

Invasive Species

Summary of SARL Breakout Session
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Unlike weather-related catastrophic events, the introduction and spread of invasive species is much less newsworthy. However, once an invasive gains a foothold, an immense effort is required to control and/or remove it. Humans have caused the evolution of weeds and invasives. Available data confirm their exponential increase. It is therefore important to keep the invasives issue at the forefront of public policy.

The National Invasive Species Council is co-chaired by the secretaries of the departments of agriculture, interior and commerce. Approximately 30 federal agencies have a role in its functions. The current NISC National Management Plan (2008-2012) emphasizes prevention with the follow-through on early detection and rapid response. The last phase is control, management and restoration. Unfortunately, conflicting mandates from the many agencies involved inhibits organizational collaboration.

Weed control efforts are only as good as those exercised on adjacent lands and dispersal corridors. An unmanaged invasive is a potential source for infestation on everyone's land. A regional approach to the control of invasives is therefore necessary.

"It's about jobs" is another perspective on the invasives issue. Only seven percent of the federal budget is used on the problem, on the ground. Federal lands are overrun with noxious and invasive weeds.

Transportation and energy corridors are vectors for the spread of invasives. Abandoned lands are another source. The Healthy Habitats Coalition asks federal agencies to provide pass-through funds to states with federal lands within their respective borders for on-the-ground control and eradication efforts.

The Idaho and Washington state invasive species plans are models for other states to use in drafting similar efforts. Idaho and Montana have effective outreach and education programs through the media and other outlets.

Invasives significantly impact endangered species. For example, cheat grass in Utah has overtaken native grass habitat for sage grouse. This invasive is also extremely volatile, making wild brush fires very difficult to control. In addition, invasives depreciate land values and degrade water quality and quantity.

Illinois Representative Norine Hammond commented on the problem of Asian carp that are overtaking rivers in her state. Such individual invasive species are emblematic of the larger issue of not addressing the problem when it is small and before it makes headlines. The NISC attempts to focus on one issue – invasives – with multiple facets (species). A mechanism is needed to fund and implement an early attack on potential infestations.

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture supports making invasives a priority for the new farm bill with funding provided by block grants to states. Also see the [Invasive Species Resolution](#) adopted by SARL members at the 2012 Summit.

Handouts:

Critical Asks to Jump Start Control Programs
Healthy Habitats Coalition