

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force

MINUTES OF THE JULY 2025 MEETING

July 8-9, 2025; Virtual Meeting

On July 8-9, 2025, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) held a two-day virtual meeting. Action items and decisions are listed below, followed by a summary of the meeting.

Decisional Items

- The ANSTF approved the Rapid Response Plan Template
- The ANSTF approved the archival of the Ruffe Control Plan
- The ANSTF approved the Guidance for Aquatic Nuisance Species Control and Management Plans

Action Items

- Executive Secretary will meet with relevant agencies (e.g., BLM, NPS, FWS, USFS, Reclamation) and other interested parties to review the 2015 document “Federal Policy Options: Addressing the Movement of Aquatic Invasive Species Onto and Off of Federal Land and Waters” and evaluate if the actions should be updated and/or expanded in alignment with direction within the EXPLORE Act.
- Regional Panel Principals will review recent projects, actions and priorities related to the bait pathway to consider if there is a need to align efforts across regions.
- Executive Secretary will work on a document with the Control Subcommittee that will supplement the Ruffe Control Plan archival that summarizes the reason for archival, control program objectives that continue be relevant, and conditions that may warrant updating the plan and returning to an active status.
- Executive Secretary and Control Subcommittee form a Golden Mussel Work Group to evaluate the immediate and long-term needs for this species, including outreach efforts to reduce confusion between the golden mussel and similarly named species.
- Create an agenda item topic for a future ANSTF meeting to identify funds to support a multi-panel project to enhance collaboration and efficiencies. This funding is intended to be a new, non-competing source of funding.

July 8, 2025

Welcome

Martha Balis-Larsen (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) introduced herself, noting Dave Miko was unavailable for today’s meeting. Balis-Larsen reviewed the agenda, which was distributed to registered participants and posted on the ANSTF website and in the meeting chat. She also thanked all for attending and participating in the rescheduled May 2025 meeting and summarized the topics that will be covered during the meeting.

Sean Corson (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) introduced himself and provided some information about his background and its intersection with invasive species. Corson thanked the Task Force members for the time and energy dedicated to Task Force priorities and highlighted the work of regional panel subcommittees and associated work plans.

Susan Pasko (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) introduced her role as ANSTF Executive Secretary and covered meeting logistics.

Introductions

Roll call was taken of ANS Task Force membership. The complete list of attendees is listed below.

Name	Organization
Adam Carpenter	American Water Works Association
Afnan Khairullah	MARAD
Alexandria Popores	National Park Service
Amy McGovern	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Angela McMellen Brannigan	National Invasive Species Council
Annette Bravo	Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
Aubree Szczepanski	North Carolina State University
Barak Shemai	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bob Likins	Pet Advocacy Network
Bryan Falk	National Invasive Species Council
Caitlyn Czajkowski	National Aquaculture Association
Caroline McLaughlin	Florida Sea Grant
Cecilia Weibert	Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Cesar Blanco	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Charlie Robertson	Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Colleen Allen	National Park Service
Christopher Densmore	U.S. Geological Survey
Connor Bevan	American Sportfishing Association
Courtney Larson	Environmental Protection Agency
Dennis Zabaglo	Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Dolores Savignano	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Donald MacLean	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Doug Jensen	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Elizabeth Brown	EB Consulting
Eric Fischer	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Eva Fielder	Aquatic Populations
Francisco Borrero	MRP-APHIS
Greg Conover	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Heidi McMaster	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Hilary Smith	Department of the Interior
Ian Enochs	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

James Ballard	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jenna Shinen	U.S. Department of State
Jenny Carney	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
Jim Carlton	Northeast Regional Panel
Joe Krieger	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
John Wullschleger	National Park Service
Jude Martinez	NAVFAC Marianas
Karen McDowell	San Francisco Estuary Partnership
Katherine Wyman-Grothem	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Katie Church	Invasive Species Centre
Kim Bogenschutz	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Leah Elwell	Conservation Collaborations, LLC
Lisa DeBruyckere	Creative Resource Strategies, LLC
Lily Thompson	University of Missouri
Margaret Hunter	U.S. Geological Survey
Maria Vega	Puerto Rico Dept. of Natural and Environmental Resources
Marian Dean	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mark Lewandowski	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Mark Minton	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
Martha Balis-Larsen	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Martha Volkoff	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Matt Phillips	Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel
Matthew Neilson	U.S. Geological Survey
Maurice Sadowsky	MJSTI Corporation
McKayla Spencer	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Meghan Bugaj	City of Bellingham
Meg Modley	Lake Champlain Basin Program
Michael Greer	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Michael Somerville	AWWA
Michele L Tremblay	Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel
Mike Freeze	Keo Fish Farm
Mike Greer	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mike Langendorf	Great Lakes Regional Panel
Mitzi Reed	Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
Monica McGarrity	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Natalie Kitts	Pennsylvania State University
Nichole Angell	Great Lakes Commission
Nilda Jimenez	Puerto Rico Dept. of Natural and Environmental Resources
Paul Zajicek	National Aquaculture Association
Phillip Andreozzi	U.S. Department of Agriculture (MRP-APHIS)
Rana Brown	Squaxan Island Tribe
Renee Crisostomo	Florida Sea Grant
Rob Bourgeois	Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resources Association

Rob Emens	Mid-Atlantic Regional Panel
Robert Walters	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Sally Brown	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Samantha Tank	Great Lakes Commission
Sean Corson	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Sean Hartzell	Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Sharmila Jepsen	Bureau of Land Management
Stas Burgiel	National Invasive Species Council
Stephen Phillips	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Susan Pasko	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sydney Currier	Invasive Species Centre
Tanner Davis	Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel
Thomas Woolf	Western Regional Panel
Tim Campbell	Wisconsin Sea Grant
Tyler Carlsgaard	U.S. Coast Guard
Vanitha Sivarajan	Office of Insular Affairs
Wesley Daniel	U.S. Geological Survey

Adoption of Agenda, Approval of Minutes, Status of Action Items

A motion to adopt the agenda was seconded, there was no discussion, and the agenda was approved.

Corson called for approval of the minutes from the November 2024 meeting. They were distributed to all members electronically and posted on the website. A motion to approve the minutes was seconded, there was no discussion, and the minutes were approved.

Presentation: USGS NAS Update: U.S. Geological Survey Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database: New Species Occurrences

Wesley Daniel, U.S. Geological Survey and the coordinator of the [USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic species \(NAS\) database](#), provided update new species occurrences reported to the database. NAS has tracked 1,448 species, consisting of 855,000 records. The number of alert system users is 1,000.

There were 54 new invasive species occurrences this year across the United States (new to country, state, drainage, etc.), some of which includes mammals and other non-aquatic invasive species. The majority of the AIS were fish, followed by bivalves, aquatic plants, gastropods, and crustaceans. Type of alerts were: 52 County, 53 Drainage, 12 State, and 5 Nation. Daniel discussed the following species:

- The introduction of Golden Mussel (*Limnoperna fortunei*) into California will be discussed later in the today's meeting.

- A secondary mussel was found during monitoring for golden mussel, a brackish species called the Axe-head Mussel (*Xenostrobus securis*). It is anticipated to have limited consequences.
- Prickly Waterlily (*Euryale ferox*) is another species new to the United States, detected in a St. Paul, Minnesota lake, likely introduced into the wild.
- An expanding fish species that is being tracked is Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*) in both the Mississippi River drainage and Chesapeake drainage.
- A hybrid eelgrass was detected in Tennessee and Florida and spreads via floating mats, moving through the Tombigbee Waterway. It is a known species in the aquarium trade, and its potential to spread is significant.
- A tropical seagrass native to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean was detected in Florida in a marina and has potential to move great distances.
- Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*) was found in the Lower Columbia River and reported to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- A new occurrence of Zebra Mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) in Colorado was detected in the Upper Colorado River.
- Silver Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*) spread is being monitored as it spreads in tributary-like areas.

New features of the NAS database include the Aquatic Disease and Pathogen Repository ([AquaDePTH](#)), a national repository to support aquatic animal diseases and pathogens in freshwater and marine systems that will be launched in 2026. It will track fish kills and aquatic pathogen trends spatially and temporally and be interoperable with other databases, such as the Wildlife Health Information Sharing Partnership Event Reporting System ([WHISPers](#)) and USFWS National Wildlife Fish Health Survey. Everything in the database will be available for public consumption – both surveillance and mortality data will be included.

Update: Early Detection Rapid Response Framework

Hilary Smith, Senior Advisor for Invasive Species at the U.S. Department of the Interior, provided an update on the EDRR Framework. The vision of the framework is lands and waters free of new invasive species. The mission is to strengthen coordination and capacity across jurisdictional boundaries to efficiently detect and response to new invasive species throughout the nation. This initiative involves many federal and non-federal partners throughout the United States. Four key actions steps are included in the EDRR workflow – planning, detecting, reporting, and responding.

Planning includes Siren, the National EDRR Information System, a key national EDRR framework coordinator, horizon scans and watch lists for priority species, and identification of invasion hotspots. Responding increases funding and capacity. Reporting uses existing national,

regional and local reporting databases. Detection includes detection tools and services and enhancing surveillance capacity.

McKayla Spencer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Interjurisdictional Invasive species Rapid Response Team ([IInSRRT](#)) Coordinator, talked about the desire to build additional capacity for rapid response. IInSRRT was developed to respond to nationally significant new high-risk invasions or invasive species that are a significant spatial gap from current known locations, as requested by land management authorities. . It uses the Incident Command System (ICS) structure for rapid response. The program ties to administration and department priorities by promoting national security, improving preparedness and readiness, reducing economic impacts, and supporting states, tribes, and territories while allowing for recovery efforts. The IInSRRT program focus is on the eradication phase of the invasion curve.

The program is organized in three areas: an IInSRRT Coordinator to direct program operations, guide development of decision support tools, serve as the point of contact for deployment requests, and work with the IInSRRT Guidance Group (GG). The GG (eight DOI agencies – there is interest in expanding this concept to create a non-DOI IInSRRT group) provides guidance and support, includes representatives from DOI Invasive Species Task Force, and assists with planning, communications, and program operations as needed. The third element is the Deployment Team, the “boots on the ground” during a response. The Team includes technical experts who are employees within DOI groups with ICS qualifications.

The trigger for deployment of IInSRRT is a request from a lead agency (federal, state, tribal, or territorial government agency), which is subject to approval by the IInSRRT Coordinator and Guidance Group. Criteria for deployment is being developed. IInSRRT program roles may include raising awareness, incident guidance, incident coordination, and incident response.

Other considerations to develop in the next year include developing an experts database, an ICS specialist database, equipment lists, environmental compliance expertise, responder recruitment, and survey incident data collection. The application for requests will tentatively open in June of 2026.

Early Detection Rapid Response Subcommittee Report Updates

Wes Daniel (U.S. Geological Survey), Chair of the ANSTF Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) Subcommittee, said there is a new vision for the subcommittee, including focusing on immediate priority work elements, objectives selected for completion by EDRR subcommittee members, discontinuing inactive objectives and outputs and creating a leaner, streamlined work plan that highlights productivity and progress.

The FY25 workplan immediate priorities:

Objective 3.3 Facilitate the development of capacities to respond rapidly to new invasions includes a strategy to facilitate the ICS process by identifying personnel and assets that can be

used to implement a response. The output was the development of a rapid response template, which supports jurisdictions new to rapid response planning. The template will be digitized as a fillable form on SIREN, can be completed online, and will have an automatically generated printable version.

Objective 3.1 Facilitate monitoring efforts to detect and report new sightings of ANS includes a strategy to assess horizon scanning tools and develop a framework for ANSTF members and partners to conduct targeted monitoring in high priority areas for high priority taxa. The effort will shift to promote these tools, including NISC is developing a publication on the use of horizon scans in management and decision making, and aid in promoting the use of horizon scans and a new StoryMap being created by several federal agencies. The output is to aid in the development and upkeep of the USFWS experts database. The committee is focused on outreach to engage more people as listed experts in the database.

The secondary priorities include:

Objective 3.3: Facilitate the development of capacities to respond rapidly to new invasions includes a strategy to identify obstacles and explore opportunities to establish an EDRR fund. The output is to develop a report describing when emergency response funds are currently in use to address ANS. A next step is to potentially conduct annual surveys to assess awareness.

Objective 3.2 Develop processes to rapidly assess new species detection and determine appropriate includes a strategy to improve decision tools, such as a rapid response decision tool. Wes is working with the USFWS to develop an exhaustive list of what should be considered before engaging in a rapid response. A Rapid Response Decision Tree will be reviewed by the EDRR Subcommittee in FY26.

Decision Item: The Task Force voted to approve the Rapid Response Template.

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force: Coral Disease & Disturbance Working Group Update

Joe Krieger, NOAA Invasive Species Coordinator, discussed new invasive species affecting corals in the Caribbean and the creation of the working group, a collaboration between ANSTF and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

Florida Sea Grant's National Coral Disease Coordinator Caroline McLaughlin provided an overview of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and Disease & Disturbance Working Group, noting the purpose of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force is to lead, coordinate, and strengthen federal actions to preserve, conserve, and restore coral reef ecosystems. The working group focuses on coral disease and disturbances. There are 70 members from federal, state and territorial entities, and universities. There are 2 sub-teams – a Transmission Team to prevent the further spread of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) and an Invasive Soft Corals Team, which is co-led by

NOAA and the State of Hawaii to support preparedness, prevention and response efforts targeted at invasive soft coral that invaded or are at risk of invading U.S. coral reefs.

Across the U.S. federal landscape, marine biosecurity actions are occurring across the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, ANSTF, and National Invasive Species Council (NISC) to avoid duplication of efforts.

Ian Enochs, Research Ecologist with NOAA, discussed SCTLD, and its effects on native corals in the Caribbean since first detected off Miami, FL in 2014. NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML)'s response includes testing transmission sources and identifying potential pathogens. SCTLD has hopped around the Caribbean and is estimated to be transported via shipping ballast water. AOML exposed 2 reef-building species to water that had been ballasted for up to 120 hours, and determined it was capable of transmitting disease. UVC treatment was tested and determined the disease can be transmitted via UVC-treated water. There is significant potential for this disease to become established in the Pacific, likely via the Panama Canal, which is used by tens of thousands of ships annually. Each ship carries up to 16 million gallons of ballast water. In addition to traveling through the canal, the ships stack up at canal entry and exit points adjacent to islands with coral reef populations. To address potential risk, investigators collected common coral species near the Panama Canal as well as diseased donor corals, where they were studied in Miami's experimental reef laboratory. All Pacific species showed signs of disease after exposure to diseased corals.

Nilda Jimenez, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, shared information about two species of pulsing corals in Puerto Rico (*Xenia umbellata* and *Latissimia ningalooensis*). An administrative order was issued declaring the presence of pulsing coral an emergency, an emergency response strategy and best management practices were developed, and state permits supporting removal actions were issued. The corals are located primarily in the south-southwest portion of Puerto Rico. Manual removal was initiated, but it was a destructive method that is considered to promote propagation. A suction method is being designed for corals in seagrass habitat. With limited resources (donations received on occasion), corals are smothered with cement, a technique used to attach corals during restoration projects. Pending activities include evaluating distribution, conducting additional genetic analysis, and obtaining additional funds.

María Vega, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, discussed outreach, including presentations, interviews, videos on social media, sharing information with other jurisdictions, workshops and integration of a U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Invasive Coral Species subgroup.

Golden Mussel Response Update

Martha Volkoff, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, shared an update on golden mussels in California. Since the November 2024 ANSTF meeting, golden mussels were delineated in the Delta, early detection monitoring increased statewide, dreissenid outreach and education materials were revised to incorporate golden mussels, prevention was expanded at uninfested waters, and coordination with water managers has been enhanced, particularly with waters that have hydrologic connections. An interagency work group, titled the Golden Mussel Task Force, was formed to address organizational elements of response, including development of a response plan. In April 2025, a Golden Mussel Response “Framework” was created to guide preventing further spread of golden mussels and minimize impacts by identification of potential actions that can be taken. California is unable to make real strides in several of these actions because of funding and other constraints. California has, however, made progress in the following areas:

- Communication: Development of rack cards, posters, and signs, creation of an outreach/media plan is in progress, as well as exploration of collaboration with industry leaders in outdoor recreation products.
- Prevention at uninfested waters: New programs have been created at high-use waters, existing programs have been enhanced, closures have been enacted, there is enhanced statewide coordination to support consistency and reciprocity, and a \$1M SFRA Boating Access grant opportunity has closed, and awards are in the process in being made.
- Monitoring: An interactive map has been developed documenting current distribution, noting golden mussels are now widespread in the Delta, there are no detections attributed to overland transport outside of downstream flow, and staff are refining methods for detection. Prevention programs are intercepting infested vessels – there is no containment in the Delta in infested waters.

In conjunction with looking for golden mussels, the Axe-ead Mussel (*Xenostrobus securis*) was detected on a watercraft traveling into California from Lake Havasu. They were detected at the Dominguez Channel north of Port of Los Angeles and nearby at the mouth of the San Gabriel River.

Highest priority management needs is veliger detection, morphology, and validating species with Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), lethal conditions research (hot water – initial results indicate that golden mussels have similar tolerances to hot water as dreissenids - drying), and understanding salinity tolerance, copper toxicity, and Zequanox® toxicity.

The state of California added golden mussels as a restricted species (emergency adoption); the permanent rulemaking process will begin in August. There currently is no state legislation introduced, and no increase to program capacity or funding. There is a potential federal bill (HR 3717) addressing golden mussels.

Tom Woolf, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, expressed a recommendation from the Western Regional Panel for support, assistance, and leadership on a national scale to address the potential impacts from golden mussel. Federal participation in prioritization and development solutions are needed to protect natural resources and infrastructure from impacts.

Prevention Session: Prevention Subcommittee Update

Chair Joe Krieger, the NOAA Invasive Species Coordinator, discussed some recent reports that reference the ANSTF:

- AIS in Commerce – evaluating possible outreach to pet industry on species-specific labeling
- Seaplane risk analysis – evaluating recommendations for next steps
- VIDA – not yet ready for ANSTF input on framework
- Aquatic Plant Hitchhiker Risk Analysis – nearly complete
- Plants in Trade – Horizon Scan and Risk – will take a year to complete

The committee is discussing the creation of a Marine Biosecurity Task Team to enhance coordination, identify opportunities to incorporate marine biosecurity priorities into the ANSTF strategic work plan, and identify an initial set of priority topics/questions/concerns for the task team to consider. The committee is looking for additional volunteers.

A Risk Analysis to Assess the Potential to Spread Aquatic Invasive Species via the Seaplane Pathway: Recommendations to Enhance U.S. AIS-Seaplane Prevention Efforts

Lisa DeBruyckere, Creative Resource Strategies, LLC, presented on a project to enhance U.S. AIS-seaplane prevention efforts. Colleagues that participated in conducting the project included Leah Elwell of Conservation Collaborations, Stephanie Otts of National Sea Grant Law Center, and Stephen Phillips of Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The project was funded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant F23AP0102600.

The 18-month project goals were to build on existing knowledge and understanding of seaplanes as a potential pathway for the transport of AIS, compile information and statistics on seaplanes and U.S. waterbodies and their potential nexus with AIS, characterize the risk of transporting AIS by seaplanes, survey seaplane pilots and conduct pilot focus groups to assess AIS knowledge and prevention practices, host a “Think Tank” summit with seaplane and float manufacturers and to propose guidelines for industry standards to lessen the transport of AIS through seaplane equipment, such as water rudders; and make recommendations to enhance seaplane AIS prevention efforts.

A project website was created to chart progress in completing project goals: <https://www.seaplanesandais.com>. All deliverables from the project are uploaded to the website.

Recommendations were made in six areas:

1. Statistics – address current gaps in seaplane statistics
 - a. Incorporate seaplane-related questions into annual FAA pilot survey; sort by straight and amphibious floats; annual hours flown; states where aircraft are flown; purpose of flights; consider additional survey for seaplane pilots only
2. Research
 - a. Technology to inform pilots when AIS is on rudders or floats
 - b. Product or treatment to kill AIS in floats
 - c. Modifications to rudder design
 - d. Anti-fouling paints
 - e. Efficacy of saltwater landings
 - f. In-depth Think Tank to produce technical bulletin
3. Address current gaps in regulations
 - a. Include seaplanes in Clean, Drain, Dry obligations (Clean, Drain, Dry components; When triggered: Launch, Removal, Transport; Drain Plug Law)
 - b. States without Clean, Drain, Dry requirements should adopt the requirements to further national alignment of state AIS policy
4. Training – ensure AIS training is a mandatory component of FAA seaplane rating training
 - a. Include information on seaplane pathway-AIS nexus and seaplane pilot best practices in FAA-H-8083-23
 - b. Produce and distribute an FAA Advisory Circular on both
5. Outreach – expand outreach to seaplane pilots
 - a. Increase transparency and accessibility of local seaplane ordinances and restrictions
 - b. Inform pilots on where they can report AIS
 - c. Provide industry with tools to raise awareness of AIS and the seaplane pathway
 - d. Ensure float manufacturers provide information about AIS in information and manuals when selling floats
 - e. Incorporate real-time AIS data layers to apps seaplane pilots use
 - f. Work with Transport Canada and Mexico's Federal Civil Aviation Agency to share results of seaplane-AIS project
6. AIS-related Infrastructure
 - a. Prioritize outreach and cleaning infrastructure at FAA-recognized seaplane bases and high output seaplane schools (Signs, Cleaning stations, Dry docks, Awareness products)

Tackling the Bait Pathway: Revisiting Model Regulations and Assessing Research Needs

Stephanie Otts, Director of the National Sea Grant Law Center (NSGLC), described the process the NSGLC uses to build policy consensus by compiling information on state legal frameworks, gaining an understanding of similarities, differences, and gaps, facilitating conversations, and developing tools for policy reform. The NSGLC and Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) held

a bait workshop in 2016 (12 states represented) that culminated in a summary report, which included recommendations on how to move forward. The panel sought to take a broader view of the bait pathway and conduct a pathway analysis using consultant Jeff Gunderson. The 2019 Live Bait Pathway Analysis found that 15 MRBP states restrict where bait can be harvested, 14 restrict where commercial bait can be used, 16 restrict transport of live bait, all states restrict import (MN prohibits import), and 10 require receipts for bait purchases. In 2021, the MS-AL Sea Grant Legal Program created a model regulations considering the laws of the 8 GSARP states and Puerto Rico, intended to be a tool for states to review existing laws and consider reforms. Recent NSGLC projects touch on the bait pathway, including the Great Lakes 21 Least Wanted “Snapshots”, AIS in Commerce case studies, a research advisory request relating to invasive crayfish in the Great Lakes. Stephanie presented at the MRBP in February of 2025. NSGLC could do a state-by-state inventory of bait laws, a comparative analysis to model regulation, or conduct consensus building for a comprehensive policy framework. What is missing and what states need with respect to policy support tools to address those gaps would be important. There was discussion that some states have existing certification programs for bait dealers. The Great Lakes Panel is working on building relationships and engaging producers, working with Pennsylvania Sea grant to communicate with wholesalers and harvesters, noting it remains a priority problematic pathway for that region.

Data Sharing Options for Watercraft Pathway

Samantha Tank, Great Lakes Commission/Great Lakes Panel, discussed a project to identify what options exist for sharing data about watercraft inspections across jurisdictions and the benefits and barriers to doing so. Samantha described numerous benefits to exchanging watercraft data across jurisdictional boundaries. The first step in the project was to survey jurisdictions to better understand what data is being collected, and how it is compiled and shared. A total of 11 Great Lakes jurisdictions completed the surveys (6 states, 4 Tribes, and 1 Tribal Authority). The next step was to host workshop from jurisdictions that presented information on their watercraft collection system and to discuss goals – that workshop included a presentation on the WID system. Options developed:

- Option 1: Participating jurisdictions submit watercraft data annually to a data manager, then the data manager produces an annual report. No additional metrics will be collected by jurisdictions.
- Option 2: Uses ESRI ArcGIS dashboard as well as a core dataset (not just any data) – the information would be sent to the data manager or entered directly into a survey app, then uploaded to the dashboard.
- Option 3: Create a new data sharing model, replicating the WID data sharing system.

The next step was to pilot the simplest data-sharing option, creating a written summary of 2023 watercraft data from around the basin. A total of 7 jurisdictions provided data, and it was summarized, but no attempts were made to standardize the data. Survey location, number of

surveys conducted, number of people contacted, density in surveys over time, percent of watercraft with AIS, and generalized boater movement was summarized, however, watercraft type and AIS reported were not.

Lessons learned: Without standardized metrics, the majority of data could not be summarized, and a great deal of information was missing; and general movement was summarized.

Data sharing is not feasible unless data is standardized, thus 5 core questions were posed:

- Geographic location of launch where survey is taking place should be collected as lat/long in a standard format.
- Previous or most recent waterbody visited should include a definition of “recent.”
- Next/future waterbody launch location should include “unknown” or “prefers not to answer.”
- Watercraft type
- Are any AIS/mud/vegetation visible on watercraft or trailer?

Next steps include a 2-year funded project, beginning in January of 2026, to implement the watercraft sharing data pilot.

Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act Activity Updates and Discussion

The Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act states the activities described below should be done in collaboration with the ANSTF. Representatives from four federal agencies described their respective actions they have taken since Act adoption:

Sharmila Jepsen, Bureau of Land Management – Secretarial Order 3435 issued on June 25, 2025, requires the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to designate personnel and allocate resources for implementation. The BLM will appoint a representative to the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation by July 2026. Key implementation areas include coordination across agencies, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, access improvements, recreation permitting modernization, stakeholder engagement (including states and tribes) and private sector coordination. Under Section 128 of the EXPLORE Act, BLM will support the memorandum of understanding (MOU) among federal agencies and others to maintain those partnerships, site decontamination stations, work with the ANSTF, share data via the WID database, and work with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) on competitive grant program for inspection and decontamination of vessels.

Heidi McMaster, Bureau of Reclamation – Reclamation is designating personnel and allocating resources, addressing existing personnel gaps, and is coordinating across agencies and states. BOR is active in the Western Regional Panel as well as state invasive species panels, fund watercraft inspection and decontamination (Washington, Montana, and others), is part of the prevention MOU as well as supporting WID, and coordinating with the USFWS on the QZAP

program. There has been no specific funding for establishing a competitive grant program, which would be realized at the earliest in 2026, would include a cost-share requirement, and have limited scope.

John Wullschleger, National Park Service – Section 128 of the EXPLORE Act, which deals with watercraft inspection and decontamination, is the focus for the National Park Service Fish and AIS Program. Other sections of the Act are within the purview of other NPS programs and offices. Currently (prior to the EXPLORE Act), watercraft inspection and decontamination (WID) occurs in 11 parks (4 with infested waters (Amistad NRA, Glen Canyon NRA, Lake Mead NRA and Voyageurs NP),) and 7 that are not contaminated). WID is conducted under National Park Service (NPS) authority for incoming boats and state authority for departing boats. WID accounts for most of the \$6.5 million the NPS spends annually on quagga/zebra mussel management. For the most part, the challenges to WID at NPS areas are not related to authority but rather to hiring and retention, capacity during peak seasons and hours, and the ability to implement closures when and where staff are not available, The Act doesn't directly impose a requirement on boaters, but authorizes the NPS to carry out inspections and decontaminations. For incoming boats, the EXPLORE Act doesn't provide additional authority, but for departing boats, the Act does add a layer of federal authority to existing state authorities.

The federal agencies and meeting participants were asked if the ANSTF could fill any gaps or needs relative to achieving the goals of the EXPLORE Act. BLM would welcome guidance on locations of cleaning stations, etc. It was noted that technology and tools to register more boats need to be used and that more responsibilities should be pushed to boaters for Clean, Drain, Dry to reduce the risk of spread and acknowledge the potential future reduced funding availability for WID. A key gap may be that in some locations there is lack of federal management support at the local level – their mission and operations with limited resources and staff make AIS a lesser priority.

Action Item: Review the 2015 document “Federal Policy Options: Addressing the Movement of Aquatic Invasive Species Onto and Off of Federal Land and Waters” and evaluate if the actions should be updated and/or expanded in alignment with direction within the EXPLORE act.

Public Comment

Maurice Sadowsky provided public comment on a research project he has worked on relative to a piscicide he developed addressing invasive carp, noting that his work ceased about six years ago due to lack of funding.

July 9, 2025

Regional Panel Roundtable

The purpose of the roundtable is for regional panels to discuss their priorities and challenges as

well as to create opportunities for ANSTF members to support their respective panels. Will support strategic planning process this Fall.

Great Lakes Panel—Mike Langendorf

Governance of the Great Lakes region includes 2 federal governments, 3 regional commissions, 8 states, 2 provinces, more than 140 tribes and First Nations, and local units of government. This panel is the oldest regional panel, established in 1991. There are two meetings of the panel annually. The panel identified three priority issues and 2 priority projects. The panel created an Organisms in Trade (OIT) Ad Hoc Committee to identify opportunities for OIT industry participation with the panel – the bait industry was identified as a high priority industry to work with, and work has begun to produce outreach materials with this industry. Emerging priorities include finalizing the 2025-2028 Great Lakes Panel Work Plan, which includes recreational activity pathways, regional alignment of species watchlist, genetic biocontrol, organisms in trade, and harmonizing species regulations. Opportunities for engagement with the ANSTF include ANSTF setting up a work group dedicated to the topic of genetic biocontrol to facilitate communication among regional ANS panels and relevant agencies, and researchers to work on this issue. The panel encouraged ANSTF to establish a biocontrol work group.

Mid-Atlantic Panel—Rob Emens

The Mid-Atlantic Panel was formed in 2003 out of the Chesapeake Bay's Program Invasive Species Workgroup. Membership includes numerous states and representatives from natural resource agencies, conservation organizations, and academic institutions. Panel activities include ad hoc committees, meeting twice annually, and allotting \$38,000 to fund a competitive grant program. Pennsylvania Sea Grant is currently developing an app for the Mid-Atlantic Field Guide to AIS. Examples of recently funded projects include interpretive signs at Sheepshead and Jamaica Bay, monitoring invasive fish, and assessing the bait pathway risk for introducing viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) in Maryland waters. The highest priorities during the past five years include assisting member states with the development of ANS management plans and eDNA monitoring of Silty Pond Mussel (*Sinanodonta woodiana*). Emerging challenges include preventing the spread of the Silty Pond Mussel, the expanding range of Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*), and uncertainties about federal funding and staffing capacity support. Opportunities for engagement with ANSTF include continued funding for operation of the panel, including continued support for and expansion of the grant program, AIS management support, and identification of issues that the panel should be focused on in any AIS-related area (e.g., prevention, collaboration).

Northeast Panel—Michele Tremblay

The Northeast ANS Panel, established in 2001, still includes several charter members, serving staggered terms alongside co-chairs. Membership spans state, provincial, federal agencies, academia, industry, nonprofits, and retains the same contractor since its inception. Governance is overseen by a steering committee representing all jurisdictions and non-governmental participants, with dedicated workgroups focused on climate change, marine species prevention,

and freshwater invasive threats. Biannual in-person and online meetings ensure consistent engagement and timely information flow.

The Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Council acts as the fiscal agent. Recent priorities include rapid spread of hydrilla and freshwater golden clams; although much attention has been on lakes, coastal marine invasives are now also of major concern. The panel emphasizes communication, coordination, collaboration, early detection, rapid response, and sustained funding. The panel calls for continued funding for marine and freshwater rapid-assessment surveys, operational infrastructure, transboundary (including Canadian) participation, and improved media outreach for consistent messaging. Joint efforts with the Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes panels include a “landing blitz,” an online dynamic guide for identifying current and emerging species, and notable projects like the Connecticut River hydrilla initiative. Looking forward, the panel stresses the importance of robust recommendations vetted through Task Force discussions, closing coordination loops between regions and on-the-ground response, and securing multi-panel funding—especially to address emerging challenges.

Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel—Matt Phillips

The Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel, composed of a diverse range of member states, continues to focus on education, coordination, and collaboration. After the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission stepped back from organizing meetings and managing grants, a new structure was adopted: a steering committee oversees planning and member states rotate as hosts for biannual meetings, supported by a hired fiscal agent (Michelle Tremblay). This system appears to be working well, despite placing more responsibility on state leadership. The panel's priority species include black carp, crested floating heart, Cuban tree frogs, giant apple snails, giant salvinia, northern snakehead, water hyacinths, lionfish, and zebra mussels. Through annual meetings, members share updates on emerging threats and coordinate management efforts—Florida often detects new introductions first, while states like Louisiana and Texas have shared strategies to prevent giant salvinia’s westward spread. Carp management efforts in southeastern river systems are another example of regional cooperation. Emphasis is placed on applied research to support managers in the field, horizon scanning to detect potential threats early, and expanding education tools such as the Invasive Species Traveling Trunk; each member state now has its own trunk to enhance outreach. The group strongly supports increased federal involvement and funding for prevention and early detection initiatives to bolster regional response capabilities.

Mississippi River Basin Panel—Tanner Davis

The Mississippi River Basin Panel was founded in 2003, it is the largest regional panel (Mississippi River Basin), and its boundaries overlap other panel boundaries. Members include 26 state members, nine federal agencies, one Canadian federal member, two academic positions, eight at-large positions, and vacancies in tribal, private, and commercial positions. There is an executive committee and three standing committees. The highest priorities in the last five years include a pathways focus (live aquatic bait, organisms in trade, and outdoor recreation), species

(most troublesome list, priority pathogens, and invasive carp) as well as education (community-based social marketing workshop). Emerging threats and challenges include capacity (funding for panels and state AIS plans and inconsistent regulatory authority across the states), pathways (transportation and organisms in trade), and species. Opportunities for collaboration include improving panel structure, new member recruitment and involvement, leadership development, co-development of projects and implementation strategies among panel committees, national analysis on model bait regulations, standardized boater survey template and data sharing, a new national system similar to the Great Lakes Detector of Invasive Aquatics in Trade (GLDIATR), review and implement the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association

(MICRA) grass carp recommendations, prevent the overland spread of AIS on watercraft, trailer, gear and equipment, and implement horizon scans and risk assessments.

Western Regional Panel—Tom Woolf

The Western Regional Panel convened with representation from 19 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, tribes, and sectors including federal/state agencies, academia, NGOs, industry, and tribal organizations, totaling 1,553 members. Its primary focus remains the prevention of aquatic invasive species, particularly zebra, quagga, and emerging golden mussels, aiming to “hold the line” within the largely uninfested Western U.S. waters. The panel emphasized that every uninfested waterbody represents a vital opportunity to prevent additional species invasion. Infestation maps highlight recent mussel incursions, underscoring the need for coordinated regional defenses/

The Quagga-Zebra Mussel Action Plan (QZAP 1.0, 2010) and its updated version QZAP 2.0 (2020) serve as the panel’s operational roadmap. These plans define strategic objectives covering prevention, early detection, rapid response, applied research, outreach, and standardized protocols.. With funding support from federal sources like USFWS and the Department of the Interior, the panel has implemented inspection and decontamination stations, laboratory sampling programs, and outreach tools aimed at mussel control and containment. The emergence of golden mussels in California and related boat-borne transport has been flagged as a significant new threat, prompting calls for ANSTF support. a new FY 2025 grant (F25AS00313) has been announced to support QZAP implementation in Western U.S. states, the panel’s prevention-first strategy, anchored by federal funding, regional cooperation, standardized protocols, and robust committee engagement, aims to safeguard Western waterbodies from further spread of invasive mussels and other aquatic nuisance species.

Governed by a nine-member Executive Committee and coordinated by Leah Elwell, the panel relies on several standing committees focusing on Annual Meetings, Coastal threats, Watercraft Inspection & Decontamination (“Decon Think Tank”), Education & Outreach, Field Sampling & Monitoring, and Membership, along with time-limited working groups. Highlights include: standardized inspection/decon protocols development; educational toolkits and public surveys; early detection sampling protocols; and efforts to increase tribal representation within the panel.

The 2025 Annual Meeting is scheduled for September in Lawrence, KS, as coordinated by the Annual Meeting Committee, presenting invaluable opportunities for stakeholder coordination and continued AIS strategy refinement .

Discussion: The central role of the ANSTF is to seek and identify opportunities for cross-collaboration and identify key gaps and challenges and ensure there is flow of information and ability to support the regional panels. The strength is regional but the regions coming together, with support from ANSTF, can make a difference. Adjoining panels that share active or incipient invasions can leverage a great deal by working together.

Regional Panel Recommendations

1. Western Regional Panel

The Western Regional Panel recommends continuing financial support for the regional panels as it is crucial to completing regional collaborative projects, communication, and advancements in achieving AIS management goals established and identified in the ANSTF Strategic Plan.

2. The Western Regional Panel recommends continued federal prioritization and support for the development and implementation of AIS Management Plans is important to the management of AIS nationwide. The fiscal support for AIS State Management plans has been and continues to be vital for all agencies to successfully implement programs within each state with approved plans.

Northeast Panel

1. The Northeast Regional Panel requests respectfully that funds be identified and secured, or other mechanisms be identified so that panels can request additional grants and funding sources to allow them to be fully operational at levels reasonable and responsive to inflation using an index such as the US Bureau of Labor statistics.

Great Lakes Panel Memo to the ANSTF Chairs concurs with the 2023 USFWS summary of actions that recommended archiving the Ruffe Control Plan. The Panel identified two objectives from the plan that remain a high priority, identified a new objective to guide responses to a major range expansion, and identified some mechanisms to achieve objectives (e.g., state and native nations can conduct Ruffe work). These objectives are documented and can be incorporated into state or other management plans as regional priorities.

The other regional panels concurred the recommendation. Following discussion the ANSTF approved the archival of the Ruffe Control Plan with As part of the archival process, ANSTF will attach a memo of why it is being archived as well as the current status, including the objectives.

National Invasive Species Council Report

Stas Burgiel, Executive Director of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), provided an update on NISC work relevant to the ANSTF. Twelve federal departments are members, including four White House offices. There are senior advisors as well as political level representation. The Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) provides guidance to the entire council. NISC is identifying member agency principals and is working to solicit input from leadership to ensure priorities of NISC align with administration priorities. NISC has been reviewing Executive Orders, such as expansion of timber production and state/local preparedness, as well as reviewing Secretarial Orders. NISC is tracking member agency capacity as there are shifts in staffing, funding, and programs. In the FY25 annual work plan, NISC has both core coordination as well as thematic priority activities. Those that may intersect with ANSTF include:

- Disasters – intersection of invasive species and natural disasters (species introduced or moved about as a result of disasters). NISC has been conducting outreach to the emergency management community and groups within USGS, state and local partners re: this issue. NISC is considering additional resources they may be able to supply to emergency management entities, such as through the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website.
- EDRR – NISC is working on finishing up an internal guidance document on shipments that may contain injurious plants and wildlife to help coordination across USFWS, USDA-APHIS, and DHS Customs and Border Protection. This includes guidance on what to refer, how to refer, and how to document. NISC is also evaluating the development of an interface that allows agencies to enable communication across agencies. Documenting authorities for those three agencies at the ports of entry will be part of FY26 work. NISC is defining the intersection of NISC member departments as part of the RR framework.
- Information Management – NISC is preparing a white paper on invasive species data management challenges and opportunities. NISC is supporting the work of the National Invasive Species Information Center within USDA.
- Horizon Scanning – NISC is determining how to provide support to decision makers relative to working with the outputs of horizon scanning – overview of the process, interpreting outputs, using the outputs to support decision making as well as considerations of a scale, such as how to use information at a local level. For FY26, there is interest in developing a resource paper of federal horizon scanning activities, data sources, and analytical capabilities.
- Biological control – This is a relatively new area intended to develop a strategic framework for biocontrol that assesses opportunities for federal agencies to enhance their

activities. This strategy also examines basic objectives as well as federal coordination and resources in biocontrol.

- Islands – NISC is developing a representative list of invasive species of concern to Pacific islands. ISAC produced an overview of invasive species and islands with recommendations and potential priorities. There is an interest in marine biosecurity relative to soft corals and coral diseases to determine how best to coordinate with ANSTF and the Coral Reef Task Force to enhance biosecurity measures.
- National Security – This is new to the FY25 work plan. NISC is detailing issues where in invasive species and national security intersect, such as the economy, infrastructure, food security, plant and animal health, wildlife health, military readiness, food security, and other issues.

Control and Management Subcommittee Report

Kim Bogenschutz, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and Don MacLean (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), presented the Control and Management Subcommittee Report.

Control Plan Guidance

In 2021, the ANSTF approved the Control Plan Development Process and Content Guidance and presented at this meeting to seek approval for these previously approved two elements (because minor changes have been made since approval) as well as the new section, which includes three different phases of the Decision-making Framework:

- Problem formulation and scoping
 - Steps include whether the species is in the United States, whether rapid response or eradication is feasible, whether enough information is available to develop a plan, whether there are control options to make a difference, whether there is a risk assessment, and if so, whether the species is high risk, and if not, whether other factors warrant a control plan.
- Risk assessment
 - This includes general information for someone doing a risk assessment – planning stage, risk assessment characterization stage, evaluating the risk assessment peer reviewed. If there is adequate information in the risk assessment to make a recommendation to develop a control plan, phase three occurs.
- Risk management and plan decision making
 - Designating a plan host entity is critical to the process.

Control Plan Development Process includes: the creation of a Control Plan Working Group that drafts the plan, the group submits it to ANSTF for review and comments back to the CPWG, the

plan is available for public comments, the final draft is presented to ANSTF, and then final approval occurs before implementation.

Plan oversight has been lacking in previous plans. The ANSTF works with the host plan entity to form an advisory group to assist with plan implementation. A plan liaison provides annual updates at the ANSTF meeting, ensuring the plan is evaluated every five years. Important plan content elements include the justification for the plan, the geographic scope (truly a national plan or regional), prioritization of action items, and plan evaluation. Once the plan is approved, it must be turned into an accessible 508 format document.

Archival Process considerations include age of the plan, plan use, current species status, and a summary report documenting support for archiving the plan. If a plan is not archived, it will likely need a revision. Archived plans are moved to a different location on a website.

DECISION: The final draft of the Control Guidance Plan Document was unanimously approved.

Other updates:

- The New Zealand Mudsail plan has been updated and is working its way through the federal register process.
- The European Green Crab plan was approved in May and final document compliance is almost complete.
- There will be an update on the implementation of the Lionfish plan in May 2026.
- There is no Snakehead plan liaison.

Discussion: The WRP requested more support for golden mussel issues. The ANSTF has two potential roles: 1) review the framework California has developed, which includes recommendations to advance; and 2) consider long-term prevention such that other regions are monitoring and prepared for an introduction. The QZAP plan was a specific request from a Senator – the question is whether the task force wants to do something similar. There is enough documented evidence that golden mussels present high risk, and we will likely need a control plan at some point? Is there an immediate next step that can be taken that could inform the development of the control plan, such as an updated risk assessment?

A proposed action item was to create a working group under the Control Subcommittee, have discussions with California and others to see where assistance is needed, identify where the ANSTF could assist in advancing the California framework, further define the role of the ANSTF, and identify what information is needed to inform the development of a control plan.

Protecting the Great Lakes from Invasive Carp

Amy McGovern, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, talked about protecting the Great Lakes from invasive carp. The primary focus of a May 2025 letter from the President described and expressed support for expediting a USACE project in the Illinois River, which would create a large barrier to invasive carp into the Great Lakes. Invasive carp refers to the four species of carp (black, grass, bighead and silver). Silver Carp, in particular, has experienced a rapid expansion. The genesis of the work in the Illinois River has been the result of two key reports, the national plan written with 70 partners in 2007, and the Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study in 2010 that identified the highest risk pathways for movement from the Mississippi River into the Great Lakes watershed, including the Illinois River. This was followed by the creation of the Invasive Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ICRCC), which was formed with funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). There are 26 United States and Canadian agencies represented. The committee develops an annual action plan, with projects funded by the GLRI. A monitoring and response work group under the ICRCC monitors and manages invasive carp populations and responds to changes in the status of invasive carp in the Illinois waterway.

The focal point in the Illinois River is removal of invasive carp – it's the primary control tool for invasive carp. Deterrents and other technologies are also used that maximize removal of fish. The State of Illinois leads harvest programs – some of the fishing is contracted, some is commercial (fishers paid in price per pound). In addition to removal programs, the river is monitored – the population front is 50 miles from Lake Michigan, and it has not changed in the past decade.

Fishers are removing millions of pounds from core areas, however, this stretch of river is an open river system, thus carp are moving over dams and through lock structures.

The [Brandon Road Interbasin Project](#) is the location where the large barrier will be constructed. The project is funded through the USACE. Current estimated cost is \$1.1 billion, and it is designed to be constructed incrementally, likely taking years to complete.

Lights Out: Eradication of *Caulerpa prolifera* in South San Diego Bay

Sally Brown, Wildlife Refuge Manager for the San Diego and Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuges, discussed the 3,700-acre footprint of the refuges in the southwestern corner of the United States near the international border with Mexico. The refuge manages salt ponds which are part of a privately owned salt works operation. Most of the refuge consists of maritime succulent sage scrub, salt marsh, riparian, and subtidal eelgrass beds, and salt ponds. The salt ponds have dividing levees, and there are more than 28,000 nests on the levees now, including terns and western snowy plovers. *Caulerpa*, a marine non-native algae and single-celled organism, was discovered in south San Diego Bay in 2023, likely the result of someone dumping an aquarium. *Caulerpa* can grow meters long (one of the largest single-celled organisms), is capable of rapid growth, forms a dense blanket on the seafloor, can disperse quickly, and outcompetes native species, such as eelgrass. It can cause changes to benthic invertebrate

communities because of its ability to alter the environment. Loss of eelgrass causes devastating effects to fisheries and the eelgrass beds that are nursery habitat for the fishery. In other places in the world, restrictions have been placed on anchoring and movement of vessels and diving gear. Such restrictions in San Diego with our Port and Naval facilities would be significant.

The species was successfully eradicated in Newport Bay. A Southern California Caulerpa Action Team formed to allow for an organized response using guidance protocols while implementing a rapid response and eradication plan. [Marine Taxonomic Services](#) is conducting surveys and mapping locations of *Caulerpa* in San Diego Bay. Where *Caulerpa* was detected, benthic barriers were deployed. Many fragments were escaping the tarps, thus the teams placed tiles over the grommets as well as placing a mesh barrier below the benthic barrier to contain the fronds. The teams placed rock salt prior to placing the benthic barrier, which resulted in “pickling” of the *Caulerpa*, preventing additional escapes of fronds from the benthic mats. In May of 2025, a single specimen with 20 fronds was found, and just a few detections occurred in the refuge. Next steps include continuing to survey for *Caulerpa* working from north to south to contain any infestation in the south bay because there is concern if it escapes to the north into the port and naval area that containment may not be possible.

Rapid Response of Newly Detected Hydrilla in Indian Lake, Rhode Island

Katie Degoosh, Environmental Scientist with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, noted that hydrilla was first observed in Indian Lake, Rhode Island, in August of 2023. Degoosh stated they received USFWS rapid response funds to address 2-acre infestation. It's a 7-mile trek from Indian Lake to a coastal system that supports river herring. The Indian Lake Hydrilla Response Coalition was formed to address this issue. There is a great deal of fishing and public activities at the lake, a 260-acre lake shallow reservoir with clear water; it is deepest at the dam at nine feet. Soon after detection, it was genetically identified as the monoecious type, common to northern New England. By the end of June 2024, the first herbicide (Fluridone) treatment was applied, and then treated every two weeks to ensure appropriate concentration was maintained for 90-120 days. The goal was to suppress the growth, eradicate it, and prevent the spread. The herbicide was administered primarily as a liquid formulation, treated six times through September 10 of 2024. A post-treatment plant survey in late September did not detect hydrilla. The response coalition considers the rapid response a success because of the existence of native plants and almost complete elimination of hydrilla. Following year treatments (2025 and 2026) will be paid from grants and agreements from the town and the state, and the coalition is applying for grants to pay for the 2027 treatment. The rapid response fund provided for the time to initially respond and control the scope of the infestation while planning for funding future treatments. Considerable outreach was conducted to spread the word about hydrilla, teach people how to report sightings, and encourage people to Clean, Drain, Dry.

Rapid Response to the First Known Signal Crayfish Occurrence in Minnesota

Don Eaton, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), described the first known Signal Crayfish occurrence in Minnesota. Signal Crayfish are native to the Pacific Northwest but the species has been introduced outside of its native range in North America, Europe, and Japan. The Minnesota discovery is the first detection in North America, east of the continental divide. There are seven native crayfish in Minnesota. Signal crayfish have white/blueish patches at the hinge of their claws (their “signals”), and the carapace is smooth compared to native crayfish. During defensive displays, the undersides of the claws of larger Signal Crayfish adults are bright red. Fully grown Signal Crayfish are about twice as long as native crayfish and weigh about three times as much. Signal Crayfish can spawn multiple times and tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. Signal Crayfish are slower growing and are more vulnerable to desiccation.

They were initially discovered by a commercial minnow harvester in Lake Winona, Douglas County – he caught 10 Signal Crayfish, reported it to the DNR, and experts from the Pacific Northwest confirmed the identification. Lake Winona is directly connected to lakes downstream, including a chain of lakes, one of which is the headwaters of the Long Prairie River. Thus, there is a great deal of potential for spread of the species. The county decided to conduct intensive spring trapping with someone with experience harvesting Signal Crayfish in Sweden. The invasive species unit at DNR received rapid response funding from ANSTF to conduct more trapping. Several types of baited funnel traps were used, set out individually along the shore, or in trap lines – many natives were caught, but no Signal Crayfish were caught. During the 2024 open-water season, the surveillance effort totaled 3,500 trap days, but no Signal Crayfish were caught. Mitochondrial DNA sequencing of those trapped in Lake Winona was conducted by The University of Illinois and MAISRC to determine the source population and choose an eDNA assay that best distinguishes Signal from native crayfish species. The crayfish captured were from the common and widespread invasive lineage found in Lake Tahoe and across Europe.

During the open water season, MAISRC used eDNA kits as an additional Signal Crayfish surveillance tool. A total of 143 samples were collected from Lake Winona, connected lakes, and nearby regional lakes. Analyses showed four Signal Crayfish eDNA detections: two from Lake Winona, one from connected Lake Henry, and one from Lake Carlos, the headwaters of the Long Prairie River. All four detections were classified as “weak”. Samples from the other four lakes surveyed did not have any eDNA detections. One hypothesis to explain the weak detections and absence of Signal Crayfish in traps is that there was successful reproduction in the fall of 2023, producing a population of juveniles that were detected via eDNA – juveniles generally are not attracted to conventional traps and they shed less DNA. Another hypothesis is sample contamination, but contamination was not detected in any of the field or laboratory blanks. Next steps are to continue to take eDNA samples, conduct surveillance via trapping, and target juveniles with new types of traps.

Outreach Session

Tim Campbell presented the outreach subcommittee report and the new boater survey template.

Outreach Workshop Report: Since the last meeting, the report is finalized, and findings and recommendations have been revised. The workshop was hosted during the NAISMA meeting in Montana. Three themes emerged:

- Consistent messaging and branding
 - Helpful to have a shared understanding of how different outreach campaigns and brands fit together
 - Guidance on how to consistently implement outreach campaigns – additional efforts and coordination
- Evaluation of outreach programming
 - General recreational that outreach works and has impact, but as we assess how we implement, we may be lacking in evidence, thus increasing understanding of different types of evidence to support program evaluation
 - Create a network of people could help with program evaluation, perhaps even an evaluation unit
 - Cultivate relationships among scientists, communications staff, and others – interdisciplinary working groups result in better evaluations
- National Communications and Outreach Plan and funding for routine implementation.
 - An outreach fundamentals book (the best information to communicate with signage, staff booths, etc.)
 - Assistance prioritizing user groups and pathways

Boater Survey Template

Evaluation should be easy for people and allow people to learn from their efforts. We can create efficiencies if we have a set of survey questions we can agree on – which would allow us to draw general conclusions. A boater survey template was created, which includes an introduction, implementation guidance, and template questions that allow for consistent scoring. The boater survey template will be ready for review and comments within one week. The committee would like to work with the regional panels to give them an opportunity to review as well as give ANSTF members a chance to provide comment.

Public Comment

There was a designated public comment period and one individual made a comment. Karen McDowell stated the naming of the golden mussel and golden clam has created confusion among the experts. It's going to be more confusing to the public, and she questioned if there could be an easy "fix."

Meeting Summary

Decisional and Action Items are listed at the beginning of the meeting minutes.

The next meeting of the ANSTF will be the week of December 8, 2025, which may be a 3-day meeting because of strategic planning and other items. The goal is for the meeting to be in-person; a determination will be made closer to the meeting date.

Meeting Adjourned