

Meeting of the Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council
Tuesday, September 7, 2021 | 10:00am
(Held virtually via Microsoft Teams)

** All text in italics indicates additional information included by the minute taker except where scientific names are mentioned.*

Council Members Present: Amy Jewitt, Andrew Ernst, Andrew Rohrbaugh, Donald Eggen, Felicia Lamphere, Fred Strathmeyer, Gary Walters, Gregg Robertson, James Grazio, Jeffrey Wagner, Jocelyn Behm, John J. Bell, Joseph Demko, Julie Urban, Kate Harms, Lisa Murphy, Maddie Stanisch, Mary Beth Ruh, Matthew Helmus, Piper Sherburne, Ruth Welliver, Sara Stahlman, Sarah Whitney, Scott Bearer, Sean Hartzell, Sean Mahoney, Steven Laskowsky

Other Participants Present: Kerry Golden, Bradley Cardinale, Anni Li, Anya Held, April Moore, Brant Portner, Brenda R. Wasler, Bryon Ruhl, Carrie (*last name not provided*), Catherine Zeigler, Christopher Strickler, Deb Klenotic, Erik Johnson, Erin Lee Frederick, Jamie Kopko, Jennifer Dean, Jennifer Schwartz, Jessica Lenker, Johnny Zook, Jonathan Geyer, Joseph Sieber, Karl Brown, Kate (*last name not provided*), Kathryn Schmidt, Kaylan Hubbard, Kelly Donaldson, Kevin Hess, Kierstin Carlson, Kris Abell, Kristen Frentzel, Lawrence Barringer, Lisa Candelore, Mary Walsh, Matthew Goldsmith, Melissa Harrison, Michael Hutchinson, Nick Decker, Phillip Stober, Rachel Reese, Shea Zwerver, Tamara Peffer, Tom Cermak

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Fred Strathmeyer (PA Department of Agriculture - PDA) gave opening remarks and provided a general overview of how today's meeting will be run, saying that Council members will be given time to conduct their business according to the agenda and a public comment period will be provided at the end. The Chat feature (*in Microsoft Teams*) will be monitored for questions that can be discussed during the public comment period.

Announcements, Roll Call, and Approval of Minutes

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) conducted the roll call. A quorum is present.

MOTION: Piper Sherburne (PA Association of Conservation Districts - PACD) moved to approve the June 8th, 2021 minutes. Joe Demko (PennDOT) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Fred thanked members of the PA Invasive Species Council (PISC) for all their recent hard work, referencing mentions of PISC during the [August 24th, 2021 public legislative hearing on invasive species](#).



[Watch a recording of the August 24, 2021 public hearing on invasive species in rural PA.](#)

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned Kimberly Bohn has resigned her role as an alternate member on PISC representing the Pennsylvania State University (PSU). Kris is talking with Julie Urban, the primary representative of PSU on PISC, to identify a replacement for Kimberly. If anyone else has ideas/suggestions for a potential replacement, please notify Kris.

Invasive Species Listing Committee

Spokespersons: Andrew Rohrbaugh, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Sean Hartzell, PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)

Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) began by saying that a survey was completed by PISC members that ranked priority invasive plants. The results from that survey have been compiled, along with supplementary information, in one centralized document. (*For clarity, this centralized document will be referred to as the “Survey Results Document”.*) The Survey Results Document includes each species’ weighted rank (i.e., highest priority down to lowest priority), current noxious weed rank, New York State/Western PA Conservancy invasive species risk assessment score, whether

each species is aquatic or terrestrial, an economic importance rank from the PA Landscape and Nursery Association (PLNA), and an invasive plant rank as determined by DCNR.

The Survey Results Document will be posted on the PISC website and include descriptions of each category (*as outlined above*) and ranking to ensure a thorough understanding by PISC members and the general public. Once online, the list will help provide notice of which species are being worked on/researched by the Invasive Species Listing Committee as future recommendations to the Pennsylvania Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee (CP&NWC) for consideration as noxious weeds. This list will be maintained to ensure it remains current.

The Invasive Species Listing Committee still needs to ensure New York State is agreeable to having their invasive species risk assessments added to the PISC website.

Name	PISC Priority Weighted Average	PA Noxious Weed Rank	NY/WPC Assessment	Aquatic or Terrestrial	PLNA Economic Importance Ranking	DCNR Rank
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i> Tree-of-Heaven	9.06	B	68	Terrestrial	0.48	1
<i>Persicaria perfoliata</i> Mile-A-Minute	8.71	B	91.11	Terrestrial		1
<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i> Giant hogweed	8.63	A	72	Terrestrial		1
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> Purple Loosestrife	8.25	B	91			1
<i>Pueraria lobata</i> Kudzu	8.12	A	84.44	Terrestrial		1
<i>Fallopia japonica</i> Japanese Knotweed	8	B	97.94	Terrestrial	0.26	1
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i> Japanese Stiltgrass	7.88	B	85	Terrestrial	0.38	1
<i>Phragmites australis</i> ssp <i>australis</i> Common Reed	7.76	Currently under review with CPNWC	92		0.5	1

Partial view of Survey Results Document.

The Invasive Species Listing Committee created a “Top 25” Invasive Plant List to be recommended for review by the CP&NWC as potential noxious weeds in Pennsylvania. Species chosen for inclusion on this list were determined based on the overall rankings from the Survey Results Document.

Many species on the “Top 25” list are known to be invasive in Pennsylvania. Andrew feels several could potentially be listed as [Class B](#) noxious weeds. Note: The “Top 25” list actually includes more than 25 individual species on it (e.g., certain plants such as Autumn olive and Russian olive are grouped together under one category – “olives”).

Gregg Robertson (PA Landscape and Nursery Association - PLNA) commented that PLNA members were asked to rank the economic importance of species on the Survey Results Document from 1-10. PLNA member feedback was then compiled into a weighted average and listed in the “PLNA Economic Importance Score” column of the Survey Results Document and the “Top 25” list.

“Top 25” Invasive Plant List Recommendation for the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee base on PISC Priority Ranking Survey*

Species Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	PISC Priority Score (1-10)	NY Assessment Score (1-100)	PLNA Economic Importance Score (1-10)
1	Phalaris arundinacea	Reed Canary Grass	7.18	77.78	1.75
2	Berberis vulgaris	European Barberry	6.12	68.75	2.25
3	Frangula alnus	Glossy Buckthorn	6	72.73	1.54
3	Rhamnus cathartica	Common Buckthorn	5.76	81	2.25
4	Elaeagnus angustifolia	Russian Olive	6.59	68	1.46
4	Elaeagnus umbellata	Autumn Olive	6.35	94	1.43
5	Lonicera fragrantissima	Sweet Breath Honeysuckle	2.94	n/a	2.18
5	Lonicera japonica	Japanese Honeysuckle	6.35	83.51	3.08
5	Lonicera maackii	Amur Honeysuckle	5.41	84.44	2.18
5	Lonicera morrowii x bella	Beautiful Honeysuckle	3.88	85.54	1.79
5	Lonicera morrowii	Morrow’s Honeysuckle	5.25	85.54	2.44
5	Lonicera standishii	Standish Honeysuckle	3.75	78.5	1.28
5	Lonicera tatarica	Tartarian Honeysuckle	5.06	85.54	2.5
6	Myriophyllum spicatum	Eurasian Watermilfoil	4.75	100	0.26

Partial view of “Top 25” Invasive Plant List to be recommended to the CP&NWC. Notice the Species Group number (far left column) includes duplicate numbers, indicating more than 25 species are on this list. For example, similar species such as olives, buckthorns, and honeysuckles are grouped together under one Species Group number.

During today’s PISC meeting, Andrew wants the Council to vote on sending the “Top 25” list to the CP&NWC as recommendations for listing as PA noxious weeds. Many of these species are known to be problematic due to their invasiveness, and several are currently for sale or have been for sale in the past.

Andrew noted that if a vote is taken and passed by PISC, what the CP&NWC does as far as listing these species as noxious weeds (or not) is up to the CP&NWC, not PISC.

MOTION: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) moved that the “Top 25 Invasive Plant List be recommended for future consideration by the Pennsylvania Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee for listing as noxious weeds in Pennsylvania. Lisa Murphy (University of Pennsylvania) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Note: Discussion regarding the motion included a question from April Moore (USDA Forest Service). She asked if distribution information for species on the “Top 25” list was used to determine the PISC priority score. Andrew said no; the PISC priority score was based on the results of the survey that was sent to PISC members. He also commented that many of the species on the “Top 25” list are fairly well distributed in the Commonwealth, further contributing to the problems they pose.

Next steps for this Committee include continued work on species assessments and economic impact assessments. Sean Hartzell (PFBC) has been working on aquatic species, and Andrew has been working on plants. A DCNR technician should also be helping with this effort over the summer. Andrew talked with [Dr. Norris Muth](#) (Professor of Biology at Juniata College) about the possibility of having some of his students run assessments as part of a classroom exercise (results of which would be used by this committee). Andrew noted the assessments are not difficult to do, but are time-consuming, so help from Dr. Muth's students would be of great value to Andrew and the Invasive Species Listing Committee.

Andrew started reviewing the Survey Results Document and identified species he considers to be "Early Detection, Rapid Response" (EDRR), species that would fall under the [Class A](#) or [Class C](#) noxious weed category. Twenty-four species were identified by Andrew as EDRR. Andrew viewed distribution data for these species in iMapInvasives and EDDMapS; based on this review, they do not appear to be in Pennsylvania currently, or have very limited distribution. However, more review is needed to better determine their known locations. For example, a few populations of Giant reed (*Arundo donax*) were found in Pittsburgh; this is a species previously not thought to be in Pennsylvania.

Other species are also being researched (outside of the current list of suggestions) including those known from areas more south or north of Pennsylvania. The hope would be to prevent their sale or transport into the Commonwealth. If these species did appear in Pennsylvania, having risk assessments already completed would allow for more immediate EDRR action to be taken. In the future, these additional EDRR species would be provided to the CP&NWC as recommendations for listing as noxious weeds.

Andrew asked Council members if there are concerns related to adding the "Top 25" and EDRR lists to the PISC website as public knowledge, once complete. Don Eggen (DCNR) commented that the purpose of the lists would need to be clearly stated on the website to ensure clarity.

Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee

Spokesperson: Andrew Rohrbaugh, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Note: The CP&NWC is a separate committee that is not part of the PA Invasive Species Council. However, the work of the Invasive Species Listing Committee is directly related to the CP&NWC because of the recommendations the Invasive Species Listing Committee is compiling and sending onto the CP&NWC.

Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) was voted to be added as a Class B noxious weed (*at the July 15, 2021 CP&NWC meeting*). There will be a two-year delay (grace period) for when that

ruling will be enforced. The CP&NWC discussed adding a white-list of approved barberry cultivars (*that could be offered for sale*), though more work needs to be done on this effort. Andrew plans to discuss this topic further with Trilby Libhart (Botanist at the PA Department of Agriculture). Andrew noted that any approved cultivars would need to have rigorous scientific evidence (i.e., long term studies) completed which show a certain species cannot spread or reproduce. If an individual person wants their barberry cultivar(s) approved, any additions to a white-list will need to be voted on and approved by the CP&NWC.

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) were also added as Class B noxious weeds (*at the July 15, 2021 CP&NWC meeting*).

A vote on adding Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) as a noxious weed was delayed due to the need for more research (i.e., further analysis of this species' use as a rootstock for both edible and ornamental pear varieties). Subsequent research has not yielded any concerns for listing this species as a Class B noxious weed. Gregg Robertson (PLNA) conducted most of the research on Callery pear rootstocks by reaching out to Pennsylvania growers.

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis ssp. australis*) discussions are ongoing. This species is currently being used in some sewage treatment plants as part of their dewatering process. The CP&NWC is trying to work through how these plant populations would be handled (*if phragmites were listed as a noxious weed*).

The next meeting of the CP&NWC is scheduled for October 21, 2021.

PRISM Program Committee

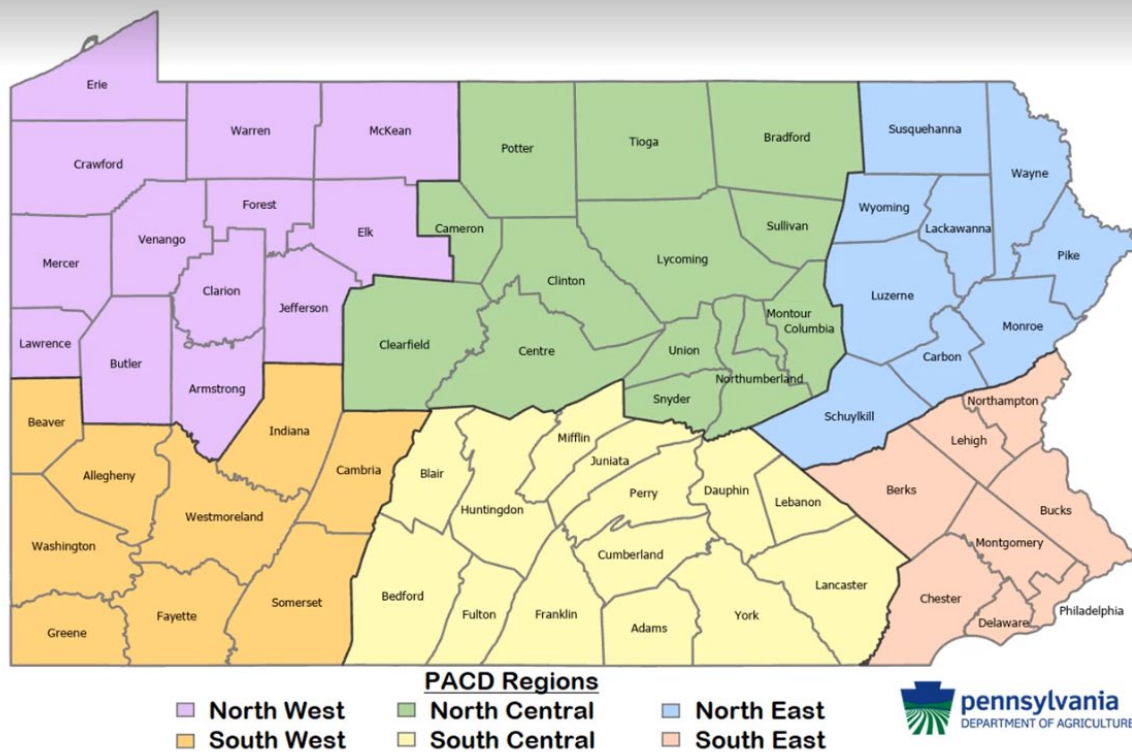
Spokesperson: Kris Abell, PA Department of Agriculture (PDA)

[PRISMs](#) (Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management) and the idea for their implementation in Pennsylvania originated from the PA Invasive Species Council. A PRISM program is a statewide, comprehensive invasive species management program and some of its key features include the following:

- **State-funded**
 - Monies are provided for coordinators, staff, contracts, supplies, and materials to address the magnitude of invasive species issues occurring in the state. Substantial and sustainable long-term funding will be needed.
- **Regionally-based**

- Current plan is to divide Pennsylvania into six unique regions; each region and its stakeholders will be tasked with prioritizing and dealing with their individual/specialized invasive species issues.
- **Collaborative and cooperative**
 - PRISMs are supported (capacity-wise) by a partnership of federal, state, and local groups. This is important because invasive species do not respect boundaries or borders, so a variety of stakeholders are needed to obtain the best management outcomes.
- **Locally and community focused**
 - Each PRISM region will have a single host organization that administers a PRISM program in their respective region. Among other duties, each host organization will be tasked with bringing together local communities and interested individuals to work on invasive species issues. (This is in comparison to a host organization being located in a centralized office and dealing with invasive species issues at a statewide scale.)

Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Regions



This map shows the agreed-upon PA PRISM regions as voted on by Council members. They are based on the current PA Association of Conservation District (PACD) regions. These boundaries were chosen based on established infrastructure and pre-existing partnerships already in the state.

Kris noted that funding has not yet been secured for a PRISM program in Pennsylvania. The program is still in the planning stages; however, a full budget proposal has been completed and is ready to be sent to the appropriate individuals when the time comes.

When funding is provided for a PA PRISM program, a detailed plan will be needed for how the program will be implemented across the Commonwealth. Therefore, the PRISM Program Committee broke into five different subcommittees, each of which discussed individual needs for a PA PRISM program. All subcommittees worked on a different task including:

- Request for proposals (RFP) development
- Review committee for RFP evaluation and host organization selection
- Statement-of-work (i.e., develop expectations for host organization, reporting requirements, and deliverables)
- PRISM 5-year strategic plan guidelines
- Geographic information systems (GIS) and data management (i.e., central clearinghouse)

The next step for the PRISM Program Committee is to form another new subcommittee to integrate each of the above-mentioned items into one cohesive plan. This group has been established and is comprised of a single representative from each of the five pre-existing subcommittees. Note: The five pre-existing subcommittees are now dissolved because they have produced their finished product(s).

Legislative Committee

Spokesperson: Kris Abell, PA Department of Agriculture (PDA)

Note: Mike Nerozzi (PFBC) is the official chairperson for this group, but could not attend today's meeting.

A successful legislative hearing was held on August 24, 2021 which discussed invasive species issues in Pennsylvania and the PRISM concept. A [summary of the hearing](#) and a [link to the hearing recording](#) were sent to Council members prior to today's meeting.

Piper Sherburne (PA Association of Conservation Districts - PACD) thought the hearing/presentation was excellent and was pleasantly surprised that an estimated 150 people

attended (*virtually via Microsoft Teams*). She thanked everyone who participated and gave testimony.

Scott Bearer (PA Game Commission - PGC) agreed with Piper's comments. He asked if any feedback was received afterwards? Also, what does the Council expect next steps to be, if anything? Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) commented that feedback was received from some legislative offices, though not many. Fred suggested that PISC members and stakeholders share the legislative summary and recording with legislators and legislative offices. Also, because the hearing was so well done and very well attended, it's important to seize this moment and share the knowledge presented on in order to get more legislators readily informed and educated on invasive species issues in the Commonwealth. Fred went on to say that it's important for legislators to feel a personal and local connection to these sorts of issues. Thankfully, the people that provided testimony at the hearing did just that.

ACTION ITEM: Fred implores the Council to think about what next steps might be and how the legislative hearing can be used as a springboard to a bigger and broader conversation in order to continue the support we have today.

Kris Abell (PDA) commented that proposed next steps are a priority action item for the Legislative Committee moving forward.

Kris also mentioned that if PISC members or others wish to be part of any of the current PISC subcommittees, please let him know.

Piper Sherburne (PACD) mentioned that a recent motion was made by board members of the PA Association of Conservation District. The PACD plans to collaborate with DCNR and members of PISC to apply for a Bureau of Forestry grant for purposes of beginning a pilot PRISM program (*in northwestern Pennsylvania*). Kris Abell thanked Piper for this news, mentioning Don Eggen (DCNR) would be providing more details about this topic later in the meeting during the Grants Committee update.

Communications Committee

Spokesperson: Deb Klenotic, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

The Communications Committee is currently focusing on launching the Council's very first e-newsletter. The target audience for the newsletter includes leaders, educators, and other decision makers across the Commonwealth. Deb thanked Council members who provided contacts for the newsletter's recipient list in advance of the first issue being released.

The current newsletter recipient list has an estimated 500 names/email addresses on it and there is a possibility of doubling that number in the future. The [Emma e-newsletter platform](#) will be used to distribute the PISC newsletter online and provide 1) analytics for the number of views each newsletter item receives, 2) popular topics/media, and 3) allow for a sign-up form to be placed on the Council's website. Deb is working with Jamie Kopko from the PDA Communications office to get a sign-up form set up. Tara Ramsey from the DCNR Communications office is providing the Emma framework.

Plans are in place to release the first issue on or around September 15, 2021. Topics will include the August 24th legislative hearing, the PA PRISM program, the three newest additions to the PA noxious weed list, the "Top 25" list of invasive plant species being recommended to the CP&NWC, and topics from DCNR and the PA Lake Management Society. The Communications Committee is excited to be launching this e-newsletter very soon!

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned that if PISC members have topics they would like included in future editions of the PISC e-newsletter, please reach out to Kris with your ideas. Kris and others on this Committee feel this newsletter will be a great outreach tool moving forward.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) mentioned his excitement and support for the Council's e-newsletter. He asked Deb if there is a mechanism in place to disperse the newsletter to organizations outside of the Council as well as the agencies. His concern centered around the newsletter possibly ending up in just one area where only a select group of people will see it.

Deb responded to Fred's question, saying that stakeholder channels from PISC members were utilized to build the e-newsletter recipient list. For future issues, the Communications Committee will need to reach out, invite more people to spread the word, and share with their stakeholder channels. Also, in the near future, we'll have a sign-up form in place on the Council's website and have an initial e-newsletter issue to show for our efforts, both of which will help to broaden our outreach.

Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Rapid Response Committee

Spokesperson: Sara Stahlman, Pennsylvania Sea Grant

Members of this committee include Kris Abell (PDA), Jim Grazio (DEP), Sean Hartzell (PFBC), Felicia Lamphere (DEP), Brian Pilarcik (Crawford County Conservation District), and Sara Stahlman (PA Sea Grant). This group was formed to talk about topics related to rapid response of aquatic invasive species (*i.e., priority species/populations*) in Pennsylvania as well as the [Rapid Response Plan and Procedures for Responding to Aquatic Invasive Species in Pennsylvania](#) that was approved by PISC in September 2014.

The AIS Rapid Response Plan (*as mentioned above*) is designed to support a framework to aid agencies and others in conducting a coordinated and structured response to new aquatic invasive species infestations. The plan is accessible on the PA Sea Grant website (*and was recently updated in February 2019*). This committee is currently working to update the plan (again).

Over the past 5-6 years, this committee has been conducting mock rapid response exercises which provide an opportunity to practice the steps outlined in the AIS Rapid Response Plan. These exercises also familiarize participants with the overall process and help individuals to identify gaps and challenges in the Plan so it can be improved moving forward.

The purpose of PA AIS Rapid Response Committee is to take the conversations, recommendations, and issues that arise during mock exercises and implement them via updates to the Plan on a continual basis. With 4-5 mock exercises currently completed, a number of recommendations were suggested, and gaps identified in order to improve the Plan. PA Sea Grant decided to form this committee in order to bring agencies and organizations together that conduct EDRR efforts. The committee meets monthly and focuses on various recommendations for changes to the Plan. The committee also engages in general discussions that would improve rapid response initiatives in Pennsylvania.

One initiative being discussed is the invasive species reporting hotline which was presented on by Sara during the past few PISC meetings. The reporting hotline will now have a vanity number (1-833-INVASIV) that should be easier to remember by the public and engage more people to call and report something that looks unusual or strange. The Council was supportive of this proposal. However, since that time, various issues were discovered with the hotline including:

- A lack of instructions for the aquatic invasive species voicemail mailbox.
- Concern over high volume of reports for non-regulatory species that may overwhelm voicemail boxes with reports for common/low priority species.

Sara and others are now working to ensure a positive user experience for people who call the hotline.

This committee is working on other activities including:

- **Permitting** – Streamline the permitting process and associated costs as currently outlined in the AIS Rapid Response Plan.
- **Funding** – What happens if funding cannot be identified to take the needed rapid response steps when an invasive species is discovered? Grant opportunities are currently being compiled for this purpose by committee members.
- **Control and Best Management Practices (BMPs)** – Individuals would like to see recommendations for action strategies listed in the Plan (while avoiding becoming an online “link farm”).

- **Case Studies** – Individuals felt it would be useful to include case studies within the AIS Rapid Response Plan to avoid re-inventing the wheel if a similar situation has already occurred. If a similar rapid response scenario occurs in the future, case studies could provide helpful BMP advice and organization contacts to reach out to.

Grant Name	Agency/Organization	Funding Amount	Notes
State Grants			
Coastal Zone Management Program	PA DEP	Up to \$50,000	Projects that benefit coastal wetlands, plan special area management, and protect Great Lakes resources. Projects must be located along the 112-mile stretch of the Delaware Estuary or the 77 miles along Lake Erie.
Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2)	DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation	Funding levels change yearly Up to \$500,000	Projects that include recreational planning and development; invasive species management would need to be a component of a development project.
Growing Greener plus	PA DEP	Average award \$250,000	Projects that help reduce nonpoint source water pollution through local, watershed-based planning, restoration, and protection efforts.
Environmental Education Grants	DEP	up to \$85,000	Formal and informal education projects for youth and adults.
Erie Access Improvement Program	PFBC	No amount listed	Projects that improve angler access and habitat improvement project in the Lake Erie Watershed. Would need to demonstrate a significant impact to the fishery/watershed.
PFBC Boating Facilities Grants	PFBC	Separated into grants greater or less than \$100,000	Funds the planning, acquisition, development, expansion, and rehabilitation of public boating facilities located on the waters of the Commonwealth. May be an opportunity for Boat wash station funding.
PA Farm Bill Grants	PDA, USDA APHIS PPQ		Funding for quick response to agricultural disasters, including animal health, plant health, or foodborne illness.

The AIS Rapid Response Committee has begun compiling grant opportunities which could be applied for and used to take quick action when priority aquatic invasive species occurrences are identified.

Case studies that have already been conducted (via Zoom interviews) or will be conducted in the future include:

- Water chestnut (Mercer County Conservation District)
- Hydrilla (Pymatuning State Park)
- Asian carp (84 Pay Lakes)
- European frogbit (Lake Wilhelm)
- Water lettuce and water hyacinth (Presque Isle State Park)
- Northern snakehead (Lower Susquehanna River)

- Round goby (French Creek)

Information garnered from these interviews included details on how various rapid response processes worked, the action steps taken, strategies chosen, objectives for the rapid response, etc. Plans are in place to include information from these case studies in the AIS Rapid Response Plan.

Shea Zwerver (DCNR) asked if there is a document that administrators of the hotline can record what a person is calling about? This would be good information to have for reference purposes. Ruth Welliver (PDA) mentioned that Lawrence Barringer (PDA) maintains a data log for insect reports that come in through the hotline. Trilby Libhart (PDA) was not present at today's Council meeting, so no information could be provided for now on what protocol is followed for documenting noxious weed reports. Reports for aquatic invasive species are automatically forwarded to Sean Hartzell, the Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator at the PA Fish and Boat Commission. Kris Abell (PDA) commented that documentation of reports is one of this committee's objectives to streamline and improve the reporting process (via the hotline). As more discussions are had, this committee should have more definitive answers and proposals to bring to PISC for comment.

Shea mentioned that as part of her question, she was thinking of her time as a volunteer for the Department of State during voting/election day. The Department uses a specific software/platform (*she could not remember the name*) that records relevant information when a call is received (e.g., call length) and allows for input into data entry fields. This tool was very helpful to determine what people were calling about; very methodical. Based on Shea's comments, Kris invited her to take part in future meetings of this committee.

ACTION ITEM: *Research the software Shea mentions as a potential tool for use with the Invasive Species Reporting Hotline.*

Sean Hartzell (PFBC) followed up by saying that any reports for aquatic invasive species received via the hotline come directly to him. He receives a voicemail that is forwarded to his email address. A special software also transcribes a voicemail which allows him to view a report in text form too. Depending on the nature of a report, Sean may forward it to another entity (e.g., DCNR, if a sighting is made in a state park), or PFBC would work on a report internally.

Grants Committee

Spokespersons: Don Eggen, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Sarah Whitney, PA Sea Grant

Don Eggen (DCNR) began by saying that the Grants Committee has begun compiling a [list of grant opportunities](#) (*that can be used for invasive species-related purposes*). Don was excited to see the list of grant opportunities Sara Stahlman highlighted in her presentation and wants to make sure those grants are also listed in the document this committee is putting together.

This committee's grant opportunities list will need continual updates to ensure it remains current. If there are any grant opportunities not listed already, please let Don or someone else on this committee know. The Grants Committee is also considering the best ways to help potential applicants from Pennsylvania with their application process.

The [Landscape Scale Restoration](#) (LSR) program from the USDA Forest Service is a competitive grant that is offered annually and goes through the DCNR State Forester. It requires a 50:50 match with non-federal funding and requires applicants to refer to items listed in their state's [Forest Action Plan](#).

With this grant, the Council is looking to provide three years of start-up funding for a single ([pilot](#)) PRISM program in the northwest region of Pennsylvania. Don is working with Holly Miller (PA Association of Conservation Districts) on this effort. The idea to fund a PRISM program with this grant aligns well with the objectives of the LSR program. Note: The LSR program does not offer the amount of money needed to implement a full-functioning PRISM program (*which is estimated to be \$1.3 million per PA PRISM region*). *None the less, it would provide a pivotal step forward in beginning a PRISM program in the Commonwealth.* Each state can submit up to five LSR applications (i.e., there are other project ideas being considered). Applications are due to the State Forester by September 24, 2021. The State Forester then submits applications to the USDA Forest Service by October 6, 2021.

Sarah Whitney (PA Sea Grant) commented on two funding opportunities for aquatic invasive species (AIS) grants that are due in late winter 2021/early spring 2022. She would like interested individuals to begin thinking about ideas for applying to these grants. Each has some limits, but do offer a lot of flexibility. They include:

- **AIS Management Plan Funding:** Offers \$90,000 for one year. Grant happens regularly. Proposed projects can occur across Pennsylvania and need to help meet the goal of the Pennsylvania AIS Management Plan. Requires a 25% match.
- **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding:** Offers up to \$800,000 for two years. Proposed projects must protect the Great Lakes from AIS and help Pennsylvania implement its AIS Management Plan. Education and outreach projects can occur across the state (e.g., we know that boaters and anglers move from across Pennsylvania to Lake Erie for fishing and boating). Control projects can happen within the Lake Erie watershed, but sometimes they can happen outside the watershed if controlling a particular species helps protect Lake Erie from AIS.

- For example, funding from this grant is used for hydrilla control at Pymatuning State Park and some other nearby parks with hydrilla infestations. Because Lake Erie doesn't have hydrilla, and because people move from Pymatuning State Park to Lake Erie, this funding is eligible for work at these locations.
- One entity submits a GLRI proposal that can have multiple projects in it. Over the past few years, that entity has been PA Sea Grant or PFBC. It often takes time to figure out the budgets for the proposals. However, Sarah feels it is better to have too many ideas to fund than not enough.

In the Microsoft Teams Chat, Kevin Hess (DEP) commented that the [Pennsylvania Coastal Resources](#) grant round is currently open and closes October 18, 2021. A 50:50 non-federal funding match is required. Aquatic invasive species and other invasive species can be considered for project funding, primarily under the Ocean Resources policy.

New York's Centralized Invasive Species Database (iMapInvasives)

Guest Speaker: [Jennifer Dean](#) (jennifer.dean@dec.ny.gov), Invasive Species Biologist, [New York Natural Heritage Program](#) (NYNHP)

Kris Abell (PDA) provided an introduction for today's guest speaker, Jennifer Dean. Jennifer provides biological expertise for New York State's invasive species database ([iMapInvasives](#)). She works with partners to strategically address resource protection issues. Jennifer earned a B.S. in Plant Biology from Ohio University and a PhD from Penn State University in Entomology with a focus on plant and insect interactions.

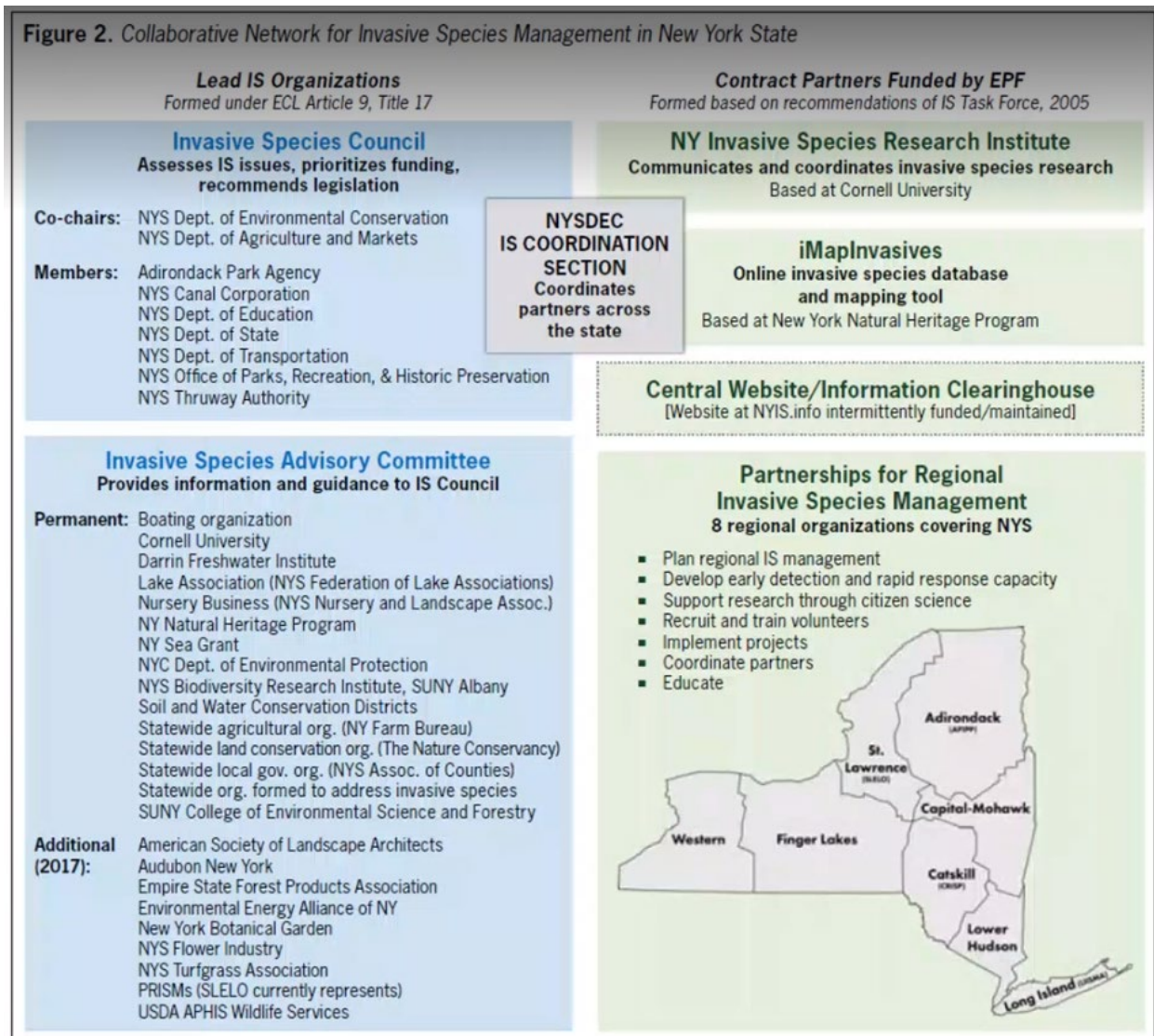
Jennifer appreciated the invitation to speak at today's PISC meeting. She recognizes this group has been doing a lot of coordinated efforts and is trying to find good models that will work well for Pennsylvania. Jennifer noted she lived in central Pennsylvania for several years and her family has enjoyed many of the natural and agricultural resources provided by the Commonwealth.

Jennifer has been in her role (as the Invasive Species Biologist at NYNHP) for about 11 years. The statewide conversations in NY about invasive species started in the early 2000s. In 2005, a task force was convened by the Governor to make recommendations on invasive species efforts. That is what led to the stable funding sources New York State has in place now and the coordinated programs that are overseen by the state agencies to address invasive species at a statewide level (i.e., PRISMs).

In 2018, the [New York State Invasive Species Comprehensive Management Plan](#) was created to assess the current statewide effort and all the different programs, and to lay out ways that outcomes can be measured and improved to ensure all the different entities are on the right track

and coordinating well together. That includes the NYS Invasive Species Council, NYS Invasive Species Advisory Committee, the PRISMs, and the invasive species database program (iMapInvasives) through the New York Natural Heritage Program.

Within the NYS Invasive Species Comprehensive Management Plan, there is a section on advising the state to continue committing to a centralized framework for sharing invasive species information. Within the plan, it says that the stakeholders need to be kept informed of new threats, effective management actions, and who’s doing what, when, where, and how. This is where the work of Jennifer and her colleagues at the Natural Heritage Program play a role as managers of the state’s centralized invasive species database (iMapInvasives).



[New York State Invasive Species](#)

[Comprehensive Management Plan](#) (Final, November 2018).

The NY Natural Heritage Program has been managing biodiversity information for a few decades prior to getting involved in data tracking for invasive species. By managing rare (*native*) species information and significant natural communities, NYNHP staff have significant experience in geospatial methodologies, technologies, and navigating the intricacies of managing sensitive data for statewide partners, which come up frequently with invasive species data too.

Some of NYNHP's deliverables to their state funders include:

- **Provide online and mobile tools** for all stakeholders including the public and state agency staff to collect, share, and visualize invasive species data.
- **Gather, review, and serve** high quality datasets and ensure key stakeholders get the information they need.
- **Manage user account access** to align with the needs of state partners. (This very often happens behind the scenes.)
 - Note: Because iMapInvasives offers different levels of permissions/data viewing, NYNHP staff work closely with state agencies to ensure they have the access they need to see the data they are interested in. In contrast, public users have more general viewing capabilities and are unable to see certain species or records considered “sensitive”.
- **Create and maintain analytical tools** and products derived from the invasive species data for strategic decision making.
 - Data from iMapInvasives is used to help PRISM leaders and other stakeholders to make strategic decisions regarding management and future invasive species survey efforts.
- **Conduct outreach and provide training** for many audiences to use the tools provided by iMapInvasives and encourage invasive species reporting.
 - Though the public may often report sightings of common invasive species, outreach on reporting helps to make the general public more aware of invasives and becomes the “eyes on the ground”.

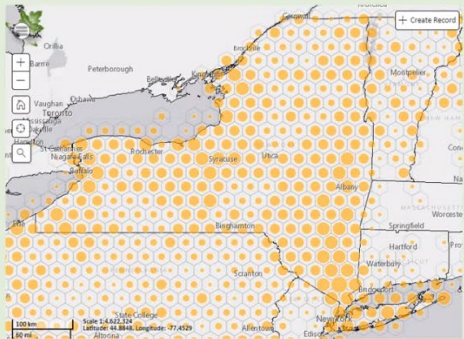
The data is the framework of the invasive species database program. When NYNHP started out with iMapInvasives, the first few years were a “scavenger hunt” of finding existing datasets from state agencies, other land and water managers, researchers, and museums. The goal was to garner these datasets from “agency silos” and compile them into one centralized location. Over time, data came into iMapInvasives primarily from natural resource professionals and the public entering it themselves via the online database and/or mobile tools.


iMapInvasives is a web-based geographic information system (GIS) framework that helps with collaborative data sharing. It also provides helpful analytical tools as well as an email alert system that provides “early detection” notifications to registered users.

In New York State, iMapInvasives is designated as the central repository for invasive species information and is a key tool for NY’s PRISM partners and state agencies to know what is happening statewide. Jennifer works closely with state agency staff to ensure they are seeing reports (via the email alert system) for species of interest, and to ensure those agency staff are confirming or deleting data records within the iMapInvasives database as appropriate.


iMapInvasives – NYS Invasive Species Database

Centralized invasive species database to support PRISMs, state agencies and other partners working on invasive species issues.







Reporting tools and data uploads



Early Detection Alerts



Species Distributions and Reports



Tracking Control Efforts and Results

The iMapInvasives program is New York State’s designated central repository for invasive species information and a key tool for PRISM partners and state agency staff.

By gathering data from a variety of sources, iMapInvasives provides detailed distribution maps, species reports, and other information via a variety of analytical tools built into the database. The database also allows for tracking of control/management efforts in a standardized way. Once management efforts are recorded in iMapInvasives, follow-up can occur to understand what treatments are most effective across the landscape.

The main data types available in iMapInvasives include:

- **Presence:** Finding an invasive species in a particular location
- **Not-Detected:** Targeted search for a species that was not found in a certain location; very valuable absence data
- **Treatment:** Detailed fields for mechanical, chemical, or biological management efforts

Types of data within iMapInvasives

Presence

What did you find?

Location(s) (polygon, line, or point) that document one or multiple species present per location



Not Detected

What didn't you find?

One or more species looked for but not found.

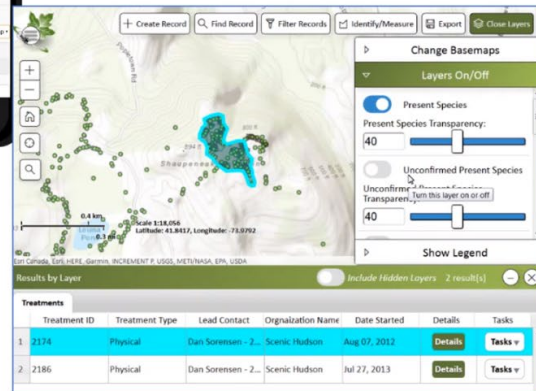
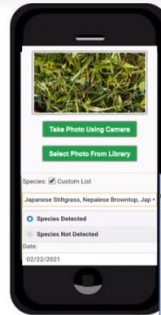


Treatment

What did you treat?

Polygon(s) within, or same area as, the parent Searched Area record

- mechanical, chemical, or biological



Data types offered in iMapInvasives include presence, not-detected, and treatment.

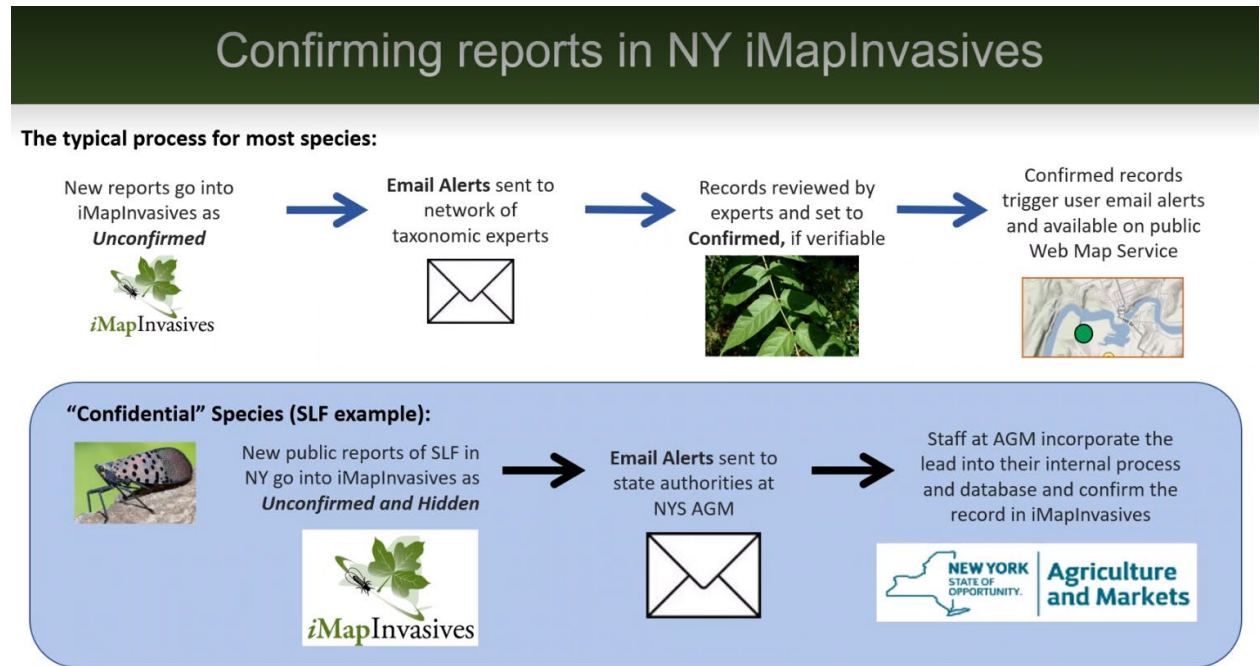
All data types can be recorded as a point, line, or polygon and can be entered via the online interface, or with mobile tools that match the workflows as seen in the online interface.

Each state participating in the iMapInvasives program can designate certain species to be hidden from view (i.e., confidential). This feature is especially useful for regulatory species such as spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*).

Any new report submitted to iMapInvasives is labeled as unconfirmed. Unconfirmed reports trigger email alerts for users that have permissions to receive alerts on unconfirmed data (i.e., taxonomic experts, state agency staff, etc.). Unconfirmed records are reviewed by species experts, and in most cases, a photo will satisfy the confirmation requirement. However, in some scenarios, someone is sent into the field such as a PRISM leader, who serves as an extension of a state agency's capacity, to do a field identification check. Once a record is confirmed in iMapInvasives, it is viewable in the public web map service and can trigger email alerts for all other users. *Note: Unconfirmed data records are also viewable in the public web map service.*

The confirmation process can vary slightly for confidential species, or species with regulatory concerns. In New York State, this includes spotted lanternfly, Asian longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*), northern snakehead (*Channa argus*), feral swine (*Sus scrofa*), and a handful of other species. If a report from the public is received in iMapInvasives for spotted lanternfly (for example), it is hidden from public view, even as an unconfirmed record. Email alerts from iMapInvasives are triggered and sent to relevant state agency staff and/or PRISM

leaders. Note: In New York State, PRISM coordinators and key state agency staff are viewers of confidential data. For data on spotted lanternfly, staff from New York State’s Department of Agriculture and Markets put this report in their own internal database and review and confirm the record in iMapInvasives. Note: In this scenario, even when a spotted lanternfly report is confirmed by Ag and Markets and listed as confirmed in iMapInvasives, it is still marked as confidential and hidden from public viewing in iMapInvasives.



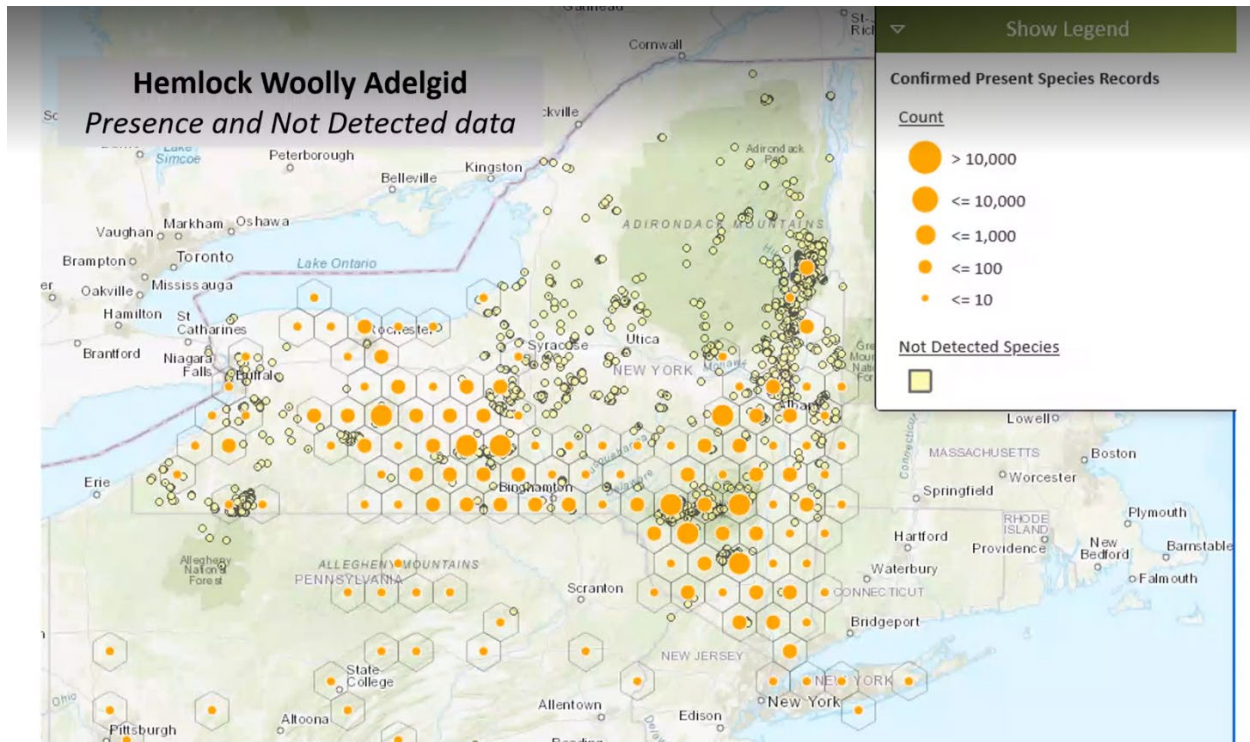
The above image outlines the confirmation process New York State uses for invasive species data received in iMapInvasives. The process may vary for regulatory or sensitive species, such as spotted lanternfly.

Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) (*Adelges tsugae*) provides another good example of how iMapInvasives is being used at the state level in New York. Currently, iMapInvasives provides a leading edge on the distribution of this species in New York State.

In the southern half of New York State, HWA is fairly well established; however, the northern half of New York State is considered an early detection area for HWA. Efforts are underway to educate the public on slowing its spread and to have trained early detectors to try and keep HWA out of the Adirondacks and the eastern Lake Ontario region for as long as possible. Groups are trained to identify HWA and report not-detected data as well as presences of the insect to iMapInvasives.

Outreach by the PRISMs, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and Cornell to encourage groups to search for HWA paid off last summer when an HWA finding by a camper on the east side of Lake George was discovered (the farthest northern population of HWA in NY State). This report was submitted to iMapInvasives which triggered immediate email alerts, and

Jennifer quickly received communication from the NY State Forester and Adirondacks PRISM leader who asked for more information. This led to a quick and coordinated on-the ground response to this specific HWA finding. Jennifer commented it was great to see these communication channels working well.



This map from iMapInvasives shows confirmed presence (orange hexes) and not-detected (yellow dots) information from surveys for hemlock woolly adelgid in New York State.

In New York iMapInvasives, there are close to 200,000 observation data points for 300-400 different species – a wealth of information! Jennifer and others work frequently with partners to make tools that determine what reports are most important to them and prioritize field-based resources. The NYNHP developed a number of prioritization tools including a Species Tiers list which uses iMapInvasives data from New York and surrounding states to create locally-specific invasive species lists and regionally-specific lists at the PRISM level. More information on these tools can be found on the [New York iMapInvasives website](#).

For example, high impact invasive species as determined by New York State’s risk assessment protocol (i.e., [plants](#) and [animals](#)) are further categorized based on these data analyses and expert input into categories of early detection, eradication is possible, local control for specific reasons, etc. (See “Species Tiers” diagram below for more details.)

Species Tiers – creating locally-specific invasive species lists using a standardized process

		Abundance / Difficulty of Eradication			
		NOT in region	Low	Medium	High
I M P A C T S	High or Very High	Tier 1 <i>Early Detection/ Prevention</i> (not yet in area)	Tier 2 <i>Eradiation</i> (very new, feasible to eliminate from area)	Tier 3 <i>Containment</i> (slow the spread)	Tier 4 <i>Local Control</i> (widespread, but may choose to control to protect site resources)
	Medium	<i>Evaluate</i> (Will impact change as environment changes?)			
	Unknown	X	Tier 5 <i>Monitor</i>		

The Species Tiers tool creates locally-specific invasive species lists that determine the abundance and difficulty of eradication. More information can be found online about this and other prioritization tools on the NYNHP/iMapInvasives website at www.nyimainvasives.org/data-and-maps.

It’s been wonderful to have state support for iMapInvasives not only for financial reasons, but also for purposes of designating one central spot for invasive species data. This makes iMapInvasives a very powerful tool for stakeholders because use of this platform is written into state contracts (i.e., if someone is getting a state contract to work on invasive species, they need to put their data into iMapInvasives). iMapInvasives also helps agency staff feel more empowered to share their data into this central online location. All in all, the program makes everyone’s work a lot easier now that information on invasive species is accessible by all for use to coordinate efforts.

Another benefit of iMapInvasives is the network of data managers working across North America that are using the same platform. For example, Jennifer works closely with her colleagues at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (i.e., Amy Jewitt, Mary Walsh, and Kierstin Carlson) who also utilize the iMapInvasives platform in Pennsylvania. This collective of data managers are constantly offering input into the software that runs iMapInvasives and how it can be better used by stakeholders.

Funding for New York iMapInvasives is provided by the [New York State Environmental Protection Fund](#) through NYS DEC. iMapInvasives tools are developed and served by [NatureServe](#).

Questions or comments concerning Jennifer's presentation can be submitted to Jennifer via email at jennifer.dean@dec.ny.gov. More information is also available on NY iMapInvasives at www.nyimapinvasives.org.

Don Eggen (DCNR) complimented Jennifer on her excellent presentation and inquired how privacy issues are handled in relation to data collected on private lands. Jennifer responded, saying that in the [iMapInvasives Terms of Use](#), if data is entered into iMapInvasives, permission must be obtained from the land owner. In this way, the onus is on the observer/data enterer to gain that landowner permission in order to enter information into the platform. If there is a landowner that wants to share information but doesn't want a data point to appear on their property (i.e., in the online database), there are creative solutions to get around this issue. For example, data points can be made approximate in which the location of a data point is changed to be a centroid of a nearby town or a whole county, depending on the sensitivity of property issues. This lets PRISM leaders know that a particular species is in the area without pinpointing a specific private property. Individual records can also be made confidential (i.e., doesn't always have to be a whole species that is marked confidential). In these cases, only a handful of high-level state agency staff and PRISM leaders can see these specific confidential points and this information is not available for viewing on the public map. On the whole, many people enter data from their own private property into iMapInvasives and there hasn't been much of a need to hide data. People want to contribute information to the database. They also appreciate that an expert has reviewed and confirmed their invasive species findings, verifying that a species identification is correct. This builds landowner knowledge regarding what species are present on their property.

Don Eggen (DCNR) had a follow-up question regarding iMapInvasives in NY State being funded by public monies, asking if there are agreements set up with the Department of Environmental Conservation in relation to [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) requests (especially for data labeled as confidential). Jennifer replied that the NY iMapInvasives program has not received a FOIA data request so far; however, they do receive data requests from individuals interested in iMapInvasives data. If a data request includes confidential data, NY iMapInvasives staff will refer the requesting individual to the agency or organization that requested the data be listed as confidential. For example, if a data request is made for spotted lanternfly data, a referral is made to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. NYNHP will also ask Ag and Markets if this data can be shared by iMapInvasives staff, or if Ag and Markets would prefer to distribute the data themselves. For forest pest data, a referral is made to the Department of Environmental Conservation, Lands and Forests Division. If NYNHP did receive a FOIA data request, the same type of referral process would occur; in other words, NY iMapInvasives staff would work closely with appropriate state agencies for data they designated as confidential to ensure that a FOIA request was handled appropriately.

April Moore (USDA Forest Service) mentioned in Chat that it would be really helpful to have access to the comments field when data is downloaded from iMapInvasives. This information is

critical for management. (Note: This and other information is available for download by working with an iMapInvasives administrator.)

Pennsylvania Invasive Species Central Database Proposal

Spokesperson: Kris Abell, PA Department of Agriculture (PDA)

The [Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan](#) (PISMP) lists 12 main goals under its “Framework for Response” to minimize the impacts of invasive species. Goal #7 is the creation of a central database clearinghouse for invasive species. It reads as follows:

7. Data Management

“Develop a statewide invasive species database clearinghouse linking data from various state, federal, and non-governmental entities.”

What is the purpose of this goal?

“Accurate and current data are a critical need of managers, researchers, and decision makers dealing with nonnative invasive species. Access to statewide information and databases, especially geographic location of invasive species data, is critical to the prevention, detection, survey, management, and restoration components of an invasive species program.”

“Currently in Pennsylvania, data on invasive species exist in many disparate locations. Data are collected and housed by single agencies or organizations, each with various purposes.”

“Oftentimes program managers are simply unaware of what data and information exist, which is a significant handicap when making management plans.”

What will be in the central clearinghouse database?

1. Invasive species presence and absence location data
2. Invasive species treatment and control data
3. Contact information of record submitters for invasive species program managers, researchers, etc. to obtain additional information or coordinate activities
4. Links to useful technical information (e.g., treatment methods used, best management practices, fact sheets, etc.)
5. Data for geographic information system (GIS) tools to allow for analysis, mapping, predicting rates of spread, and developing risk assessments

The Data Management section of the PISMP has four proposed actions. The two yellow-highlighted actions (*seen below*) are specifically addressed by the motions made in this proposal:

1. Inventory the various invasive species reporting databases that already exist in the Commonwealth.
2. Support the development or adoption of a central clearinghouse database, including geo-referenced data, treatment data, technical information, and contact information.
3. Facilitate the coordination of data management with federal, state, and non-government organizations.
4. Establish a new or use an existing reporting system for managing invasive species (from both community scientist and natural resource professionals) and disseminate data to relevant agencies, partners, and stakeholders in a timely fashion.

Kris offered a proposed motion (that would need to be given by a Council member) that says: “The Council recommends that iMapInvasives be designated as the central clearinghouse database for invasive species data in Pennsylvania.”

Sarah Whitney (PA Sea Grant) asked Jennifer Dean what the estimated budget is for the New York State invasive species database? Jennifer responded that she did not have this number off the top of her head, but she provided details on the program’s capacity. It currently includes four full-time employees (FTEs) that work on the database team at NYNHP and two part-time employees (PTEs). The four FTEs focus on coordination, budgeting with the state, etc., and includes Meg Wilkinson (lead coordinator), Jennifer Dean (biologist), a GIS person that works on the mobile apps and other GIS analyses, and an education and outreach coordinator to encourage the use of iMapInvasives for reporting. These staff comprise the crux of the NY iMapInvasives budget. Also, over the years, part of the NY iMapInvasives budget has included funding for [NatureServe](#) (the programmer of the iMapInvasives software) to develop specific functionality that has been requested in New York State and across the iMapInvasives network. Essentially, these programming costs are one component of the budget and the FTEs are another component.

Ruth Welliver (PDA) commented that PISC has had a data subgroup working for quite a while. She inquired what other options this subgroup has explored regarding invasive species mapping and how they came to choose iMapInvasives as the recommended platform. Kris Abell (PDA) replied, giving more background on the group Ruth referred to and their work to talk with agencies and organizations on how they collect data on invasive species internally, how data sharing could work in the future, discussions of a central repository, etc. He said that one of the primary advantages of iMapInvasives as a central repository in Pennsylvania is the current active participation of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and their staff on this Council (which administer iMapInvasives in Pennsylvania). They are willing and interested in serving this role as administrators of an existing invasive species clearinghouse being used in Pennsylvania.

Amy Jewitt (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy - WPC) provided further comment, stating that she is one of the primary coordinators of iMapInvasives in Pennsylvania, a role she has held for over eight years. Jeff Wagner and Mary Walsh are also attending today's PISC meeting and are each heavily involved in the Pennsylvania iMapInvasives program (and are also staff at the WPC). Amy agreed with Kris's comments, stating that the WPC has been very involved as members of PISC and do have a direct connection at both the statewide level and the local/regional level where relationships are in place with individuals who are doing work directly with invasive species. We take that collaboration of the data management work we do with iMapInvasives and weave that into the efforts of the people that PA iMapInvasives staff work with and know personally throughout the state. By doing this, we make sure that relevant information on invasive species is being disseminated as quickly as possible and to the most appropriate individuals. Amy felt that existing and long-standing relationships PA iMapInvasives staff already have in place was one of their strongest points as far as what iMapInvasives can offer and one of the main reasons why it would be a big benefit to use iMapInvasives as the tool of choice in the state of Pennsylvania.

Gary Walters (DEP) strongly supports using iMapInvasives as the central clearinghouse for invasive species data in Pennsylvania. As part of an agency that has to manage data and resources for environmental protection, having a central database is very necessary. iMapInvasives has already been developed. Gary's program is in the process of trying to update their data systems to capture additional data which will cost an estimated \$3 million. The DEP's conservation and environment delivery center is strapped for personnel resources to do this work, let alone the funding that goes with it. Gary strongly recommends the Council proceeds with using something that's already been largely developed. He also mentioned that many people on PISC already interact with iMapInvasives.

Sean Hartzell (PFBC) commented that the PA Fish and Boat Commission currently has a data sharing agreement in place with the Pennsylvania iMapInvasives program. PFBC sends aquatic invasive species data to iMapInvasives that comes to the agency which has been verified by a biologist. This data sharing agreement has been working well so far. Sean commented that iMapInvasives is a good, streamlined database to send information to and offers an established system currently in place with the staff at the PA iMapInvasives program (referencing Gary Walters' earlier comments on the benefits of using an already-established system for invasive species tracking purposes). Sean's remarks were based both on his perspective as well as the perspective of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission as a whole.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) reiterated Jennifer Dean's earlier comments that NY iMapInvasives currently has 4 full-time employees and a few part-time staff. Supporting this many staff to run iMapInvasives in New York State requires dollars and a budget. Fred asked Western PA Conservancy staff (on the call today) if they could provide an estimated budget for how much an invasive species mapping program would cost to run in the state of Pennsylvania.

Mary Walsh (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy) responded to Fred's question, saying that for the last ten years and currently now, the Pennsylvania iMapInvasives program has been supported by the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) (GLRI) which funds one full-time employee and a few part-time employees (Mary Walsh included) who contribute to some of the database work. From the PA iMapInvasives program's current budget, a small fee of a few thousand dollars is paid to fund the back-end administration of the database. (*This fee is paid to NatureServe.*) This is our current funding model; however, going forward, staff at the PA iMapInvasives program as well as members of PISC could investigate other funding mechanisms. If the state adopts iMapInvasives as the PA invasive species clearinghouse, there may be additional resources that become available. So far, the PA iMapInvasives program has been very successful at securing funding to administer the database. However, if funding were no longer available, or if only limited funds were received in the future, the database and its information wouldn't disappear, but there would be limited capacity to enter new data.

Jim Grazio (DEP) stated that if the soft funding goes away that currently supports the administration of the PA iMapInvasives program (i.e., GLRI), there would need to be some mechanism in place to support continuity of the data moving forward.

Jeff Wagner (WPC) provided brief details on the backstory on the creation of the PA iMapInvasives program (which occurred shortly before Amy came on board). Working with DCNR, the WPC and the PA Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) decided to embark on administering iMapInvasives as a Natural Heritage network product and program. The challenge of funding was known at that time; however, we managed to move it along in combination with the Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area (LEW CWMA) using grant funding and some state funding, though mostly federal funding. For a long time, we've been waiting for the state to make a decision to putting effort (and funding, when the PRISM program comes on board) to support iMapInvasives. This would allow for the PRISM program and iMapInvasives to become incorporated and work together on invasive species efforts at the state level. Essentially, there would be state funding to support the PRISMs along with monies to replace the fundraising we currently do to support iMapInvasives and the other control efforts WPC does in the Lake Erie Watershed. In short, iMapInvasives has to evolve with the state programs (PRISMs, etc.). If the state doesn't use a central database, how long can we continue with soft funding? iMapInvasives will need to be incorporated into a broader invasive species plan over time.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) related this situation Jeff Wagner described as "the chicken and the egg" or "the cart before the horse". In other words, if the proposal to use iMapInvasives as Pennsylvania's statewide invasive species clearinghouse was accepted, that is a step. But is there a prior step that needs to be taken, such as securing funding, as New York and other states have done to support these types of programs? Ultimately, it's about figuring out how we can get sustained funding. For example, with Kris Abell's position, agencies are helping to fund that position. Should there be a need for another person, how do we do that?

Fred went on to say that the August 24th legislative hearing provided education to legislators and others, both locally and statewide, on the need to fund a PRISM program in the Commonwealth. Perhaps the first step is to use the legislative hearing as a springboard to advance conversations with the goal of obtaining funding for a PA PRISM program. Legislators certainly have an interest in this type of program.

Fred commended the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy on their work thus far in getting the iMapInvasives program in Pennsylvania up and running. To date, the program has been working well. However, soft funding is not going to be a sustainable mechanism to continue supporting this invasive species tracking database as time goes on.

Jeff Wagner (WPC) agreed with Fred's comments regarding the need for sustainable funding for PA iMapInvasives. He clarified that at the scale the PA iMapInvasives program is at currently at, with the number of data providers the program has, and the territory covered, we can operate successfully with our current model. Essentially, right now there's a balance in place between how the state collects invasive species data and how iMapInvasives functions with its support coming from soft funding. However, if every region in Pennsylvania suddenly had an operational PRISM, the PA iMapInvasives program would be under capacity. Jeff stated that it's important to note these two programs go hand in hand – iMapInvasives and PRISMs. Ultimately, until the decision is made to implement a PRISM program in Pennsylvania, there won't be a need to ramp up staffing for the PA iMapInvasives program. But when a commitment is made and PRISMs become a reality in the Commonwealth, hopefully more money will be available for iMapInvasives as well as all other functions we want to initiate across the state.

Shea Zwerver (DCNR) asked if iMapInvasives offers a way to track how much money is being spent on invasive species treatment efforts? She also asked if iMapInvasives allows users to run reports to see if a treatment area (i.e., an area depicted as a polygon) is shrinking over time in a specific geographic area?

Amy Jewitt (WPC) answered Shea's questions, saying that money spent on treatment efforts could be captured in an iMapInvasives comments field within specific treatment records. At present, there is not a standardized field specifically for this information. In other words, this information could be recorded, but not tracked in a coordinated fashion. However, changes like this can be made in iMapInvasives if a formal request is made to an iMapInvasives administrator (*and work is then done with NatureServe and the iMapInvasives network to implement the change*). Changes to iMapInvasives occur fairly frequently when user feedback is received. Regarding Shea's second question of tracking change over time, this is possible to do with the current tools iMapInvasives offers. Data exports from iMapInvasives allow data to be viewed in a GIS, etc., where these changes are more easily visible.

Shea thanked Amy for her responses and further clarified that these types of capabilities in iMapInvasives could help show the effectiveness of controlling and reducing invasive species populations and their boundaries in specific regions. This would be a big help if we are able to

get funding for PRISMs in Pennsylvania. These tools could also help make the case for additional funding to support the capacity of iMapInvasives, whether that be software development or additional staff.

Don Eggen (DCNR) mentioned there are two proposed budgets currently developed by PISC. One of the budgets outlines funding for PRISMs. The other budget is to support Kris Abell's position as well as the PA Invasive Species Council and calls for an increase in staff to do GIS, outreach, etc.

Ruth Welliver (PDA) added that the proposed budget did not include funding to support the maintenance and development of the programming (*for a centralized invasive species database*). Don Eggen agreed with Ruth on this.

ACTION ITEM: John Bell (PA Farm Bureau) asked in the Chat if PISC could appoint a workgroup to study and offer a recommendation on future funding for the maintenance and development for iMapInvasives?

Ruth Welliver (PDA) asked in the Chat if a phrase could be added to the motion (*that Kris previously suggested*), "...pending identification of a funding mechanism to support database maintenance and development".?

Based on comments from Ruth Welliver and other Council members, the proposed motion regarding iMapInvasives was revised.

MOTION: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) moved that PISC recommends iMapInvasives be designated as the central clearinghouse for invasive species data in Pennsylvania, pending identification of a sustainable funding and administrative mechanism to support database maintenance and development. Gary Walters (DEP) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned that the other proposed action item for discussion by PISC today is to facilitate the coordination of data management with federal, state, and non-governmental organizations in relation to a centralized invasive species clearinghouse. He clarified that while the funding issue is critical to advancing a central database, there's still things that can be addressed prior to the funding issue being resolved. This includes making internal efforts to begin preparations for sharing data with a central database such as iMapInvasives or another data collection mechanism. Then, if/when funding becomes available for PRISMs and a central repository has been decided on, PISC doesn't need to start from square one (i.e., a build-up to that point would have already occurred).

Kris offered a proposed motion (that would need to be given by a Council member) that says: "The Council recommends that agencies and organizations begin working to incorporate steps into their existing data collection/management procedures to include regular submission of

invasive species data (presence, absence, location, treatment and control efforts) to iMapInvasives, and provide updates on progress towards this goal at each PISC meeting.”

Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) commented that the Bureau of Forestry already shares their invasive plant data with iMapInvasives to ensure this information gets out to the public. There was a recent meeting with staff from DCNR’s State Parks and Forest Health divisions to improve their data flow to iMapInvasives as part of DCNR’s ongoing mission.

April Moore (USDA Forest Service) mentioned in the Chat that the Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area (APIPMA) and the Allegheny National Forest both make use of iMapInvasives.

Sarah Whitney (PA Sea Grant) asked for clarification on the last phrase of the motion that says, “...provide updates on progress towards this goal at each PISC meeting”. Kris Abell (PDA) responded, saying this is for accountability purposes. Based on Kris’s response, Sarah felt concern over the substantial amount of time that would be taken up during Council meetings to provide this type of update.

Based on comments from Sarah Whitney and other Council members, the proposed motion regarding coordination of data management efforts was revised.

MOTION: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) moved that PISC recommends agencies and organizations begin working to incorporate steps into their existing data collection/management procedures to include regular submission of invasive species data (presence, absence, location, treatment and control efforts) to iMapInvasives, and provide updates on progress towards this goal at PISC meetings. Gary Walters (DEP) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

PA Invasive Species Management Plan Workgroup Proposal

Spokesperson: Jeff Wagner, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Jeff provided a brief update on a proposed new workgroup for the Council – the Management Plan Workgroup – which encompasses the following:

- **Purpose:** Provide a framework and strategy for evaluating progress in implementing the [Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan \(PISMP\)](#)
- **Need:** The Council’s capacity is limited for developing meaningful measures of progress that are critical in its overall reporting function.
- **Composition:** Chaired by one Council member with 5-10 individuals who are strongly involved in invasive species issues

- **Evolution:** Initially working with various contacts and information sources but eventually working with PRISMs to glean information to evaluate goals
- **Specific goals** of the workgroup:
 - Develop a reasonable and straightforward approach to evaluate each goal within the PISMP whether quantitative, qualitative, or categorical
 - Create a baseline for each goal
 - Evaluate the PISMP goals at an interval determined by the Council

Jeff mentioned the one main change since the last PISC meeting was the elimination of the word “advisory” in the title of the workgroup (i.e., formerly named “Management Plan Advisory Workgroup”). Also, details were provided regarding the specific goals of the workgroup (*which are listed above*).

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) clarified that the purpose of this workgroup is to “manage the Management Plan”, as opposed other work being done by existing Council workgroups. This workgroup will keep a clear focus on the goals that are outlined in the PISMP.

Kris Abell (PDA) felt that a formal motion from PISC was not needed to officially form this new workgroup. Rather, he was looking for general approval from Council members. Kris clarified that the composition of this new workgroup would primarily be non-Council members with one Council member leading the group.

Don Eggen (DCNR) expressed concern that this new workgroup would only have one Council member on it and the rest of the workgroup members would be non-Council members. Jeff Wagner (WPC) responded to Don’s concern, saying there is no stipulation to only have one PISC member be part of the group. Additional Council members who have the time and interest could also join the group.

Approval of the Council was given to form the new Management Plan Workgroup.

Fred encouraged Kris Abell to work with Jeff Wagner and others on moving this new workgroup forward and to see who from outside current Council membership would be willing to participate.

New Business

Kris Abell (PDA) is currently searching for individuals to serve on a committee to help update the PISMP. The PISMP update occurs on a five-year cycle and the due date for another update is in 2022. Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) and April Moore (USDA Forest Service) both volunteered to serve on this committee. Don Eggen (DCNR) recommends limiting the writing team to a

maximum of 3-4 people. Including Kris Abell, there are now three people on this committee. That leaves room for one other person.

Kris Abell is also looking for volunteers to assist with plans for PISC’s booth at the 2022 PA Farm Show. (Note: Plans are in place to host the Farm Show in person in 2022). Felicia Lamphere (DEP) volunteered to help with this effort.

Kris mentioned that the Invasive Species Listing Committee needs additional expertise for non-plant taxa (insects, mammals, diseases, etc.) to develop more prioritized invasive species lists and run species risk assessments. Amy Jewitt (WPC) wondered if PISC members who belong to academia/universities may know of some qualified students that could assist (e.g., Penn State, Temple University, etc.). Jocelyn Behm (Temple University) agreed with Amy’s suggestion, as long as a clear protocol were in place for students to follow. Don Eggen (DCNR) mentioned that staff at DCNR and PDA who are entomologists, plant pathologists, etc., should be relied on for help with this project. Mary Walsh (WPC) mentioned she would be interested in helping too.

Member Updates, Activities, and Events

Amy Jewitt (WPC) gave a shout-out to Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) who was recently featured on a [podcast](#) titled “Protecting our Plants” done by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. During the episode, Andrew talked about the work DCNR is doing to protect the rare flora in Pennsylvania as well as work being done related to invasive species. Good job Andrew!



Pennsylvania Environmental Council - Protecting Our Plants

Listen to the recent [podcast](#) Andrew Rohrbaugh was featured in called “Protecting our Plants”.

Don Eggen (DCNR) said there are over 545,000 acres of forest damage this past year, with *Lymantria dispar* (formerly known as gypsy moth) being responsible for over 320,000 acres of that total. Damage from *L. dispar* will be even worse next year. Initial proposals currently exceed DCNR’s capacity to conduct the *L. dispar* spray program; prioritization will need to occur for next year’s program.

Kate Harms (PA Lake Management Society - PALMS) mentioned that through a grant from the PA Fish and Boat Commission, PALMS purchased a [CD3 mobile unit](#) that can be placed at docks throughout Pennsylvania. It's solar-powered, self-reliant, and provides people with the tools needed to do a simple “clean, drain, and dry” of a boat and trailer. The unit will have educational signage put on it. If PISC members, partners, and/or stakeholders are interested in hosting the mobile unit now or in years ahead, it can be taken to lakes throughout Pennsylvania.

Kate stated that the unit can only be placed at locations that have public access; it cannot be put at lakes that are completely private. The unit is currently at Lake Wallenpaupack and will be going to Beltsville Lake later this week. So far, the unit has had 100 uses in less than one month. Kate felt that if a volunteer could be with the unit, it would be a great educational tool to engage with the public on raising awareness on how to properly clean, drain, dry recreational equipment. The upcoming PISC newsletter will have more information on the mobile unit. April Moore (USDA Forest Service) asked Kate to send more information about the mobile unit to her via email.

ACTION ITEM: Notify Kate Harms (PALMS) if you are interested in hosting the CD3 mobile unit at a lake with public access.



The new CD3 mobile unit purchased by the PA Lake Management Society offers boaters a quick and easy way to clean, drain, and dry their boats and trailers at lakes offering public access.

Scott Bearer (PGC) thanked the Western PA Conservancy and the PA Natural Heritage Program for the collaborative work going on in northwest Pennsylvania (around Pymatuning State Park) on State Game Lands #214. These are areas that have unique and valuable marshlands. In the context of the secretive marsh bird work the PGC has been doing over the past year, there have been many vegetation surveys conducted throughout these marshes and across the Pymatuning area. From this work, it was discovered that European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) is taking over a large part of the area. PGC and others are struggling to know how to deal with this invasive species issue. It is a significant concern. The population started small, but has very quickly spread like wildfire.

ACTION ITEM: Scott would welcome suggestions and ideas on how best to tackle this issue with European frogbit.



European frog-bit can be seen in Pymatuning Reservoir in State Game Lands #214. This photo and accompanying information was reported to Pennsylvania iMapInvasives in October 2020 by Brian Pilarcik of the Crawford County Conservation District.

Public Comment Period

No public comment.

Concluding Remarks

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) thanked Jennifer Dean (NYNHP) for her presentation. Kris Abell (PDA) and others will likely be reaching out to her in the future in regards to efforts by PISC to centralize Pennsylvania's invasive species data.

Fred also thanked Council members for their participation in the August 24th legislative hearing. The hearing should be a stepping stone for PISC to advance the current needs we have.

The next Council meeting in December will be held via Microsoft Teams. Kris Abell and Fred will continue to talk about how PISC meetings will be held moving forward (perhaps a hybrid). Over 61 people were in attendance during today's meeting.

MOTION: Gregg Robertson (PA Landscape and Nursery Association – PLNA) moved to adjourn the meeting. Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) seconded the motion. **Meeting adjourned.**

Next PISC Meeting

December 7, 2021 at 10am on Microsoft Teams

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Amy Jewitt, Invasive Species Coordinator with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program.

Questions concerning these minutes should be submitted to Kris Abell (krabell@pa.gov), Council Coordinator. If you are a member of the public and wish to attend the next PISC meeting, please contact Kris for more information.
