

Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council

Progress Report May 15, 2008

The Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council (AISAC) was initially created in 2005 by the Governor's Executive Order to develop a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach for addressing invasive species issues in Arizona. In June 2006, recommendations to the Governor included that the AISAC be permanently established and a comprehensive invasive species management plan be developed.

Since the last update of December 13, 2007 AISAC has developed an invasive species management plan and is on schedule for delivery of the plan to the Governor by June 30, 2008. This plan is based upon the framework recommended in the initial AISAC report and focused on five strategic concepts: Leadership and Coordination, Research and Information Management, Anticipation and Outreach, Control and Management, and Funding. In developing the plan, fifteen objectives and sixty-three recommendations were established to address invasive species needs in Arizona.

When Council members and contributors developed the plan specific themes appeared consistently across the strategic concepts and as such, need to be emphasized. These repeating themes include needs to:

- Cooperate, coordinate, and increase the effectiveness of communication among agencies and stakeholders to implement comprehensive invasive species management;
- Implement the Memorandum of Understanding and recruit additional stakeholders to ensure cooperation and collaboration;
- Create a Center for Invasive Species as a web-based network that would be the gateway for information collection, sharing, and distribution to aid the public, agencies and organizations in Arizona in addressing invasive species management needs;
- Seek to establish a rapid response fund and develop a strategy to assess the economic feasibility of creating a sustainable emergency response resource to address the long term issues associated with response to critical invasive species detections;
- Emphasize education and outreach as integral components to effectively accomplish goals identified in each strategic concept;
- Facilitate amending applicable state grant programs so that eligibility criteria would include addressing invasive species issues. Publicize grant opportunities that can potentially fund or enhance efforts for the strategic concepts; and
- Pursue, cultivate, and secure creative funding solutions from public and private sources. Raise the awareness of state, federal, and community decision makers for sustained

commitment to manage invasive species threats, complementary to and not in lieu of other priority initiatives and program needs.

The AISAC also recognizes that invasive species issues and needs are inter-related with other state initiatives including forest health, wildlife connectivity, smart growth, rural development, energy development, and climate change. Threats and impacts of invasive species can be identified and associated across all of these issues. Communication and cooperation among the AISAC and other Governor's advisory councils is important to seeking and linking comprehensive understanding and management of invasive species.

Progress has been made in achieving early successes in some areas recognized in the plan as well. The AISAC members are in the final stages of approving a Memorandum of Understanding that recognizes early responsibilities of identified state agencies. Progress has also been made, with the help from the Arizona Government Information Technology Agency (GITA), in the development of a user friendly website and database. Increased communication and identifying key points of contacts within various agencies and organizations has also been initiated.

During the last two weeks of March public meetings were held in Yuma, Tucson, Phoenix, Kingman, Flagstaff, and Pinetop to seek public comment on the recommendations in the plan. Since then resolutions have been made to address those comments.

Marianne Meding, from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Brian McGrew, from the Arizona Department of Agriculture, were recognized for their contribution and hard work in the development of the Statewide Invasive Species Management Plan by Governor Janet Napolitano during the Governor's May 7th staff meeting. Marianne has since been promoted to another position within her agency and the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Invasive Species Coordinator position has been filled by Tom McMahon. Marianne's commitment and contribution will not be forgotten, thank you Marianne.

The Statewide Invasive Species Management Plan is in the final stages of development and the process of layout and final print has begun. The draft plan was approved by the AISAC at their May meeting, it is in the process of layout for publication, and the plan is on schedule for delivery to the Governor by June 30, 2008. Pending initial screening review by the Governor's Office, layout will be completed and initial publication for Governor's review will be completed in June. The Council will resume regular quarterly meetings starting August 5, 2008. The Council will also reserve the option to hold emergency meetings if necessary.

For additional information, please refer to the Governor's Invasive Species Advisory Council Web page <http://www.governor.state.az.us/ais/>, or contact Brian McGrew at the Arizona Department of Agriculture: bmcgrew@azda.gov (602)542-0955 or Tom McMahon at the Arizona Department of Game and Fish: TMcMahon@azgfd.gov