

MONTANA INVASIVE SPECIES FRAMEWORK

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MONTANA INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Since 2016, the Montana Invasive Species Council has taken major steps in its work to implement the tasks and objectives outlined by stakeholders in the Montana Invasive Species Framework. Much of that work has been driven by the threat of the introduction of invasive mussels. We have worked collaboratively with local, state, tribal and federal partners across the state to develop strong rapid response guidelines and agreements to increase our readiness, led focused discussions on lessons learned from our experience with the mussel detection in 2016, and sponsored the creation of Montana's first economic damages report for aquatic invasive mussels. These projects and more not only increase our readiness for a potential mussel introduction, but also prepare us for other potential invasive threats from encroaching populations of feral hogs or emerald ash borer.

The invasive species law review and subsequent summit in 2018 opened the door for discussions on how we can work more collaboratively and efficiently in the future by assessing what works best (and what could be improved) in our invasive species programs. We will continue this work into 2019-2020 by inviting stakeholders from across the state to participate in developing recommendations for the creation of an all-taxa invasive species list and the development of an all-taxa invasive species act for the state of Montana. Developing a cohesive and comprehensive invasive species program for our state is a monumental task. But by pulling together, it is a task we are sure to accomplish.

Bryce Christiaens, MISC Chair



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Framework is to provide a road map for identifying goals to prevent and limit the negative effects of invasive species. The goals and objectives will be accomplished by implementing the tasks listed in the Framework. Implementation of the Framework will require collaboration and participation from invasive species stakeholders. Entities responsible for implementation should use this document as a guide for planning, collaborating, and executing invasive species work. The tasks outlined in the Framework are the synthesis of a shared vision drawn from the Assessment and Summit and subsequent Listening Sessions held across Montana in September and October, 2016.

The Framework has been organized around the focal areas of coordination, prevention, detection, rapid response, and control. While many of the tasks may fall to one group or another, the Framework can only be successfully carried out in a spirit of cooperation. The objectives that the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council recommends in this Framework are:

Coordination6

- Respond to invasive species as a shared responsibility and a common priority across the state by integrating and strengthening Montana's management.
- Engage in and support regional efforts to manage invasive species at the local, watershed, and regional levels to allow effective resource sharing, staff expertise, and perimeter defense.
- Build sustainable funding for a statewide, all-taxa invasive species program with common priorities while recognizing the authorities and resources of diverse partners.

Prevention9

- Reduce the transport of invasive species into and within Montana by fully engaging existing entities and resources.
- Develop a shared, statewide set of priority invasive species to exclude from Montana based on their threat to economic, environmental, or cultural values.
- Increase involvement in preventing the spread of invasive species by engaging new audiences, motivating those who can interact with invasive species pathways, and supporting existing stewards.

Detection 11

- Identify invasive species and responsibly share the locations of high priority invasive species across jurisdictions in Montana to focus and improve management.

- Increase and improve search efforts for invasive species with an emphasis on newly establishing invasive species to contain their populations to a smaller area.
- Improve monitoring for invasive species populations and control efforts to ensure that management is measured, analyzed, and evaluated for effectiveness.

Rapid Response13

- Develop a generalized rapid response plan for emerging invasive species.
- Improve the capacity to respond to new invasions of high priority invasive species to contain their spread, limiting the damage they cause.
- Prepare natural resources managers to effectively use all tools available to improve the outcomes of rapid response actions.

Control15

- Grow both capacity and expertise in managing invasive species in Montana to improve program effectiveness.
- Expand collaborative working relationships with enforcement agencies to increase compliance with existing regulations for invasive species.
- Ensure that invasive species control restores the desired ecological, economic, and cultural values to the land that is being managed.



COORDINATION

Coordinate invasive species efforts, focusing on common priorities, and sharing information regarding management outcomes to build a successful invasive species program.

OBJECTIVE

Respond to invasive species as a shared responsibility and a common priority across the state by integrating and strengthening Montana's management.

TASK: Extend the term of the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council for the purpose of increasing communication, engaging stakeholders, and implementation of our shared goals and priorities.

- Utilize the Council to communicate priorities for invasive species funding to state and federal leaders
- Improve coordination among agencies tasked with managing invasive species through working subcommittees of the Council that identify gaps, overlap, and maintain focus on common statewide priorities
- Identify a legislative liaison for invasive species issues
- Strengthen internal, regional, and international coordination

TASK: Expand the sense of stewardship expressed by Montanans to include a responsibility to identify and manage invasive species that harm economic, environmental, or cultural values.

- Engage legislators through a biennial invasive species field day or provide an invasive species day at the capitol

- Identify leaders who will provide education on invasive species within their organization
- Engage landowners through evaluated, consistent messages and outreach efforts
- Build stewardship among anglers to contain the distribution of introduced sport fish and aquatic invasive species
- Identify and engage with new audiences

TASK: Evaluate the need for a comprehensive Montana Invasive Species Act that sets minimum priorities for state agency management of invasive species. The regulatory framework review should address the following:

- Identify regional regulatory tools for managing invasive species for their utility to Montana
- Identify and develop approaches to unify state statutes relating to invasive species
- Clarify relationships between principal government agencies and county weed districts
- Identify enforcement authority and gaps
- Examine the utility of developing a statewide invasive species coordinator position that functions as a single point of contact for this issue

TASK: Conduct a statewide all-taxa risk assessment and develop a cost benefit analysis that creates a comprehensive, prioritized list of invasive species for Montana. Use a cost-benefit analysis to identify species that should be top candidates for management and create a process for regulated parties to review and respond to revised control mandates.

TASK: Establish a biennial summit to share knowledge, measure progress, improve collaboration, and share success. Create a forum to address the following:

- Assess the state's highest priorities for invasive species management
- Provide a forum for researchers and managers to collaborate on invasive species research
- Assess and measure Montana's progress towards accomplishing Framework objectives and tasks
- Align invasive species management priorities with research opportunities through better collaboration among managers and researchers

TASK: Review existing plans that include invasive species and create a comprehensive all-taxa management plan that builds on existing authorities, resources, and experience.

OBJECTIVE

Engage in and support regional efforts to manage invasive species at the local, watershed, and regional levels to allow effective resource sharing, staff expertise, and perimeter defense.

TASK: Encourage the establishment of cooperative invasive species management areas and support local coalitions in managing invasive species.

TASK: Promote cooperative invasive species management agreements (e.g. the Western Regional Panel, 100th Meridian Initiative, the Western Weed Coordinating Committee, Pacific Northwest Economic Region; invasive species councils, and other collaborations). Support Memoranda of Understanding among neighboring states, tribes, and provinces, and at all levels of government and private land owners to address Montana's priority invasive species.

TASK: Build a shared clearinghouse for invasive species management tools (trainings, bulletins, etc.).

OBJECTIVE

Build sustainable funding for a statewide, all-taxa invasive species program with common priorities while recognizing the authorities and resources of diverse partners.

TASK: Assess funding mechanisms for an all-taxa invasive species trust fund and fully fund the established aquatic invasive species trust fund.

TASK: Create a funders roundtable to coordinate state and federal grant programs and disbursements to focus on the highest priority invasive species.

TASK: Evaluate the current distribution of funding and consider shifting the distribution to strengthen prevention and outreach efforts, evaluate the need for new funding and align with priorities.

TASK: Increase the impact of existing funding by improving efficiency of existing grant programs:

- Improve consistency between grant programs with similar goals by using the same criteria
- Compile multiple small grants through cooperative agreements between state and federal funding agencies to reduce administrative costs while creating transparent fund distribution to maintain accountability
- For small, reoccurring grants that are carried out under existing agreements, develop a simplified form and reporting process

TASK: Develop sufficient and sustainable revenue for invasive species management that is linked to land and water uses.





PREVENTION

Protect Montana's natural resources and reduce the future burdens of invasive species impacts by restricting the introduction of harmful species.

OBJECTIVE

Reduce the transport of invasive species into and within Montana by fully engaging existing entities and resources.

- TASK:** Identify pathways that introduce invasive species into Montana and assess the resources and cooperation needed to reduce the likelihood of introductions.
- TASK:** Strengthen our perimeter defense system beginning with high-priority taxa for which prevention can be strengthened most quickly, efficiently, and effectively, while analyzing whether and how the program could include other taxa.
- TASK:** Assess funding levels required to meet enforcement goals and request authorization of stable funding levels for enforcement consistent with invasive species prevention objectives.
- TASK:** Develop pathway-specific regulations.
- TASK:** Assess the need to revise and create regulations addressing known pathways.
- TASK:** Fully implement and enforce existing pathway specific regulations.
- TASK:** Consistently enforce existing penalties for the introduction and spread of invasive species.

OBJECTIVE

Develop a shared, statewide set of priority invasive species to exclude from Montana based on their threat to economic, environmental, or cultural values.

TASK: Expand authority to an all-taxa list of invasive species.

TASK: Assess and periodically reassess priority species to exclude from Montana.

TASK: Support research on invasive species under changing climate and other environmental conditions to predict future risk.

OBJECTIVE

Increase involvement in preventing the spread of invasive species by engaging new audiences, motivating those who can interact with invasive species pathways, and supporting existing stewards.

TASK: Expand the role of the existing state weed education program to include all taxa.

TASK: Research, evaluate, simplify, and share the messages and methods proposed for communicating about Montana's invasive species and take advantage of regional collaborations when appropriate to enforce and provide consistency in messaging.

TASK: Draft a statewide communication and outreach plan that is inclusive of non-traditional partners (e.g. Department of Education). Use this new document as a resource for identifying existing materials (clearinghouse) and experts who can provide technical support.

- Identify gaps in the current education effort and solutions to support invasive species education
- Support a K-12 curriculum element on invasive species and include funding for youth education in invasive species management
- Increase discussion and understanding of invasive species impacts as a way to engage the public in preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species
- Create and fund a comprehensive outreach campaign for invasive species and evaluate the effect on behavior and invasive species management





DETECTION

Search for new populations of invasive species, monitor existing populations, and communicate findings so the risk they pose can be assessed and appropriately managed.

OBJECTIVE

Identify invasive species and responsibly share the locations of high priority invasive species across jurisdictions in Montana to focus and improve management.

TASK: Host a statewide invasive species inventory workshop and develop a collaborative plan for ongoing efforts to collect, protect, and share invasive species data.

TASK: Evaluate hiring a statewide data coordinator to address both sharing data about invasive species while protecting the privacy of landowners.

TASK: Identify, develop and encourage citizens to contribute to a uniform database and create incentives to share reports of invasive species.

TASK: Promote citizen science to record invasive species records and distribution. Identify a specific focus for target audiences in invasive species identification, reporting, and control.

OBJECTIVE:

Increase and improve search efforts for invasive species with an emphasis on newly establishing invasive species to contain their populations to a smaller area.

TASK: Assess and adopt a statewide list of existing and emerging invasive species priorities on an ongoing basis to inform policy, detection, management, and research.

TASK: Identify areas at risk of invasion by species that are established elsewhere, both within and beyond state borders.

TASK: Develop training and educational programs to improve our ability to identify species that are spreading from landscaping and gardens.

TASK: Establish dedicated early detection teams and funding to improve the likelihood of identifying newly establishing invasive species in Montana.

OBJECTIVE

Improve monitoring for invasive species populations and control efforts to ensure that management is measured, analyzed, and evaluated for effectiveness.

TASK: Provide invasive species tools and resources to the public for improved knowledge and identification of invasive species.

TASK: Share and evaluate monitoring protocols and reporting of results in a way that is accessible and protects sensitive landowner data.

TASK: Require standardized monitoring as part of state grant funded invasive species activities and report on results to create a shared adaptive management approach for invasive species.





RAPID RESPONSE

Build capacity to eradicate, control, or contain populations of invasive species that have newly invaded and pose a risk to Montana.

OBJECTIVE

Develop a generalized rapid response plan for emerging invasive species.

TASK: Review existing plans, summarize existing authorities, and assess gaps in regulatory tools that facilitate rapid response.

TASK: Identify planning needs to improve rapid response capacity.

TASK: Prioritize areas with high-value resources at risk of invasive species introductions.

OBJECTIVE

Improve the capacity to respond to new invasions of high priority invasive species to contain their spread, limiting the damage they cause.

TASK: Develop necessary regulatory tools for rapid response to invasive species.

TASK: Draft formal agreements that reflect the resources needed to carry out generalized rapid response plans.

TASK: Map sensitive areas subject to restrictions on management actions that could limit the type of invasive species control efforts required by a rapid response.

TASK: Develop a cost-benefit analysis that creates a comprehensive, prioritized list of invasive species for rapid response in Montana.

TASK: Develop a dedicated rapid response fund and mechanism for approving rapid response actions that includes all-taxa.

TASK: Establish a process for revising priority rapid response, all-taxa invasive species lists.

OBJECTIVE

Prepare natural resources managers to effectively use all tools available to improve the outcomes of rapid response actions.

TASK: Commit to the use of Incident Command System for invasive species rapid responses.

TASK: Develop and support carrying out joint exercises and training for managers working with invasive species.

TASK: Train staff in preparation for a rapid response.

TASK: Develop and maintain a directory of specialists (e.g. taxonomic experts, ecologists, enforcement, commercial pesticide applicators, policy and regulatory experts) in anticipation of multi-partner teams.





CONTROL

Reduce the negative impact of established invasive species to Montana's economy, environment, and culture.

OBJECTIVE

Grow both capacity and expertise in managing invasive species in Montana to improve program effectiveness.

TASK: Connect current research with managing invasive species through discussions, funding, and cooperative projects on priority invasive species.

TASK: Increase funding for cost-share with private landowners, tribes, and other stakeholders and use incentives to manage invasive species.

TASK: Identify a library of best control practices as well as uniform standards to train partners managing invasive species.

TASK: Identify, train, and support personnel who can provide invasive species control expertise (for species other than plants).

TASK: Hire full-time county weed coordinators or combined county coordinators and provide these staff with training on grant writing and property weed assessments.

TASK: Encourage land trusts and other established coalitions to work with landowners to manage invasive species.

TASK: Expand communication with landowners to improve understanding of existing regulations and science and to encourage invasive species management through existing programs and industry partners.

TASK: Establish a process for revising lists of priority invasive species that landowners are required to control, which informs and engages stakeholders, allows time for review and adoption, and clarifies compliance goals.

OBJECTIVE

Expand collaborative working relationships with enforcement agencies to increase compliance with existing regulations for invasive species.

TASK: Provide more capacity and consistency of enforcement to implement invasive species regulations that currently exist.

TASK: Explore forming a regulatory oversight forum to provide a venue to tribal, state, federal, and local government to address enforcement issues that arise.

TASK: Provide counties with more authority to fully utilize and enforce existing weed laws including a tiered approach based on species priority level.



OBJECTIVE

Ensure that invasive species control restores the desired ecological, economic, and cultural values to the land that is being managed.

TASK: Study the impact of invasive species on the land values (productivity, wildlife, or other values) to demonstrate the value of invasive species management.

TASK: Draft management plans to control established invasive species that will benefit from ongoing control efforts.

TASK: Expand local expertise and capacity to carry out planning and environmental compliance for invasive species management.

TASK: Identify incentives for encouraging required control work.

TASK: Monitor the impacts of invasive species control efforts on non-target organisms.

TASK: Increase capacity for restoration and revegetation.

TASK: Celebrate success stories and make demonstration sites available to showcase how invasive species can be managed successfully.



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