

Minimizing the Threat of Invasive Exotics to Wisconsin's forests



OUTCOMES

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Total number of participants: 67

I. Information and Education

The general public is becoming more aware about the risks, impacts and costs of invasive species. As landowners and land managers become increasingly active in managing for invasive species, the demand for information and training has increased, creating a growing audience for specific information on their biology, ecology and management. A second audience is composed of the many forest users who are unwittingly spreading invasive species through recreational activities. Examples of recreational use spreading invasive species include ATV users spreading seeds of invasive plants within and between sites, or campers crossing county or state lines carrying firewood infested with destructive insect pests.

One noteworthy aspect of the largely grassroots efforts that have developed to control invasive species is the strong sense of community and land ethic this work fosters. This session will explore the currently available sources of information and training around invasives, and identify ways to reach more people more effectively with the right information. Effective action here can help improve our collective response to this challenge, and build our sense of community and shared commitment to land health.

Goal # 1: Improve the ability of family forest owners to minimize threats and manage invasive species by delivering appropriate educational materials and training.

Suggestions / Concerns:

- Need to expand the definition to include non-forest owners, but rural property owners as well.
- Need to have participation by non owners too
- Partnerships very crucial w/ UW-Extensions, School Forests, Grants, etc.
- Currently, very complicated procedure of accumulating info about exotics.
 - Landowners have limited access to the data.
 - Need a centralized agency to facilitate education, organization, and participation of landowners

Goal #2: Increase awareness and affect the behavior of recreational forest users and the urban public to help minimize invasive species spread in parks, working forests, and the urban environment.

Suggestions / Concerns:

- Lots of avenues for public to inadvertently get exotic species
 - Greenhouses, seed packets, etc
- Need to work with already existing groups to control invasives.
- Include school programs in educating user public
- "Need to develop partnership with people in industries that sell recreational

- Equipment and use this partnership as a marketing tool to reach the public.”
 - This would serve to decrease the reliance on volunteer groups.

II. Best Management Practices

Review of Topic / Issue:

- Need BMPs to help ID problems, actions, what’s needed for implementation, to educate and increase awareness in public, and to keep priorities in mind.
- BMP one area with the greatest opportunity to move forward with new ideas
- WI only state in eastern US with BMPs for forestry
- Process not necessarily the same as the water quality/general forestry BMPs, but we can use those to help guide our process

Initial Discussion of Goal & What it Should Encompass

- What spectrum will this goal address?
- Will it be voluntary (water quality BMPs) or will it involve more legislation?
 - Voluntary may increase participation and be more successful
 - Could mandate it in the MFL law
- How narrow should the BMPs be to “forestry” when dealing with complicated ecosystems and a wide range of interactions w/ society
 - Invasive species also introduced by recreational users, agriculture, shipping materials, greenhouses, etc.
 - Other agencies involved in control of species outside of forestry issues
- Must be practical and affordable
- Must be flexible to react to changing/new situations
- Must deal realistically with limited priorities, resources, and time
- Need to define “forestry” as including urban, private, and recreational areas, timber company lands, etc.
- Establishing partnerships is very important to our success
- Prioritize based on location

Overall/End Goal Statement:

To create partnerships & process for development of forestry BMPs for invasive species.

Common Points of Agreement:

- Needs to be voluntary, comprehensive, flexible, practical, affordable, and inclusive of different aspects involving/influencing forestry.

Suggested Actions to Take: (#s in parenthesis = number of votes it received)

Risk Management Aspect:

- Define all major invasive species and vectors (8)
- Establish a central information dispensing hub
- Prioritize pest species by DNR regions
- Prioritize by risks / threats (8)
- Control Methods (how to enforce, who, etc)

Financial Considerations:

- Address all economic impacts
- Determine total available funding

- ID Costs of BMPs including non-implementation & long term impacts (17)
- Rank by cost / benefits (1)

Leadership/Involvement/Partnerships:

- ID all interested partners (2)
- Identify / Engage key partners / stakeholders (18)
- Develop an interagency and partnership taskforce (2)
- Organize a task force to develop process, charge partners w/ duties, etc (1)
- Require upfront commitment to jump start process
- Organize partnerships with:
 - Dept. of Ag. / Nursery Assoc / Tourist Assoc / WI Proff. Loggers Assoc./ FISTA / WWOA / Woodland Owners Assoc, etc
- Start subcommittees to work on: (2)
 - Definition / monitoring / education / training / research / etc.
- Bridge urban / rural gap

Education / Awareness: (4 total votes)

- Use existing models/examples to facilitate process (1)
- Information gathering hierarchy at all levels
- Disseminate information to private and public owners / users (9)
- Spread strategies / information to private landowners (1)
- Provide BMP education/training

Key Action Followed by Next Two Most Important Actions:

- Urge Governor's Council to act on making invasive BMPs a top priority (8)
- Identify / Engage key partners / stakeholders (18)
- ID Costs of BMPs including non-implementation & long term impacts (17)

Other Top Priority Actions (not actually worked on in session):

- Disseminate information to private and public owners / users (9)
- Define all major invasive species and vectors (8)
- Prioritize by risks / threats (8)

Criteria to Consider for the Development / Implementation / Application of the BMPs:
(Determine the following...)

- Costs (monetarily)
- Non-Monetary costs (time & resources needed to address a specific issue)
- Threat to resource
- Potential impact to ecosystem of specific species
- Impact / Potential for success
- "Keystone actions" (order of sequence needed / timetable)
- Inclusiveness of the project (opportunities available for building partnerships)

Individuals / Organizations Who Will Participate In This Action

- Dept. of Agriculture
- Nursery Association
- Tourist Association
- WI Professional Loggers Association
- WI Woodland Owners Association
- Training groups such as FISTA

- Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin
- Neighboring state/local governments
- Sporting / Recreational groups (Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, etc)

Timeline (short-term & long-term)

- Base timeline on urgency of problem / species

Indicators of success

- Measured partly by degree of involvement / assistance by public / landowners
- If BMGs serve to effectively identify, prevent, monitor, and control invasives

Perceived obstacles/barriers

- Struggle to get public involved / educated of urgency of problem
- Lack of control over non-forest societal areas (trade, recreation, etc)
- Increased privatization of land = increased importance of volunteer efforts

III. Research and Monitoring

There is relatively little applied research on the ecological and economic impacts of many invasive plants, insects and diseases affecting Wisconsin's forests. In particular, the economic and silvicultural effects of extensive infestations of invasive plants are not well documented. New, rapidly emerging threats to our forests such as the Emerald Ash Borer, require applied research focused on providing management options for land managers. Co-ordination between survey and research efforts is necessary to provide a quick response to these new threats.

The research/survey session will bring together members of the research community with survey specialists and land managers to address the structures and partnerships needed to ensure rapid assessment of invasives issues, identification of research needs, and rapid transfer of applied research to managers.

Goals Identified by Leadership Team

1. Create new or improve existing processes for communicating real world invasive issues from the forest land manager to those responsible for setting priorities for funding and research agendas.
2. Create new or improve existing processes for providing survey data needed to support critical research on invasive issues.
3. Improve and speed technology transfer from research scientists to land managers.
4. A Goal #4 was added by the sub-group: Generate the information needed to address problems.

Initial Discussion of Goal & What it Should Encompass (?)

Overall/End Goal Statement: (?)

Common Points of Agreement:

Funding and support for research is limited by lack of objective data on invasives. Gathering data on the occurrence and extent of invasives species is a critical first step to supporting appropriate research. Educational and land management agencies need to share a common platform for collecting and disseminating this information.

Suggested Actions to Take:

- Create central data repository that integrates low level filters that allows for multi-partner communication
- Employ specialists/train existing people for regional partners to develop infrastructure for monitoring. A state specialist would be appropriate for this goal

Key Action:

- Create central data repository that integrates low level filters that allows for multi-partner communication

Other Top Priority Actions

- Employ specialists/train existing people for regional partners to develop infrastructure for monitoring. A state specialist would be appropriate for this goal

Individuals / Organizations Who Will Participate In This Action

Existing: State, industries, non profits, state agencies, private landowners, USFS, tribes

Needed: Citizens, volunteers, IPAW, WWOA, Tribes, USFS, DNR, APHIS, DATCP, Herbarium County, Military, NGOs

Indicators of Success:

- Financial backing
- Survey maps and records of where we find things
- 100% of MFL lands documented invasives
- Status report from all organizations_
- Researchers have access to real data on occurrences of invasives to support research needs

Perceived obstacles/barriers

- Finding accurate data,
- Filtering through bad or misleading data
- Quality Control of data
- Diversity in data formats

IV. Partnerships and Co-operative Management

Although many examples of good co-ordination exist, most landowners or agencies do not routinely share information or co-ordinate on invasive species management with their partner / neighbors when developing either long-range management plans or short-term operational plans. Agencies that share jurisdictions may work at cross purposes when for example routine management of road right-of-ways spreads invasive plants into interior forest, or when the efforts to control rapidly spreading forest pests by one owner are not matched by neighbors who share the infestation on adjoining lands.

This session will identify the barriers to and opportunities for strategic co-operation on a variety of scales that could improve our ability to protect forest lands from new invasives and minimize the threats or slow the spread of existing occurrences.

Goals Identified by Leadership Team

1. Facilitate county or regional information sharing, planning and management for invasive species between neighboring landowners of all sizes in and surrounding Wisconsin.
2. Improve co-ordination between forestland owners and managers of public rights-of-way to minimize spread of invasive species.

Initial Discussion of Goal & What it Should Encompass (?)

The group reviewed a variety of structures and organizations that could be used to support cooperative planning and management. The concept of a local weed council or Weed Management Area (WMA) was identified as the most feasible method of achieving the goal.

There was also a discussion of the role of managed right-of-ways in spreading invasives, especially plants. This problem is difficult as much right-of-way maintenance is done by local counties and townships.

Overall/End Goal Statement: (?)

Common Points of Agreement:

Co-operative management and information sharing at the regional (county or multi-county) level is an important need. The weed council model offers the best structure available to facilitate this kind of co-operation.

WDOT, while recognizing the significance of the issue of right-of-way spread of invasives has not made the issue a priority. WDOT staff have specifically directed regional field staff not to address invasive species in management of state ROW's due to budget constraints and the need to prioritize other safety-related management.

Key Action:

- Develop the Weed Council (or Weed Management Area) model for co-operative invasives management at a local or regional level.

Individuals / Organizations Who Will Participate In This Action

- UWEX, RC+D, NRCS, County Conservation Departments, WDNR, Public Lands Managers, WDOT, County Highway Departments.

Indicators of Success:

Perceived obstacles/barriers

Participant Comments:

- “We need to prioritize based on threat of the specific species. We can’t fight everything at once.”
- “We need a central agency to coordinate control of invasives”
- “Partnerships need to be established, and can build on successful examples of the past”
- “We need to make solutions cost effective (grants/cost-sharing is not enough)”
- “We need to organize efforts at a local level”
- “This is the issue with the most momentum and opportunity for success”
- “The diversity present in this room is the key to success on this issue”
- We have support through the governor’s forestry council, inv sp council, and that’s something to be recognized, and try to support the efforts of these support groups”
- Where will the funding come from? We need money! Humans are responsible for exotic invasives. Must assign responsibility to these people to help financially back our effort. People such as tourists, etc.
- Private landowners need to understand that things are being done at the state level to help them deal with the invasive problem. To help them justify expending resources on their property to eradicate these species. This conference will help let them know that help is on the way and there is a great concern in the state that invasives are a problem that need to be dealt with.

Partnerships Forged

There is a clear emerging partnership among forest managers, industry, government, private landowners and academia around support for acting to minimize the threat of forest invasives. We had a good variety of participants and diversity of perspectives. We have identified many common issues and achieved consensus on the severity of the challenge and the need for united action. We had good representation from industry, academics, NGO’s, urban foresters, and private owners.

Connections with other themes

We had a good connection with the Urban Forestry and Private Lands themes. There will be a continued need for overlap and co-ordination with these themes in their efforts.

Summary

We were very successful in engaging participants in building consensus and a recognized need for action.