



Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative¹ **Progress Report – October 2007**

Introduction

Preventing the introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is the first line of defense against invasions. However, even the best prevention efforts may not stop all AIS introductions. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) Strategy recognizes that 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. On March 2, 2007, the GLRC Executive Committee endorsed the formation of an Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative which would improve coordination in the event that a new species is detected in the Great Lakes.

Activities

- 1. Develop a Great Lakes Communication Protocol for rapidly identifying new invaders and formulating response efforts.**
- 2. Identify Agency Points of Contact and technical experts that could be called upon to inform early identification and rapid response efforts.**

Federal, state, tribal, cities, and Congressional representatives will develop a Communication Protocol which will help organize multi-agency rapid response activities. There are a variety of species-specific and location-specific rapid response contingency plans under development or that have been completed by natural resource, environmental protection, and land management agencies. These specific contingency plans provide the greatest level of preparation for a potential response effort and supersede the purview of this Communication Protocol. However, such specific planning is resource intensive and current resources do not allow for the development of rapid response plans for all possible events. The Communication Protocol will be developed to address this gap and help ensure that agencies can efficiently coordinate and pool resources when an unexpected invader is detected.

A key component of this protocol is the identification of a formal point of contact during rapid response activities. Because no two agencies have the same organizational structure, an "Invasive Species Response Coordinator" will be identified to serve as the formal point of contact for day-to-day information exchange and to be the principal interagency communicator in the event of a rapid response event. The Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel met in December, 2006 specifically to discuss rapid response. In addition, they recommended that Great Lakes agencies populate the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Expert Database, which was designed to direct users to invasive species experts.

Proposed Schedule

- Develop Protocol over spring and summer of 2007.
- Commitment to provide agency contacts and taxonomic experts and population of database (July-September 2007)
- Report success at GLRC October 2007 meeting.

¹ The Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative was endorsed by the GLRC Executive Committee on March 2, 2007

Progress to Date

- A draft Communication Protocol was developed at the direction of the GLRC Executive Committee and, on August 9, 2007, the GLRC Executive Committee requested agencies participating in the GLRC to provide points of contact by September 15, 2007.
- The above request above was also used to identify state public points of contact and taxonomic experts for inclusion in the ANSTF Expert Database.
- The identified points of contact are currently being compiled.

3. Conduct a Mock Exercise to test the Communication Protocol.

There is no better way to test the responsiveness and effectiveness of the GLRC Communication Protocol than by conducting a mock AIS rapid response exercise. This mock exercise will include a press event/outreach piece to raise awareness. The protocol will be in place before attempting this exercise.

Proposed Schedule

- A workgroup will test the Communication Protocol in a mock exercise by late 2007.

Progress to Date

- Plans are underway for a mock exercise in spring 2008.