



Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative

Progress Report – February 2008

Background

The first line of defense against aquatic invasive species (AIS) introductions is prevention; however, even the best prevention efforts may not stop all introductions. Early detection and rapid response efforts increase the likelihood that invasions will be addressed successfully while populations are still localized and can be contained and eradicated. There are a variety of species-specific and location-specific contingency plans that have been completed by natural resource, environmental protection, and land management agencies. However, current organizational and fiscal resources do not allow for planning for all possible events. As an interim step toward improving AIS response capability in situations where specific contingency planning does not exist, a Rapid Response Communication Protocol has been developed to insure that agencies can efficiently coordinate and pool resources as soon as a new invader is detected.

Status

- In December 2005, the federal agencies endorsed forty-eight Federal Near Term Actions in support of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) Strategy, including “The Federal Interagency Task Force will explore creating a Rapid Response Subcommittee under the Regional Working Group to serve as a central point of contact for information and activities related to invasive species rapid response efforts.”
- Over the year 2006, the Regional Working Group established the Federal Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response (FAISRR or “phaser”) Subcommittee. The subcommittee developed a Communication Protocol with formal points of contact to help insure that Federal agencies can efficiently coordinate and pool resources.
- Recognizing that this effort would only be successful if non-federal partners were included, the Regional Workgroup began discussions with GLRC Executive Committee. In the Spring of 2007, the GLRC Executive Committee endorsed the formation of an Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative which would expand the Communication Protocol to include points of contact within State, Tribal, and City agencies.
- A letter signed August 3, 2007 has been transmitted to GLRC agencies, requesting the identification of formal points of contact by September 15, 2007.
- Pennsylvania has offered to host a Mock Exercise which will test the Communication Protocol. They are able to bring additional resources to the effort from an existing grant and will provide the meeting facilities at Presque Isle, PA. (This location/event may also occur in conjunction with Pennsylvania’s Clean Boats Day.)

Next Steps

- A small steering committee to guide the Mock Exercise will be formed. Membership will be on a volunteer basis, solicited from the Communication Protocol membership list.