invasive Species*” means *plants, animals and pathogens that are nonnative to Montana’s ecosystem and cause harm to natural and cultural resources, the economy, and human health.*

Recommended Language: MCA 80-7-1203 “*Invasive Species*” means *plants, animals organisms and pathogens that are nonnative to Montana’s ecosystems and likely to cause harm to Montana’s natural and cultural resources, the economy, and human health.*

Next Steps

- MISC will hold a follow up meeting to determine a strategy for completing species assessments. At this meeting multiple areas of information could be determined including potential identification of participants, specific tools to be used, and identification of role for Montana Natural Heritage Program in species assessments. Ideally an assessment process could be used that would speak across jurisdictions.
- An initial process might take several species and utilize multiple tools in assessments to better understand which best suits Montana needs.

