

NISAW 2011 Highlights

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Invasive Species Council (NISC), along with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) and other state and federal partners, sponsored a week of events to increase awareness about invasive species and their impact on the U.S. economy, environment and animal and human health. NISAW events focused on cooperative and coordinated action to curb invasive species across the nation and around the world. Secretary Salazar is a co-chair of NISC and provides leadership for DOI efforts to prevent and control invasive species. Given the number and diversity of participants, the press coverage and the level of engagement by federal, tribal, state, and local governments as well as NGO's and the private sector, NISAW 2011 accomplished our goals of raising awareness about invasive species and increased sharing of successful strategies to prevent and control invasive species. The event launching NISAW was particularly important as one of the first national events to highlight the impact of invasive species on tribal lands and communities. The participation of key Administration leadership, including Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs, Lori Faeth, Deputy Secretary Hayes, Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Michael S. Black and USDA Deputy Undersecretary Ann Bartuska, demonstrated a high level of interest in the issue of invasive species impacts on American Indian Tribal communities.

II. SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS

National Invasive Species Awareness Week focused on raising awareness of the issue and providing an opportunity for state, international and local organizations to share success stories, lessons learned and best management practices in order to more effectively protect our natural resources from the harm caused by invasive species. NISC coordinated and organized the State and Regional Invasive Species Workshop during NISAW. The workshop, with over 140 participants, provided updates regarding critical national issues by federal officials, including: aquatic invasive species issues such as the spread of quagga and zebra mussels to the western US; the spread of the lionfish in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean; Asian carp in the Great lakes (including an address by Asian Carp Director John Goss); as well as regulatory developments and federal progress made on rapid response, control and prevention. The second half of the workshop focused on the state and regional issues chosen by participants from over 20 different states -- many of which have their own invasive species councils. Two of these panel sessions were available to the public by webinar.

Other organizations sponsored events in venues throughout downtown DC, including:

- Panel discussion on international and regional invasive species issues;
- Forum sponsored by environmental organizations focused on Great Lakes issues, forest pets and wildlife diseases.
- National Forest Service presentation of invasive species partnership awards
- ANSTF reception at the National Aquarium where the invasive lionfish was served as an appetizer; and
- AFWA and other partners sponsored reception at the US Botanical Gardens saluting state wildlife officials and in honor of NISAW (300 attending)

III. MAJOR THEMES

Despite the wide variety of events and venues, certain themes did emerge from NISAW 2011, including:

- Need for further focus and recognition of Tribal invasive species issues;
- Desire to include Tribal component in future NISAWs
- State representatives interest in expanding opportunities to work with other states and engage at a national level.
- State representatives and NISC agreement to increase communication and collaboration including a possible state and regional-focused invasive species list-serve.
- State participants also expressed the need for additional federal leadership at the national level on invasive species issues.
- Importance of working with, as well as broadening the number of partners as part of NISAW and creating a national invasive species network
- Importance of coordination and leadership -- given that invasive species problems are accelerating with climate change and increased international trade, in the face of budget and other resource constraint challenges

IV. PROSPECTS FOR NISAW 2012

On the final morning of NISAW, NISC hosted a meeting to get feedback and input about NISAW and discuss whether NISC or another organization should host NISAW 2012 and suggestions for improvements. Overall there was strong support for NISAW 2011 and for NISC (and its partners) hosting NISAW 2012. Most appreciated the wide variety of events and the time available to meet with other groups or attend other events while in DC. Broadly suggested ideas included:

- 1) Finalize the agendas and events earlier in the year to increase the opportunity to communicate and promote NISAW and NISAW events in order to increase participation
- 2) Expand NISAW to allow invasive species groups to host their own, broadly defined 'NISAW' events in their states and regions
- 3) Make more sessions available on the internet
- 4) Provide additional support especially for tribal and state officials to attend (some support was provided by NISC, AFWA and FWS)
- 5) More clearly define the purpose(s) and goals of NISAW.
- 6) Organize more briefings or meetings to inform congressional staff about invasive species issues
- 7) Provide more information about NISC and its role
- 8) Engage additional partners such as the WGA and the NGA
- 9) Focus on one or a few key invasive species issues
- 10) Provide additional online resources and materials to participants.