

MEETING MINUTES

These abbreviated summary minutes will become the official adopted minutes at the next Montana Invasive Species Council meeting when they will be approved. Until then, they are considered a draft.

Meeting Name:	Montana Invasive Species Council		
Date of Meeting:	October 16, 2025	Time:	8:30 am
Minutes Prepared By:	Nicole Hallsten & Liz Lodman	Location:	Fort Peck Fish Hatchery / Zoom
Attendees:			
<p><i>MISC: <u>Charles Headdress</u>, <u>Dylan Brown</u>, <u>Jasmine Chaffee</u>, <u>Jason Allen</u>, <u>Karen Latitala</u>, <u>Michael Bias</u>, <u>Sara Ricklefs</u>, <u>Steve Wanderaas</u>, <u>Tom Woolf</u>, <u>Rose Picklo</u> (proxy for Jake Chadwell). Virtual: <u>Pam Schwend</u>, <u>Jared Beaver</u></i></p> <p><i>MISC Staff: Liz Lodman, Russ Hartzell, Nicole Hallsten</i></p> <p><i>Absent members: Andy Welch, Dennis Longknife, Taylor Tidwell, Martin Charlo, Paul Rossignol, Sean Fritzler, Tracy Tyner and all federal members.</i></p> <p><i>Partners & Guests: Brent Smith, Emily Kaleczyc, James Bolyard, , Tahnee Szymanski, Todd Anderson, Trish Smith, Isayava Valverde-Vindas, Carley Chapman. Virtual: Bryce Christiaens, Molly Masters, Bryce Maxwell, Casey Lewis, Clarissa Orton, Sara Owen, Jason Mohr, Amber Burch, Stephen Phillips, Hannah Walker, Ben Holen, Doug Ekberg, Emily Henry, Josh Wagoner</i></p> <p><small>*MISC voting members are underlined.</small></p>			
Agenda & Notes, Decisions, Issues			
Topic	Discussion		
Welcome, Role Call & Minutes	Steve Wanderaas (Chair) opened the meeting at 8:34 am. Conducted roll call and confirmed the quorum.		
	<p>Attendees introduced themselves. Recorded presentation does not follow agenda in order to accommodate speaker schedules.</p> <p>*ACTION: Motion to approve minutes from the July meeting.</p> <p>Motion: Sara Ricklefs</p> <p>Second: Jason Allen</p> <p>No further discussion.</p> <p>Motion passed unanimously.</p>		
MISC Staff Updates Liz Lodman Russ Hartzell	<p><u>Council Member Updates:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charles Headdress, representing Fort Peck tribes, will not reapply for another term with MISC. <p><u>Budget:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FY25: Final accounting figures were shared for fiscal year 2025 and reviewed by category. FY26: Accounts have not yet been updated by DNRC so there is nothing to share. 		

MISC Staff Updates
Liz Lodman
Russ Hartzell

4-P: Share idea inputs for workplans

- The 4-P document (proposed projects, programs and priorities) was shared *again*. Council needs to provide guidance for actions.
- Comments:
 - Make sure agenda of the council is driven by the council. Council members need to speak up.
 - Disconnect between hunters and feral swine control. Do we need more targeted outreach to hunting groups, wildlife society
 - Suggest working with social media and influencers
 - Invite influencers to meetings, like Ryan Calahan/Meateater or Randy Newberg
 - Opportunity for listening session or focus groups to see how they would frame a message to their peers
 - Can MISC have a discussion about ticks
 - GEO tags for specific locations can be useful

Summit 2026

Summits are held every 2 years; the next one is in 2026. This group needs to decide:

- Dates: October or November
- Location: Butte, Great Falls or Helena
- Topic: Pathways
 - What are outcomes if we choose this topic
 - Could include communications session
 - Funding is often associated with a species and not a pathway, so pathways get left out
- Facilitator: need to decide process
- Planning Committee: Steve, Karen, Tom, & Pam volunteered
 - Need to check with federal partners for input and to join committee

Responses to the Menti prompt about pathways:



MISC Staff Updates
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Russ Hartzell

AIS Management Plan – Section G

Plan is available on the FWP website. Last FWP plan is from 2004. Plan is under review by Aquatic Nuisance Species Task in DC. Final approval of management plan has been delayed due to government shutdown.

- **G.1.2: AIS list**
 - Dept of Ag workgroup voted to make separate priority for aquatic plants (3 noxious, 2 regulated). FWP is writing language for management. Makes clear between terrestrial and aquatic who is responsible. FWP will add 8 more plants to list. The proposal is currently before Ag and FWP Directors for review. Will go through public review/hearing by spring 2026. This will move Eurasian watermilfoil, curlyleaf pondweed, and flowering rush under FWP management.
- **G.1.2.1 Add species to prohibited species list**
 - FWP plans to add these species to prohibited list - golden mussels, corbicula clams, mystery snails (species available in aquarium trade). MISC will support this effort.
- **G.1.3 Pull the plug legislation**
 - Effort in western states to harmonize this law so plugs are out during transport. Pulled plugs would help with draining boats and improve enforcement.
- **G.1.4 Increased penalties for non-compliance**
 - No action, HB242 passed in 2025 legislature increased penalties.
- **G.1.5 AIS trust fund**
 - Balance is currently \$3,625,796.26. Capped at \$100 million before it can be utilized. At future meeting have discussion about function of trust funds.
- **G.1.6 Review and clarify overlapping AIS responsibilities**
 - FWP will initiate a meeting between directors of FWP and DNRC
- **G.1.7 Statutory requirement for integrating tech-based inspect before launch verification**
 - FWP and MISC will monitor new developments. Look into I-LIDS (Internet Landing Installed Device Sensor) that Ben Holden mentioned in his presentation.
- **Other tasks: Explore ways to promote acknowledgement of AIS staff through awards, recognition, and appreciation.**
 - This was discussed at AIS partner meeting. MISC is a good avenue to help with this. Look at the Montana Weed Control Association award program.

Department of Commerce

- Liz and Russ met with Taylor Tidwell to discuss ways that Commerce can assist with invasive species effort and messaging. Several ideas were shared.
- Need to work with Pat Doyle about the Visit MT website that targets tourists

<p>MISC Staff Updates Liz Lodman Russ Hartzell</p>	<p><u>Don't Move Firewood</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MISC has hosted 2 interns to promote this effort; Fern McBride in 2024 and Mia White in 2025. MISC needs a partner in eastern Montana for 2026 efforts. DNRC mailed 9 thousand postcards to out-of-state hunters with message to not bring firewood. Through our Forest Service Grant, MISC donated \$1k to cover postage costs. <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops: MISC has been sharing a survey to gather input from organizations that would benefit from attending a communications workshop. Webinars: what topics would benefit partners, MISC can help organize. MISC e-Newsletter: starting a segment called <i>Stories from the Front-Line</i> to share on-the-ground and good news stories. Please share your ideas, videos, etc. T-shirts: to promote the <i>invasive species to watch</i> list, t-shirts featuring zebra mussels, bullfrogs, and eastern heath snail have arrived. Plan to continue this series with rush skeleton weed and feral swine. Could turn designs into stickers.
<p>Committee Updates</p>	<p><u>Science Advisory Panel (SAP)</u> Assess Invasiveness SAP - Bryce Christiaens This SAP sought to explore tools for assessment of invasive species that could come to Montana, determine if the legal definition of invasive species is adequate, and assess impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest clarifying word changes to the definition of invasive species Apply tools from other states Continue discussing <i>pathways</i> rather than specific <i>species</i> Next steps: Meeting Oct 24th to look at tools and strategies that will fit with work done at MTHNP and fund a prototype assessment trainer. <p>Future SAP topics – group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective messages to change behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WRP is working on this and it's too big for an SAP project Frontiers in control – what's changed to improve management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drones, thermal cameras, AI programs, eDNA technology Invasive annual grasses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other states use fuels money to treat invasive grasses, should Montana pursue this? How does Montana keep up with western states in causing landscape scale changes in annual grasses? Climate change – risks for known invasives and potential shifts Next meeting: council will ask for input and other ideas, prioritize options, and vote on topic; need a champion move forward

Committee Updates	<p><u>Citizen Science - Bryce Maxell</u></p> <p>Montana Natural Heritage Program is partnering with MISC to promote invasive species reporting in conjunction with existing citizen science efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote growth of reporting and connection to species around us (native & invasive) ○ Enhance early detection and rapid responses ○ Create websites with links to citizen science effort and resources • Workgroup formed to develop this project. Plan to create a postcard, wanted poster, and training materials. <p>*MISC will send an invite for next meeting.</p> <p><u>Woody Invasives - Sara Ricklefs</u></p> <p>Efforts to Date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held 3 working groups meeting 2023 through 2025 • Hosted 2 Science Advisory Panels through a contract with MISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2023: Management Best Practices-see what other have ○ 2024: Ecological/ Economic Impacts • Created outreach materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identification tri-fold brochure ○ IPM Guides for each species • Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Radio, online, social media, and sponsored content article • Management Plan draft will be out by end of October. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public comment on draft open for 1 month • Impact study being conducted by Flathead Lake Bio Station through a sub-contract from MISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Could present at the December MISC meeting • Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning a field tour for summer 2026 – contacts are Molly Masters and Amy Seaman ○ Host working group meeting annually ○ Update Management Plan as needed (ideally every 5-10 years) ○ Ideas for more funding? Land management, WRCDC, sponsorships? <p>Q: If funds were available, is it beneficial to continue the working group and is ISAN interested.</p> <p>A: Coordination money is hard to come by, more funding is available for management. Stakeholders need to decide if meeting is beneficial. Still possible to apply for Noxious Weed Trust Fund grants for bigger projects.</p> <p>*MISC agreed the Woody Invasives Working Group is valuable and MISC should continue to be involved.</p>

Feral Swine Updates

Dept of Livestock - Feral Swine - Tahnee Szymanski

Update on feral swine reports in Montana and Phillips county detection

- Feral swine laws can be found here:
 - [MCA 81-29-101 to 106](#) – definition, control, presence, prohibitions, and penalties.
 - [MCA 81-4-201](#) – Animals running at large

	Reports	Live pigs	Carcass or pig sign	Confirmed as domestic	Other Outcomes
2025	5	4	1	3*	No swine observed, domestic animal population to be removed*.
2024	9	6	3	4	No swine observed, use of aerial surveillance, game cameras, and local canvassing
2023	4	3	1	3	Genetic testing

- Recent detection in Phillips County. Reported as bear damage. USDA-WS investigated and found pig sign.
 - Determined to be domestic swine living uncontained, estimated 125 pigs.
 - Trapping operations are currently underway. Game cameras are in place.
 - Pigs will be shipped to Producer Partnerships for processing.
 - Cooperative operation between the owners, MT Dept of Livestock, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks, and USDA-Wildlife Services.
- Introduction of new veterinarian Dr. Emily Kaleczyc.
- Dept. of Livestock request MISC to provide SWAG for people reporting feral swine, ballcaps and t-shirts.

Q: Do you have concerns about Colorado hog hunting ranch.

A: This type of operation is not allowed in Montana. Need to keep amplifying the message that feral pigs are restricted in Montana.

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corp (SCIC) - Dale Knouse

Update on SCIC Feral Wild Boar Control Program

- SCIC coordinates sightings, monitoring and removal. Investigate every sighting and employ qualified hunters/trapper to work with landowners and rural municipalities. Have removed 1,000 pigs since 2017.
- Provide compensation for wildlife damage of crops or livestock.
 - In 2024 SCIC paid \$14,000 for feral swine damage compared to \$24 million for all other wildlife damage.

- In 1980- 90's swine were imported from Europe for livestock diversification efforts then released intentionally or accidentally when markets were not realized.
- SK still has wild boar farms (hunting and production) but now require licenses, fencing, and inspections. Cannot sell farms, only passed on through family succession.
- Website with map of wild pig reports at <https://www.wildpigs.ca>
 - Black dot = verified report of any type of pig (domestic or wild)
 - Blue square = field activities where a province is investigating the sighting
 - Orange square = areas with wild pigs and field activates



Saskatchewan Feral Swine Management

Sighting and Trapping Statistics

2024 Reported Sightings

- 13 domestic pig
- 15 wild boar
- 21 unverified

Animals Removed

- 2021 season – 186
- 2022 season – 186
- 2023 season – 128
- 2024 season – 65

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach awareness strategies include <i>Squeal On Pigs</i> billboards, YouTube ads, and Facebook ads. <p>Q: How much is spent to manage feral swine. A: get \$200,000 <i>Canadian</i> each year for trapper wages, adjustor expenses, and promotion.</p> <p>Q: Will map be updated? A: Yes, it will be updated annually.</p>
AIS Updates	<p><u>Montana FWP Aquatic Invasive Species – Tom Woolf</u></p> <p>AIS Update for 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 FWP funded watercraft stations, 8 still open through October 26th • Over 97,000 vessels inspected in 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 37 mussel fouled vessels, 21 were destined for Montana waters ○ 550 weed fouled vessels ○ Boats transported by brokers from mid-west are a problem • Fort Peck BIG project interviewed 117 boaters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Over half were from North Dakota; only 3 had not been inspected – entered at night or road did not pass by inspection station • Over 2,300 early detection samples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No invasive mussel detections • Tom shared information about Golden Mussels in California, Quagga mussels in Idaho’s Snake River, and Zebra mussels in Colorado and Smishek Lake in North Dakota • AIS Summit is Oct 29-30 in Helena <p><u>North Dakota Game & Fish Aquatic Nuisance Species– Ben Holen</u></p> <p>Zebra Mussels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First found in Red River in 2010. Currently in 3 rivers and 7 lakes. • Explanation of ANS history, funding, staff enhancements, outreach and laws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Used boat docks and lifts infested mussel are a big issue • Hire 20 roving watercraft inspectors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 11,000+ watercraft inspections ○ 8 fouled watercraft ○ Piloted contract inspection program • Equipment Inspections (out-of-state barges, tugboats, large workboats) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 200+ pieces of large commercial equipment inspected ○ 30 pieces had mussels • Prevention Devices – wash stations, CD3, and I-LIDS • Bait inspections, hatchery inspections, pet store visits • Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 170 waterbodies and 2,000+ plankton tow net samples ○ Vegetation samples, substrate checks, snorkel surveys <p>Smishek Lake Mussel Detection - 2025 Reservoir is 195 acres, 2 miles long, 20 ft deep; 70 miles from Montana’s border</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept 25: veligers identified and adults mussels confirmed • Sept 26-27: Follow up sampling downstream • Sept 29 – Oct 3: Treatment planning, additional sampling, consultation with White Earth • Oct 6-10: Finalize treatment plan & post treatment monitoring, press release and notify stakeholders, receive EarthtecQZ • Oct 13-17: Treatment and monitoring • May-June 2026: plan a triple dose treatment
Round Robin Updates	<p>Jason Allen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rush skeleton weed is showing up randomly all over the state. MDT and counties have jumped on treating. <p>Jasmine Chaffee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SJ42 bill looks at all noxious weed laws so the EQC task is huge. EQC will have a report by end of next year. Email thoughts about weed laws to Jasmine. • EDRR species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rush skeletonweed: Beaverhead county-4 new sites, Broadwater county-1 site, East Helena-1 site, Flathead county-1 site, Ravalli county-2 large sites. ○ Dyers Wold: no new sites this year ○ Phragmites: Three Forks/Willow Creek-1 site, Bozeman-1, Hill/Blaine county along railroad-1 site, near Hwy 93 north of Missoula-1 site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dept of Ag has tested all suspect sites to determine native vs. invasive. ○ Palmer amaranth: found a plant in Hill county ○ Water hemp: plants are established in northern part of state • Noxious weed trust fund: Grants close January 6, 2026. All Forest Service funding has opened up. Several council member positions are open. • Weed free materials: Gaining traction on gravel pit inspections. Got funding to purchase a drone and will test at gravel pit and weed free forage inspections. • Education: Still working on website, need to make ADA compliant. New materials are being printed. • Ag Corps: Funding was cut, but 4 of the 8 members were shifted to another program and stayed on. Next year Ag will have full funding for 14 members. <p>Karen Laitala</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For EQC SJ42 recommend updating law that requires both a weed board and weed coordinator. Current law only requires a weed board. • Weed coordinators are winterizing equipment, finishing projects, writing reports and proposals. <p>Mike Bias</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOAM hosts an advanced guide school called <i>Guiding for the Future</i>, Tom Woolf presents about AIS at these schools. Hosted a school in Maine in 2023. Working with Wyoming to establish a professional fishing guide business license and school.

<p>Round Robin Updates</p>	<p>Charles Headdress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost position that hires young people that tested water quality and worked with FWP fisheries crews. • Natural Resource Department looks for weeds on reservation. • Stepping down from MISC but will recommend a replacement after their tribal election. <p>Rose Picklo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNRC deployed 61 traps for spongy moths around Missoula – all negative. • 2024 Spongy moth positive detection at Red Lodge-Basin campground. Conducted delineation survey in 2025 - all negative. • Updated the Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan this spring. Amy Gannon is talking to Idaho about response planning. • In 2017 DNRC started to look at impacts of white pine blister rust on limber pine along Rocky Mountain Front. This year visited 24 of 31 survey sites. • Suggest a MISC field trip to Rocky Mountain Front to look at white pine blister rust. Nature Conservancy has a compound where we could meet. • Service Forester in Miles City is hanging up Don't Move Firewood signs at rest areas. *MISC will look into visiting with this group. <p>Sara Ricklefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third pet rehoming event was held in Helena. Received 40 fish (29 goldfish). Seeing a steady increase in surrendered pets and requests to come back to communities. This is filling a great need. Zoo Montana and pet stores who help rehome pets are valuable partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Next event in Bozeman in spring 2026. • Working with 4-H and Fair boards to suggest goldfish not be given away during the fair. <p>Q: Does ISAN still visit pet stores with Don't Let It Loose program. A. No, FWP has taken over these visits and got resources (bags and stickers) from ISAN.</p> <p>Dylan Brown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His company has consistently treated rush skeletonweed at a site in Wyoming and it has not increased or moved. <p>Jared Beaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote a feral swine article for <i>Lives and Landscapes</i> magazine and is working on <i>MontGuide</i> for feral swine. <p>Pam Schwend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently became an associate member of the Conservation Board, will bring MISC issue to CD. Filled in for the Stillwater Co Extension Agent at NILE and taught 415-4th graders about rangeland.
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<p>Round Robin Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February is National Invasive Species Awareness Week – need to start planning. *MISC will help plan. <p>Steve Wanderaas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McCone CD is planning a drone workshop in Circle in November. Attended the Watercraft Inspection Partners meeting in Great Falls; CD operated WIS are rolling along good. Going to NAISMA. Presented to MaCO about funding needs for weed districts and that the effort needs to be led by county commissioners. There was no discussion afterwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke with Director Kaster who suggested follow up discussion with Governor’s Budget Director and include Natural Resource Advisor Rich Roth. Need to bring Dept of Ag Director into conversation.
<p>Wrap Up & Adjourn</p>	<p>Public Comment:</p> <p>CEMIST - Brent Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIS train the trainer workshop is next week in Billings; participants are down due to government shutdown Planning an invasive annual grasses workshop in Winnett in February or March. Inviting presenters from MSU extension, Dept of Ag and University of Wyoming IMAGINE group. CEMIST has over 2,800 direct contacts on invasive species for the year. Held the AIS Lake Elmo Days, funded by an AIS grant. Worked with FWP AIS crew. Invite surrounding schools; had 171 kids over 1.5 days. <p>Bryce Maxell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated invasive risk models for vascular plants-Link Added species: everlasting (used in floral arrangements) recorded near Troy, sessile fruit arrowhead in northern Idaho but not Montana yet, spotted lantern fly potential occurrence in MT, garden forget me knot, weak leaf bursage. 1+ million observation records for non-native species in Montana. EQC asked for fact sheet on how MTNHP centralized data. Suggest for Steve’s discussion about noxious weed management to add representatives from industry -- Northwestern Energy, Forest Council. <p>MISC Exe Com meeting scheduled for Oct 20 is cancelled.</p> <p>*Action: Motion to adjourn the meeting Motion: Karen Laitala Second: Dylan Brown No further discussion Motion passed unanimously</p> <p>Meeting adjourned at 4:33 pm.</p>