

Meeting of the Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council
Tuesday, March 9, 2021 | 10:00am
Virtual Skype Meeting

** 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, Ayanna Williams, Brian Pilarcik, Daniel Zimmerman, Donald Eggen, Fred Strathmeyer, Gary Walters, Gregg Robertson, James Grazio, Jeffrey Wagner, Jocelyn Behm, Joseph Demko, Kate Harms, Kimberly Bohn, Lisa Murphy, Mary Beth Ruh, Matthew Helmus, Piper Sherburne, Stahlman, Sarah Whitney, Sean Hartzell

Other Participants Present: Becca Manning, Brant Portner, Brenda Shambaugh, Bryon Ruhl, Destiny Zeiders, Erik Johnson, Eryn Spangler, Greg Podniesinski, Johan Berger, Johnny Zook, Jonathan Geyer, Kate Wehler, Katie Schmidt, Kerry Golden, Kevin Hess, Kris Abell, Kyle Schutt, Madeline Stanisch, Melissa Harrison, Michael Hutchinson, Michele Hensey, Mike Nerozzi, Nathanael Brague, Phillip Stober, Rebecca Kennedy, Ruth Welliver, Shane Phillips, Shannon Powers, Shea Zwerver, Stephen Rudman, Susan Caughlan, Trilby Libhart, Victoria Challingsworth

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) gave introductory remarks.

Announcements, Roll Call, and Approval of Minutes

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) conducted the member roll call. *A majority of members were present (17 of 21), thus establishing a quorum.*

Fred requested the meeting minutes from the December 8th, 2020 Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council (PISC) meeting be approved. *These minutes were posted on the PISC website and sent via email to all council members prior to today's meeting.*

MOTION: Gregg Robertson (PLNA) moved to approve the December 8th, 2020 PISC minutes. Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Kris Abell (PDA) gave a brief overview of today's agenda.

Kris announced that Temple University was appointed by the Governor as the newest member of PISC. Jocelyn Behm is the official member from Temple University and Matthew Helmus and Amy Freestone are alternate members.

Kris has requested information as to why there's been a delay in appointing the Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area (APIPMA) as an official member organization of PISC. So far, no notification has been received from the Governor's office.

Invasive Species Listing Committee

Spokesperson: Andrew Rohrbaugh, DCNR

At the last PISC meeting, the council voted to approve use of the PA-modified [Generic Impact Scoring System](#) (GISS) for assessing non-plant species. For plant species, the council voted to approve use of the [New York State non-native invasive plant assessment tool](#) (*modified for PA*). The Invasive Species Listing Committee thought the New York State non-native invasive plant assessment tool lacked details concerning economic impacts, so the group decided to include info from the GISS to address this issue. This additional info will include impacts on:

- Agricultural production
- Animal production
- Forestry production
- Human infrastructure and administration
- Human health
- Human social life (hunting, fishing, recreation, tourism, etc.)

Some forest health staff from DCNR are running initial assessments for forest insects/diseases (*using the GISS tool*). Those assessments are for the following:

- Gypsy moth
- Beech leaf disease (completed)
- Hemlock woolly adelgid
- Spotted lanternfly (completed)
- Thousand cankers disease

Of the plant assessments that need to be completed, New York State has already completed several. Additionally, Andrew Rohrbaugh has completed six assessments for the following species:

- Japanese timber bamboo (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*)

- Bee bee tree (*Tetradium daniellii*)
- Greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus*)
- Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)
- Beefsteak plant (*Perilla frutescens*)
- Standish's honeysuckle (*Lonicera standishii*)

Of the 130 species that need completed assessments, the group still needs to do about 30-40 species from the [DCNR Invasive Plant List](#). Once these remaining assessments are completed, they will be reviewed by PISC and potentially recommended as species to be added to the [PA Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed List](#) (as part of the [Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Law](#)). PISC has already recommended about 50 species be added to the PA Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed List, while a handful of other species with commercial considerations will require additional discussion.

The committee discussed the need to create a review panel, likely comprised of PISC members, that would review completed assessments (for all taxa) for accuracy and ensure all needed information was documented.

The committee is also looking into a more systematic process for proposing species for listing on the PA Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed List. Some people have commented that, in the past, suggested species for listing were proposed too short notice to the [Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee](#). To combat this problem, perhaps a suggested list of species listings would be proposed to the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee once per year which would first be vetted by major partners such as the PA Farm Bureau, PA Lake and Nursery Association, PennDOT, and others.

The group currently has a number of species listings which were previously approved by PISC to be recommended for review by the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee. Those species include:

- Eurasian water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)
- Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) (seeded varieties)
- Lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*)
- Jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*)

Gregg Robertson of PLNA has volunteered to create a poll to help prioritize the 140+ species on the DCNR list that will focus limited resources and allow for completion of assessments for the highest priority species. As needed, PISC may need to contract with universities, colleges, botanical gardens, and other entities to complete these species assessments due to time constraints of Andrew Rohrbaugh and others on this committee.

Jeff Wagner (WPC) asked for clarification on Andrew's comment of wanting others to review species assessments. What is the purpose of that review? Andrew responded, saying that right

now the Invasive Species Listing Committee has assessments that were completed by New York State as well as himself. Andrew feels that many of these completed assessments are legitimate and show that certain species are indeed invasive; however, Andrew is interested in having others also run species risk assessments as a way to double check the accuracy of already-completed assessment results. Andrew also clarified the purpose of the poll Gregg will create is to prioritize which species assessments need to be done first. The review team may also be expected to help conduct species risk assessments if the Invasive Species Listing Committee is unable to contract outside assistance to complete this task.

Gregg Robertson (PLNA) clarified that the poll he plans to create will be sent to all PISC members (not just members of the landscaping industry). Ultimately, the Invasive Species Listing Committee is interested in better understanding what the invasive species community as a whole feel are the most important species. Andrew added that so far, the species he has run risk assessments for are the ones he himself has prioritized. However, it would be good to have broader input from the Council moving forward.

Trilby Libhart (PDA) asked if all the completed plant risk assessments would be passed onto the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee (*as suggested additions to the PA noxious weed list*)? Andrew responded saying no, not all of them, at least not right away. Trilby went on to clarify the difference between an invasive plant and a noxious plant. The definition in the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Law states that a noxious weed is injurious. Trilby feels that not all plants fit into the “noxious weed” category.

Ruth Welliver (PDA) mentioned that Jim Grazio (DEP) asked a question in the Skype meeting Chat box. Jim asked if Eurasian water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) is in trade? He’s curious to know because the plant is ubiquitous across the lower 48 states. Andrew Rohrbaugh responded, saying he thinks Parrot’s feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) is the more common species in trade.

Kris Abell (PDA) clarified the idea behind review committee for the Invasive Species Listing Committee is to say that PISC has approved these species risk assessments which gives them an extra level of rigorousness and confidence of accuracy. Once completed, these species risk assessments can be shared and distributed for multiple uses throughout Pennsylvania.

Sean Hartzell (PFBC) gave a brief presentation regarding the PA Fish and Boat Commission’s interest in taking the lead on conducting PA-modified GISS species assessments. This will include an initial round of 10 vertebrate and invertebrate aquatic invasive species. These initial assessments are currently in progress (Sean is taking the lead). Moving into the future, PFBC would like to conduct additional assessments for 40-50 aquatic invasive species. Each of the 10 initially-chosen species are currently listed in 58 PA Code [Chapter 71](#) and [Chapter 73](#) regulations.

“Round 1” species include:

- Bighead carp (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*)*
- Black carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*)*
- European rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus*)
- Quagga mussel (*Dreissena bugensis*)
- Round goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*)
- Ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*)*
- Rusty crayfish (*Faxonius rusticus*)
- Silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*)*
- Northern snakehead (*Channa argus*)
- Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*)

* = Not currently established in Pennsylvania waters

Species that were left out of “Round 1” include tubenose goby (*Proterorhinus semilunaris*) and diploid grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella* var. *diploid*), both of which will be included in a future round of GISS species risk assessments. Sean expects the process of running the 10 initial species through the PA-modified GISS tool to take a few months. Right now, Sean has a draft review completed for rusty crayfish (*Faxonius rusticus*) and northern snakehead (*Channa argus*).

PRISM Host Selection Committee

Spokesperson: Amy Jewitt, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Discussions continue to focus on what qualifications an organization must possess to be eligible as a Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) host. These qualifications will be outlined in a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Example qualifications include:

- Organization must be located in their respective PRISM region.
 - So far, the number of PA PRISM regions has not been solidified, but will likely be 6-7.
- Have at least five years of experience (TBD) coordinating partners engaged in cooperative landscape-level conservation activities.
- Experience managing a budget of \$100,000+.
- Experience successfully administering a program under a state or federal contract from final award through completion. (Desirable, though not required)

Criteria for a PA-specific RFP are currently being developed in a “living document” on the committee’s Microsoft Teams channel. This is being done by pulling relevant components from a New York PRISM RFP and modifying it for Pennsylvania.

One of the NY RFP components is a schedule of when deliverables should be completed. This schedule helps define the expectations for applicants (ahead of time) of the tasks to be completed by a PRISM host over time. The PRISM Host Selection Committee would like to have a similar deliverable schedule for Pennsylvania's RFP too. The deliverable list would include a 5-year plan and reports. Some things that were specific to the NY RFP that this committee may or may not include in the Pennsylvania RFP are:

- Example deliverable from NY (1): Hold PRISM partner meetings; provide written summaries. Minimum of two regular meetings annually. Due date: Summaries due one month following meetings.
- Example deliverable from NY (2): Hire one full-time PRISM Coordinator, a Terrestrial Program Coordinator, and an Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator. Due date: Three months after contract award.

This deliverable schedule brought about the realization that our subcommittee needs to not only define what information applicants need to provide, but also what information we need to provide them so applicants understand what is expected of an organization that desires to be a PRISM host (and the level of detail they need to be thinking about when applying).

Much of this information being discussed by our committee should be disseminated to the PRISM Contract and PRISM 5-Year Plan subcommittees due to overlap in subject matter and to ensure all subcommittees are working cohesively.

At the group's most recent meeting (on February 16), we clarified amongst ourselves that it is the job of the PRISM host organization to not do all the work of the PRISM, but rather to coordinate it (such as convening steering committee meetings and activities comprised of PRISM partners). Additionally, organizations serving on a Pennsylvania PRISM RFP review panel would not be allowed to submit an RFP to be a PRISM host organization, as this would be a conflict of interest.

Ruth Welliver (PDA) inquired about the qualifications of a PRISM host organization, many of which are fairly general according to what was discussed here today. Has this group discussed the differences between an organization that has administrative experience compared to one that has invasive species experience? Amy responded, saying that so far, this group has not gotten into some of those finer details as we are still at the very beginning of this process of developing an RFP. However, we will try to discuss these sorts of details at the next PRISM Host Selection Committee meeting.

Jim Grazio (DEP) asked what the funding source is for the Pennsylvania PRISMs? Amy responded, saying that the PRISM committee is hoping the state legislature will provide the needed funding; however, that has not yet been solidified. There is also a PISC Grant Funding

Committee that has discussed raising funding to monetarily support the start-up for one Pennsylvania PRISM as a proof-of-concept.

Matthew Helmus (Temple University) asked for examples of what is meant by “landscape level conservation activities” (*in reference to an example qualification of a PRISM host organization*). Amy responded, saying an organization would have experience doing broad-based work with invasive species including both terrestrial and aquatic species and in various places (not just a single plot of land) while simultaneously coordinating with partners to complete this work.

In the Skype Chat box, Michele Hensey (member of a citizen task force for invasive plant legislation) asked how much funding is hoped for to support the Pennsylvania PRISMs? Don Eggen (DCNR) responded (*in the Chat*), saying PISC has an entire budget spreadsheet for funding the Pennsylvania PRISM program and he would be glad to share it with her. Don also mentioned that based on six PRISM areas, the total Pennsylvania PRISM budget currently proposed is \$7.8 million with \$1.3 million being allotted per PRISM.

PRISM 5-Year Strategic Plan/Proposal Committee

Spokesperson: Kimberly Bohn, Penn State Mont Alto

The goal of this group is to develop the guidelines/template for applicant host organizations to develop their 5-year strategic plan (which will be an expectation/deliverable of a host organization). The framework for this strategic plan would be consistent across all PRISMs over time. Rather than reinvent the wheel, this committee is using the 5-year strategic plan that the [Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area](#) (APIPMA) uses as a template for the Pennsylvania PRISMs strategic plan/guidelines. Note: APIPMA used a framework developed by The Nature Conservancy for establishing cooperative invasive species management areas (CISMAs) in Florida.

The main goals in a Pennsylvania PRISM 5-year plan will include the following:

- Create/strengthen the collaborative
- Outreach/training
- Monitoring/mapping (*of invasive species*)
- Prevention (*of invasive species*)
- Early detection and rapid response (EDRR) (*of invasive species*)
- Control/treatment prioritization (*of invasive species*)

Within each of these goals, there will be a subset of specific objectives to meet a particular goal. And within each objective, specific bullet points will discuss unique action items.

The committee is currently parsing out relevant parts of the AIPMA strategic plan and deciding what should be included in the Pennsylvania PRISM 5-year plan. This committee realizes that the PRISMs will each be located in a different region of the state, meaning each will have different collaborators, invasive species priorities, etc., and this will mean that each PRISM's strategic plan will vary slightly. However, expectations for specific outcomes/deliverables will be consistent across all Pennsylvania PRISMs.

Jeff Wagner (WPC) mentioned it would be helpful to have the goal template for the PRISM's 5-year strategic plan align with the [PA Invasive Species Management Plan](#) since this official document outlines what PISC is trying to track/evaluate (*regarding overarching goals related to invasive species work in Pennsylvania*). Kimberly was amenable to this suggestion.

PISC Review Committee for PRISMs

Spokesperson: Jeff Wagner, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

The purpose of this committee is to consider how the proposal applications (*submitted by applying host organizations*) and 5-year plans will be reviewed. Both of these reviews may need to be done annually (e.g., in case updates need to be made to the 5-year plan), but at the very least, both the RFP and 5-year plans will be reviewed once every five years. A review committee from PISC will assist the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) with evaluation of submitted proposals and related administrative tasks. Note: The review committee will act as a consultant and the PDA will ultimately be responsible for carrying out necessary administrative tasks (in relation to PRISM proposals and 5-year plans). The review committee will also help maintain PISC involvement and awareness of PRISM operation in Pennsylvania.

The review committee will consist of five members made up of two PDA staff members and three PISC members; however, this composition is flexible. Anyone from PISC could participate in this review committee; no specific expertise is needed. However, interested individuals would need to have the time and ability to remain engaged for at least the first round of reviews (i.e., evaluation of proposals and drafting of the first 5-year plans, which could be a year and a half process). Likely the composition of this committee would change over time given changes in PISC representation; however, it will be important to have stability as far as having the same people serve on the committee at the very beginning (up until PRISMs in Pennsylvania are up and running). Ideally, it would be good to have this same group of people also review the first 5-year plan(s) after the completion of a PRISM's initial year of operation.

The goal will be for each member of the 5-person review committee to independently review the submitted proposals and score them via a standardized scoring sheet. Note: The scoring sheet is not yet developed; Jeff believes another PISC committee is currently creating it. New York State only scores their proposals numerically, which this committee felt was a good way to start the

review process. However, this committee also feels there needs to be discussion about the evaluations and the organizations themselves. Out of that discussion would come a consensus of which candidate (per PRISM region) to recommend to the PDA for hosting each of the PRISMs.

No entity submitting a proposal would be allowed to serve on the review committee. This is something to keep in mind up front - for any organization seeking to submit a PRISM RFP, no representatives from that organization should volunteer to serve on the RFP and 5-year plan review committee.

Pertinent to the PISC committee that's working on the internal organization template for the PRISMs is a recommendation to form a PRISM advisory committee. This advisory committee would be comprised of a small subset of each PRISM region's partners and would help all PRISMs work well together, share information, and provide updates to PISC as needed.

Matthew Helmus (Temple University) asked how to include external reviewers in this process. Jeff responded, saying the 5-person review committee would evaluate the materials given to them, but they would also be encouraged to contact partners who have worked with an applying organization to get a better picture and help answer questions that may not have been clear from the proposal. This would be similar to how a candidate is evaluated for a job (via references).

PRISM Contract and Statement of Work Committee

Spokesperson: Don Eggen, DCNR

The purpose of the statement of work is to outline requirements and expectations of the Commonwealth for regional partners who host a PRISM to address the impacts of invasive species in a defined region of Pennsylvania. Right now, this committee is laying out what the mutual benefits and interest for a statement of work are by using New York as an example and pulling out the parts relevant to Pennsylvania. Like many other statements of work, the Pennsylvania PRISM statement of work will require other supporting documents (such as a 5-year strategic plan).

The Pennsylvania PRISM statement of work as it currently stands (in draft form) is available for viewing by other PISC members on this committee's Microsoft Teams channel.

While composing the statement of work, this committee is also keeping in mind the goals outlined in the PA Invasive Species Management Plan to ensure the Pennsylvania PRISM statement of work aligns with the allotted tasks in that document.

GIS and Data Sharing Committee

Spokesperson: Amy Jewitt, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

This committee's discussions continue to focus on iMapInvasives as the (potential) centralized clearinghouse for use by all Pennsylvania PRISMs. At our most recent meeting on February 25, Jennifer Dean from the New York Natural Heritage Program joined our meeting. She is one of several others who administers the iMapInvasives program in the state of New York. She shared her knowledge of how iMapInvasives is being used in New York to serve as the centralized clearinghouse for the New York State PRISM program.

Amy's presentation provided information on the following topics:

- Data agreements/contracts
- Funding for iMapInvasives
- Data collection
- Confidential data viewers
- Pennsylvania iMapInvasives program

Data Agreements/Contracts

The New York Natural Heritage (NYNHP) is contracted by the state to manage data for the PRISMs via iMapInvasives. (There is an MOU between NYNHP and the state to do this.) The New York DEC is the main entity overseeing the New York PRISM program. DEC has multiple staff to coordinate PRISM contracts.

No specific data sharing agreement is in place between NYNHP/iMapInvasives and the New York PRISMs. When signing up for iMapInvasives, PRISM staff simply agree to the standard [iMapInvasives use agreement](#). In hindsight, Jenn Dean said it would have been helpful to have an agreement in place to ensure data is entered into iMapInvasives by the New York PRISMs in a timely manner. (New York wishes they had this set up from the start.) They now have this in their contract language.

Jenn Dean mentioned that requirements and deadlines related to data entry into iMapInvasives need to be tied to funding (or else PRISM staff have no "incentive" to complete this task).

Funding for iMapInvasives

No funding is provided by the PRISMs to help pay for the operation of iMapInvasives in New York State. The New York iMapInvasives program receives their funding from the [NY Environmental Protection Fund](#) (NY EPF) which is funded by real estate transfer taxes.

Note: The NY EPF was created by the NY state legislature in 1993 and is financed primarily through a dedicated portion of real estate transfer taxes. The EPF has gradually grown from its original appropriation of \$31 million in fiscal year 1994-1995. Over the past 20 years, the EPF has provided more than \$2.7 billion for a variety of environmental projects (one of those projects being iMapInvasives).

Data Collection

New York PRISMs can use iMapInvasives or their own applications for data collection, but often use the iMapInvasives mobile app for early detection species to ensure iMapInvasives email alerts are triggered immediately and sent to key personnel across the state.

iMapInvasives staff have end-of-season debriefs with PRISM staff to identify and discuss any issues that may have occurred during the year. Both group and individual communication occurs year-round between the New York PRISMs and New York iMapInvasives staff. Jenn Dean mentioned the need to ensure more data from agencies is incorporated into iMapInvasives (since sometimes, New York iMapInvasives staff have to track down data from DEC and other agencies). PRISM managers rely on this data to prioritize survey and management efforts.

Confidential Data Viewers

iMapInvasives allows for data to be marked as confidential (if needed). This can be done for an entire species, and/or certain “sensitive” records. In New York, PRISM coordinators all have access to view confidential data in iMapInvasives. Several state agency staff are also confidential data viewers.

The New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets has their own internal database for regulatory pests/quarantine pests. When receiving public reports for these species in New York iMapInvasives, they are always kept as “confidential” until confirmed by staff from Ag & Markets.

In New York, state agency staff are the go-to people for confirming records. This provides the confidence for agencies to participate in iMapInvasives.

Pennsylvania iMapInvasives Program

The Pennsylvania iMapInvasives Program is currently administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. Amy Jewitt is one of the main administrators. The Pennsylvania iMapInvasives program is eight years old (launched in 2013). Over 1,800 people have registered user accounts spanning all across the state. The program currently receives its funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Pennsylvania iMapInvasives staff have close ties with Pennsylvania state agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and the five active cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs) in our state, among other groups. Communication between Pennsylvania iMapInvasives staff and these entities occurs year-round. The program currently manages data for all taxa (400+ species) and a special emphasis is put on reports for early detection/high priority species.

Any registered user has the option to set up custom email alerts via iMapInvasives in order to stay up-to-date on important or notable findings. Example: Sean Hartzell with PFBC has several iMapInvasives email alerts set up which notify him immediately when various aquatic invasive species are reported in iMapInvasives.

Legislative Committee

Spokesperson: Mike Nerozzi, PFBC

The primary focus of this committee has shifted to elevating issues of invasive species, the need for dedicated funding, and the movement to a regional PRISM-based management approach in Pennsylvania. We have been working with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania (CRP) to hold a legislative hearing on the statewide impacts of invasive species in Spring 2021 and help build support for the PRISM model. Kris Abell (PDA) and Mike Nerozzi met with committee staff a few weeks ago and talked through logistics of getting a hearing established. Because the CRP is governed by a board that also includes legislators (e.g., the Chairman is Senator Gene Yaw), we need to submit a formal request letter to the CRP requesting the hearing which is the first step in this process. That letter will then go to the CRP board for consideration. If they are supportive of our request, they will begin getting the hearing established.

As part of the formal request letter, it was also suggested by the CRP that our committee obtain letters of support from state agencies and other organizations that are interested in this issue. Most of the organizations representing the Legislative Committee have agreed to submit letters of support for a hearing, several of which are already in hand. It is our goal in the next two weeks to have the formal request letter be sent to the CRP along with the letters of support. We were told by the CRP we can anticipate a hearing sometime later this spring or summer.

It will be up to the Legislative Committee to propose a list of speakers to the CRP, a process the group is working through right now. The group is trying to come up with speakers that will best represent the entire threat that invasive species pose to the Commonwealth. Additionally, we are trying to get someone from New York State to speak at the hearing about the effectiveness of the PRISM model.

We are hoping the main focus of each speaker/topic will be on the economic impact of one or more invasive species simply because these types of concerns tend to resonate with legislators and the businesses that are being impacted in their district. We also plan to target invasive threats and the devastation caused by invasive species in relevant legislative districts; these topics will be represented during the hearing(s). Speakers will need to present not only facts, but also try to appeal to the emotional side of the harm caused by invasive species by discussing real world impacts on communities.

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned that this committee is open to suggestions for speakers including charismatic individuals that are good at speaking and can draw a line to the need for funding. Please send suggestions to either Mike Nerozzi or Kris Abell.

PISC Website Committee

Spokesperson: Gary Walters, DEP

At the beginning of the year, the Website Committee realized we were trying to develop communications for more mediums than the website. With that in mind, the committee decided to include some communications professionals, simultaneously rebranding ourselves as the Communications Committee. We've now strengthened the group with new members including communications directors from PA Sea Grant (Kelly Donaldson), DEP (Deb Klenotic), PDA (Emily Demsey), and DCNR (Tara Ramsey).

One of our main objectives now is to develop a communications workplan to help us develop these communications that our committee will provide to other members of PISC as well as to outside sources. One of our first objectives was to increase our presence on social media. To get started on this objective, during National Invasive Species week in February, we had a presence on PDA's social media. We also have some things planned for inclusion in DEP's social media (including a Lunchtime Live event) during the second National Invasive Species Awareness week in May.

This committee is interested in staying up-to-date regarding communications requests from other PISC committees or on behalf of PISC member agencies/organizations. If someone does have a particular communications request, please let this committee know so it can be included in our communications plans. Also, if anyone else is interested in participating in this committee, Gary mentioned that additional members are welcome to join.

Gary mentioned the [PISC StoryMap](#) went live in January 2021 which highlighted some of the activities of PISC member organizations. Gary asked Amy Jewitt (WPC) to provide statistics of the number of views the StoryMap has received thus far. Amy mentioned that from the time the StoryMap was published at the beginning of January till now, there were over 1,200 views with

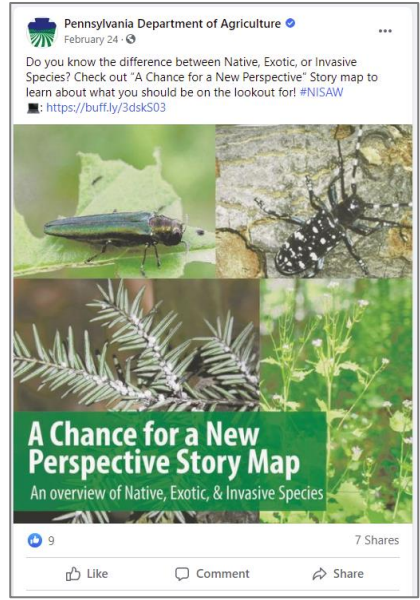
an average of about 20 views per day. The following agencies/organizations contributed content to the StoryMap which accounted for 25 total updates:

- PA Department of Environmental Protection
- PA Department of Agriculture
- PA Department of Transportation
- PA Fish and Boat Commission
- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- University of Pennsylvania
- Pennsylvania State University/Penn State Extension
- Temple University
- PA Sea Grant
- PA Lake Management Society
- Western PA Conservancy/PA Natural Heritage Program

The StoryMap is available for viewing by clicking on the large photo at the [top of the PISC website](#).

Gary mentioned that Sara Stahlman (PA Sea Grant) is attempting to improve the PA invasive species reporting hotline which will be discussed more today during the New Business portion of the meeting. Along these lines, work is also beginning on a new campaign to promote reporting of invasive species.

As mentioned previously, content was created for National Invasive Species Awareness week (*in February*) that was posted on PDA's social media accounts. This content was created by Emily Demsey and Jamie Kopko, both from PDA. The following screenshots from PDA's Facebook page showcase some of these posts. *Note: Click on the screenshots below to view these posts online.*



Grants Committee

Spokesperson: Sarah Whitney, Pennsylvania Sea Grant

This committee has been brainstorming a variety of topics including:

- What grants are available?
- What are some priority topics that we could look for funding for?

The committee now has a spreadsheet with information on state and federal grant opportunities with deadlines that describe the types of projects each grant has funded. This document is available in Microsoft Teams where it can be viewed by other PISC members and additional grant ideas can be added. There are discussions of posting this document on the PISC website or publishing updates in a newsletter or email to keep PISC members informed of its contents.

Sarah mentioned that many grants have regular cycles, and through use of this document, PISC members can know what grants are coming up so those interested can better prepare a grant application. Sarah also mentioned that the Grants Committee will not be the entity actually writing grants; that will be a task done by the agency or organization receiving funding. However, the committee is happy to help facilitate getting information and project ideas from the group.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) asked Sarah if this committee is tapping into USDA sites, etc., to find available grants and then get this grant information online for others to view? Sarah responded, saying yes, that is the intent. She also clarified that the committee hopes to share grant information so that PISC members will also add other grant opportunities to the document that they know about which are not already listed.

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned that during a recent Invasive Species Listing Committee meeting, it was mentioned that since so many species risk assessments still need to be done, there may be a need to contract an outside entity (such as a college or botanical garden) to complete them. This may be an opportunity for the Invasive Species Listing committee and the Grants committee to work together on that effort. Sarah agreed, also adding that as the various PISC subcommittees think about tasks that need to be done, folks should add those thoughts into this document as potential project ideas. Once project ideas are jotted down, they can be matched up with applicable funding sources. However, receiving funding will still require an agency or organization to apply for a particular grant by going through the necessary application steps.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) asked Sarah if there is a timeline of how soon the grant document/related information will be posted on the PISC website? Sarah said no. She added that the group isn't sure if the PISC website is the best place to post this information; however, they are interested in sending this information out to Council members quarterly.

Member Updates and New Business

Kris began the discussion by giving an update on the proposal for a Pennsylvania Weed-Free Straw and Hay Certification program.

Update: Weed-Free Straw and Hay Certification Program

Spokesperson: Kris Abell, PDA

Kris sent a proposal to all Council members last week about a Weed-Free Straw and Hay Certification Program. Over the past year, various presentations and updates have been given to PISC to familiarize folks with what this program is, why it's important, and why a variety of individuals want to develop this type of program for Pennsylvania. A team consisting of Johnny Zook (PDA), Phillip Stober (PDA, Ag Development Business Center), and Kris Abell drafted a proposal for the program with the intention of submitting it to Secretary Redding (and hopefully having the program created *and administered* by the PDA).

Amy Jewitt (WPC) mentioned that during past PISC presentations, this program has been referred to as a Weed-Free Forage and Straw Program. Now during today's meeting (*on the Power Point slide being shared*), the program is being referred to as a Weed Free Straw and Hay Certification Program. Since these names are different, Amy wanted to make sure the name of this program is firmly decided on and remains consistent moving forward.

Johnny Zook (PDA) responded to Amy's question, saying that most other programs (*in other states*) refer to it as a Certified Weed Free Forage program, which covers everything including both hay and straw and the various uses of this items (e.g., forage and mulching). Johnny feels it will be fine to call the program (*in Pennsylvania*) a Certified Weed Free Forage Program.

Andy Ernst (PA Farm Bureau) and John Bell (PA Farm Bureau, Environmental Issues Counsel, Government Affairs and Communications Division) were discussing details of this program recently and thought that to have the full support from the PA Farm Bureau, there may need to be a more formal process in setting up this program. Also, the term "forage" could be a red flag as it could make people think there would be issues if there are weeds present in any type of forage (which Andy realizes is not accurate).

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) responded to Andy Ernst's comments, saying this program will be for those individuals that have an interested in being certified (*via the program*). Fred emphasized PA Farm Bureau needs to know this will not be a mandatory program, but rather a voluntary opportunity for farmers who want to engage in selling this type of product as a way to enhance their business model. Also, the program isn't a catch-all that all forage must be weed-free (*for those not participating in the program*). If needed, Fred is happy to talk with others at PA Farm Bureau about their concerns.

Ruth Welliver (PDA) mentioned that some of PDA's certification programs have in their title "voluntary" or "specialized" which makes it clear the program isn't for everybody. Andy Ernst (PA Farm Bureau) responded to Ruth's comment, saying he feels the term "voluntary" would be very helpful to include along with this program.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) clarified that he (Fred) has been asked to present the concept of a Weed-Free Hay and Straw Program to Secretary Redding and to highlight it as a new

opportunity for Pennsylvania’s farming community. Fred is confident the Secretary will be supportive of this new program.

Phillip Stober (PDA, Director of the Agricultural Business Development Center) was recently looped into this project about six weeks ago (joining Johnny Zook and Kris Abell who have been working on it for a while now). The Ag Business Development Center also views the Weed Free Hay and Straw Program as an opportunity for farmers to make upwards of \$50+ per acre on small grains where income can be derived both from seed as well as straw. We understand there’s a market for this product and that it provides an incredible opportunity to prevent the spread of invasive species in Pennsylvania while also helping farmers earn more income. Once this program is discussed with Secretary Redding at PDA, it will hopefully also be discussed with Secretary McDonnell at DEP.

MOTION: Lisa Murphy (UPenn) moved to approve and support the proposal to create a Weed-Free Forage Program in Pennsylvania. Daniel Zimmerman (Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

ACTION ITEM: Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) reminded Kris Abell/others to ensure information about this program is sent back out to Council members with details explaining it as a voluntary program and that the name of the program will include the word “forage”. This should be done prior to the program proposal being sent to Secretary Redding. Kris Abell (PDA) said he would make sure to complete both of these tasks as requested by Fred.

New Business: Zebra Mussels Found in Moss Balls Sold in Aquarium Trade

Spokesperson: Sean Hartzell, PFBC

Sean gave an overview of a new national/international emerging invasive species issue which just happened last week.

A product known as moss balls (or marimo moss balls) are popular aquarium plants commonly sold at many aquarium stores. Recently, zebra mussels (highly injurious aquatic invasive species; considered one of the worst aquatic invasive species in the United States) were found in these moss balls. More specifically, an employee at a Petco store in Washington State last week found zebra mussels in a shipment of moss ball products. The finding was reported to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Unfortunately, it was later found that zebra mussels were in these products on the store shelf for at least a month. Because the employee wasn’t sure how to report this finding to the proper authorities, there was some initial reporting lag time.



News of this finding went to many different people in the aquatic invasive species community (various state and federal entities), and as folks began checking other stores in different states, more findings of zebra mussels in moss ball products were discovered. Sean believes approximately 20-25 U.S. states have found these products on store shelves contaminated with zebra mussels.

PFBC's waterways conservation officers began conducting store investigations last week and have found some of these products on store shelves contaminated with zebra mussels. PFBC is coordinating with PDA on these investigations (with whom they jointly regulate the aquarium trade in Pennsylvania). Throughout much of the U.S., majority of these products are in Petco and PetSmart brand pet stores. Both stores (nationwide) have been very responsive to this issue, removing all moss ball products from their store shelves, placing them in quarantine, and following guidelines prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to properly dispose of these products and properly cleaning their aquaria. These moss ball products have been removed from store shelves in Pennsylvania (from these two chain stores); however, they may be in other types of retail stores. Investigations are underway in Pennsylvania and other states to check additional retail locations.

Currently, the risk of sale of these products has been very well addressed by the sellers and various entities involved. However, the bigger issue at hand is that these products were on store shelves in Pennsylvania and nationwide possibly for several weeks until the proper authorities were made aware. Customers who have purchased these moss balls and put them in their aquaria may not be aware of this larger issue. In response, the USFWS in collaboration with several state agencies have put together guidance for members of the public who may have purchased one of these products in the last several weeks. The guidance states how to disinfect the moss ball and how to properly clean aquaria to prevent the potential spread of the zebra mussels. Note: The disinfection process will kill the moss ball.

Zebra mussels produce microscopic larvae (*called veligers*) that may be present in an aquarium tank that included one or more moss balls, so even if zebra mussels are not visible, these products may contain microscopic veligers or the tank water may be contaminated with them.

Work is still underway to ensure these products are not being sold in Pennsylvania (which is being well addressed), but the larger issue still at hand is to communicate to people who may have bought these contaminated moss balls and teach them how to properly disinfect everything to prevent the spread of zebra mussels to other locations.

Over the weekend, PFBC issued a press release on this issue which included links to guidance information provided by the USFWS. Sean has distributed this press release and related information to several members of PISC and asked for folks to please share this info via social media, website, or other relevant communication channels. Sean is interested in sharing this info with all of PISC and he will coordinate with Kris Abell (PDA) on how best to share this information with all Council members. Sean also commented this this issue in its entirety will likely serve as a learning experience for many people to hopefully be on the lookout for similar situations like this in the future and how best to mitigate the issue(s).

Jim Grazio (DEP) congratulated Sean on the good work he has done on behalf of PFBC concerning this issue. Jim also inquired if there are efforts underway to track down the sources of these contaminated moss balls? Sean responded, saying that part of the issue is still under investigation. However, 90% of these contaminated products have been linked to a distributor from overseas in the Ukraine (a location where zebra mussels are native to parts of the area). This distributor primarily ships their products to sites in Florida, California, and a few places in the northeastern U.S.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) inquired if this issue with the contaminated moss balls has raised red flags regarding additional products (being sold in stores) potentially contaminated with zebra mussels and/or other invasive species which may be going unnoticed. As Sean had mentioned, the issue with these contaminated moss balls had been going on for at least a month or more before it was reported to the proper authorities. With that in mind, are there other things we are missing, even now, that folks should be looking for? Sean responded, saying that right now in Pennsylvania and in other places across the country, we are in a “reacting phase” (*since this issue is still so new*). However, once the dust settles on this issue, people will likely be taking a harder look at other products to investigate. Note: In addition to the zebra mussels found in the moss balls, other organisms have been found including worms and some small [isopods](#); however, no other species have been discovered that are known to be invasive. Sean noted that Hawaii has either banned the sale of moss balls in their state or restricted them in some capacity.

Sarah Whitney (PA Sea Grant) commented that this issue has impacted states from New England to the west coast. It was astounding to see how many states checked for them (and found them) within 24-48 hours of when the notices came out. Sarah expects that more questions will be

asked and more thought put into this issue (*and related issues*) at a nationwide scale as the process moves forward.

Sara Stahlman (PA Sea Grant) made mention that organisms in trade is a key focus area for the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. There is an Organisms in Trade Symposium currently being planned that will focus on working with industry on enforcement and regulation of species in trade that may be of interest to folks. Sara will keep the Council posted as she learns more on dates and details for the symposium.

New Business: A New Workgroup for PISC: Management Plan Advisory Workgroup

Spokesperson: Jeff Wagner (WPC)

Jeff provided an overview of his suggestion for a new advisory workgroup for PISC. The main purpose of this group would be to provide a framework and strategy for evaluating progress in implementing the [Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan](#). The need for this group comes from PISC's limited capacity for developing meaningful measures of progress that are critical in the group's overall reporting. This workgroup would be chaired by one PISC member and composed of 5-10 other individuals who are strongly involved in invasive species issues. Initially, the group would work with various contacts and information sources, but eventually would work with PRISMs to glean information. The goal of this group would be to make progress on the specific goals listed in the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan that don't require statewide, detailed data and knowledge.

Example goals that can more readily be addressed include:

- Early Detection and Rapid Response
 - Create a watch list of invasive species not yet known or of limited distribution in the Commonwealth. This list will be placed on the PISC website and checked on an annual basis to ensure it is up-to-date and comprehensive.
- Survey and Monitoring
 - Conduct monitoring surveys to assess the threat to critical habitats and their species from invasion and address their protection through policy when needed.
 - Incorporate long-term monitoring into eradication and control programs to ensure success.
 - Create and/or identify a clearinghouse for the purpose of sharing invasive species location data.
 - Conduct surveys for 3-5 high priority species to better understand their distribution in the Commonwealth.

- Control
 - Develop action plans for 3-5 high priority species known to be infesting specific places in Pennsylvania. Plans can be made for species occurring on either public or private property. Ensure that funding is available to follow through with these action plans. Identify one or more groups which will coordinate the implementation of these plans.
 - Create a master directory of contractors, analysts and consultants in private, public, and non-profit sectors who can provide technical services or recommendations for an identified invasive species management problem.

- Restoration
 - Create a master directory of existing efforts and key groups that focus on restoration of native habitats.

- Research
 - Develop a prioritized list of research needs to address the most important aspects of invasive species risk, prevention, eradication, and control.

Kris Abell (PDA) suggested that another short-term committee be formed in PISC that would seek to create this advisory committee Jeff is suggesting.

Scott Bearer (PGC) is supportive of this idea.

Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) mentioned that as one of the people who worked on the last update of the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan, he would be happy to help with this effort, though his bandwidth is currently limited.

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) asked if Jeff has provided this information to the Council already? Jeff responded no, and Kris Abell (PDA) clarified that up to this point, this topic has mostly been a discussion of a smaller subset of people. **ACTION ITEM:** Jeff said he can update this information for purposes of sending out to members of the Council. Fred mentioned that since several PISC members could not be part of today's meeting, so it would be helpful to have something to refer back to get additional feedback from others.

Don Eggen (DCNR) mentioned the Bureau of State Parks is working with the Department of General Services (DGS) to create service contracts for invasive work. The purpose of this is to not have individual contracts each time you want to do something. They will have a statewide list of approved contractors that state agencies can then contact any vendor on this list to do invasive species-related work. Rachel Reese (DCNR) is one of the people coordinating with DGS on this effort.

In relation to Don's comment, Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) mentioned in the Skype Chat box that he is currently making a directory of contractors and can provide that list to PISC in the future.

New Business: Improve Invasive Species Reporting Hotline

Spokesperson: Sara Stahlman, Pennsylvania Sea Grant

Sara began her presentation by mentioning that the [Pennsylvania Rapid Response Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species](#) was approved by PISC in 2014. Since that time, Pennsylvania Sea Grant has been conducting mock rapid response exercises and getting feedback from those that are using the Plan. A group of people (many of whom are PISC members) are working to update this Plan and one of the items that came up was working to streamline reporting mechanisms to report findings of aquatic invasive species.

Over the summer, there were a few instances of species that were discovered that were later found out about via word-of-mouth and/or social media. These instances show us that some species are not being reported appropriately. Currently there are reporting mechanisms in place to report finds of aquatic invasive species including the [PFBC reporting form](#), the [Sea Grant invasive species field guide app](#), and [iMapInvasives](#); however, it's important to keep in mind that some people may not be comfortable using the internet or digital mediums to report this information and may need another option, such as a hotline (*phone number*) to call.

Pennsylvania Sea Grant has been working with Kris Abell (PDA) and others at PDA to have an aquatics option put on the existing PDA hotline for reporting invasive species. As part of this discussion, the idea to have a vanity number associated with this hotline was proposed (i.e., something that's catchy and easy to remember). For example, the current PDA hotline number is 1-866-253-7189 which isn't very easy to remember. (For those not familiar with a vanity number, something like 1-866-INVADER or 1-866-PA-PEST are potential examples.)

Sara feels a vanity number may help encourage reporting of species and wanted to bring this idea to PISC to get feedback from others.

She mentioned there was some concern from PDA and other agencies that have printed materials with the existing hotline phone number on them; however, it was determined the existing phone number could exist in tandem with a new vanity number. So, no matter which number was called, the report would go to the same place until which point the existing hotline number could be phased out on printed materials. The other issue at hand is the availability of vanity numbers which has been somewhat of a challenge.

If the creation of a vanity number is something the Council is supportive of, Sara would ask for help in coming up with ideas for a potential vanity number. Note: This would be not just for aquatics, but for the entire invasive species reporting menu.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) wrote in the Chat box the following comment: Sara, one thing to discuss further with this idea for an invasive species reporting hotline is the structure behind the hotline. Who is managing the information coming in? How is it being confirmed? Where is the information going from there as far as documentation? Sara responded, also in the Chat, saying the hotline already exists and is being managed by PDA. It's the 1-866-253-7189 number. The new mailbox already exists as well and she believes it goes to Sean Hartzell at PFBC. This would simply be creating a new "name" for the existing hotline that is catchier and easier to remember for folks to help encourage reporting.

ACTION ITEM: Kris Abell (mentioned) to Sara that it would be good to distribute a summary of this proposal via email to all Council members since we are short on time at this point in the meeting.

Update: Spotted Lanternfly Work Scheduled for 2021

Spokesperson: Michael Hutchinson, PDA, Entomology Program Manager

Michael provided information on the spotted lanternfly program both for 2020 and coming up in 2021.

In 2020, a number of agencies received varying levels of funding for spotted lanternfly control, predominately PDA and USDA. However, additional entities including conservation districts, DCNR state parks, Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission all received some funding for spotted lanternfly control on their properties.

Penn State was the lead for research education and they also ran the call center that handled all 82,000 citizen reports that came in. Penn State also administered the permitting program.

In 2020, most spotted lanternfly control activities used the trap tree methodology which uses tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and about 150,000 tree-of-heaven trees were treated using this method. In the fall when systemic insecticides aren't quite as effective, we transitioned over to treating some rail and industrial properties with a contact insecticide. At that time, there were still large numbers of [gravid](#)s by the spotted lanternfly in the landscape that were either laying eggs or hopping onto vehicles and laying eggs at other locations. Those contact insecticide treatments seemed to work well, showing 95% efficacy after collecting data on pre- and post-trapping numbers.

In 2021, PDA plans to expand the use of contact insecticides and focus on heavily-infested areas that are associated with industries which show a high probability of long-distance transport for spotted lanternfly. These places will include railyards, airports, shipping and trucking yards, etc. – places where there is a lot of traffic in and out as well as large numbers of spotted lanternfly that could hop on vehicles.

Many of these locations are highly disturbed habitats dominated by invasive vegetation including spotted lanternfly’s preferred host, tree-of-heaven. PDA feels treating these habitats with a broadcast insecticide should reduce non-target effects rather than treating in more natural areas. PDA will be working closely with Penn State in 2021 on both efficacy studies as well as the potential for non-target effects (as PDA transitions to doing more broadcast insecticide treatments than what they have done in the past).

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Fred Strathmeyer (PDA) thanked all members of the Council for continuing to work above and beyond everyone’s regular day jobs. He looks forward to the progress this council will make in the future and commends PISC members for the projects they are willing to take on.

In looking at the many people on today’s meeting (59 total), Fred mentioned we are certainly reaching out to a broad audience that cares about this subject matter. PISC as a whole will look at what is the best way to continue holding PISC meetings moving forward and will accept input from others on this (*either in-person or virtually*).

MOTION: Gregg Robertson (PLNA) moved to adjourn the meeting. Gary Walters (DEP) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Meeting adjourned.

Next PISC Meeting

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 10:00am via 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 meeting 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 in June, please contact Kris for more information.
