ANS Task Force

The Task Force Coordination Mechanisms for Managing ANS.

A Holistic Approach for Coordinating ANS Prevention and Control Activities at the National, Regional and State Levels.

What Are Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)?

Throughout history, man has introduced foreign plants and animals to new aquatic areas, either accidentally or on purpose. In new surroundings, these organisms are freed from predators, parasites, pathogens and competitors that have kept them in check. Once established, these exotic species can create negative impacts such as dramatically increasing the operating costs of water-intake systems; displacing native species and degrading ecosystems. A general term derived from the broad impacts collectively describes these organisms as ***Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS).***

The ANS Management Challenges

Over the past ten years, the ANS issue has become one of the single greatest challenges facing today's fish and wildlife managers. Unlike other challenges, ANS is more complex due to its pervasive connection with different facets of our society.

Recently, in the U.S. and around the world, the ANS challenge has received more attention due to the increase of high profile invasions and the impacts. Extensive research attributes this increase to the expansion of our global economy. More specifically, the transportation we use to exchange our raw materials, goods and services in the global marketplace provide ANS with ready-made "rides." Once these species establish themselves in new areas, they outcompete native species. This alone makes ANS difficult to manage. When combined with our constant demand for goods and services; the multiple authorities that manage our aquatic resources; and the range of values that drive resource management, it is easy to see how ANS transcends the fish and wildlife field.

The unique biological dynamics of ANS require a strong leadership role by the fish and wildlife resource profession, which can address many aspects of the problem. However, traditional resource management, which has managed species for clearly defined purposes, needs to expand its paradigm to account the broad species impacts and their introduction pathways, rather than focusing on the species themselves. Additionally, other factors, like economics, engineering and the social elements, need equal consideration when developing strategies to prevent and control new and existing ANS. Thus, new expertise needs to be factored into developing a comprehensive approach. The bottom line is that while traditional resource management needs to be the backbone, new expertise dealing with engineering, social science and economic concerns needs to be included to develop an innovative and more holistic approach.

What Has Been Done To Address this Challenge?

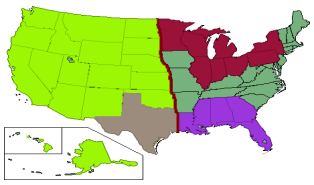
Fortunately, Congressional wisdom accounted for the complexity of the issue and designed a framework for this new approach when it passed the landmark legislation known as the Nonindigenous Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (NANPCA). This law established provisions for the federal resource agencies to deliver a comprehensive ANS program, and created the ***ANS Task Force***, an oversight organization, along with multiple mechanisms to engage different levels of government. What follows is a brief a description of the three primary mechanisms available to the ***ANS Task Force*** for coordinating national ANS activities.

National ANS Program

To make the most effective use of governmental resources, the ***ANS Task Force*** used the NANPCA guidelines to create the comprehensive ANS Program that establishes broad-based goals to prevent and control ANS on a national level. Via the program, public and private sector interests convene to address the associated issues. Additionally, the Program serves as a guide for all federal ANS activities that are funded, conducted or authorized, except for those dealing with intentional introductions. Thus, the ***ANS Task Force*** complements existing activities rather than trying to supplant them. The three core components of the program are: Prevention, Detection and Monitoring and Control. The three primary support elements are Research, Education and Technical Assistance. The Task Force uses this framework to coordinate national activities, provide direction and maximize existing government capabilities.

Regional ANS Panels

To facilitate effective coordination, Congress added a provision that created regional panels to assist the ***ANS Task Force***. Since the ANS issue gained notoriety in the Great Lakes, this was the first panel to be created. It is administered as an ongoing part of the Great Lakes Commission. In '96, when the law was reauthorized as the National Invasive Species Act (NISA), the Western Governors' Association expressed their concerns about the potential for ANS to spread westward across the country. As a result, the Western Regional Panel was created. In 1999, the Gulf of Mexico regional panel was created.



States colored bright green, maroon and purple make up the existing regional panels. Texas is brown because it is part of two panels.

The unrepresented areas are: the Mississippi River states, the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and the inland Southeastern states. Each of these regions are in the planning stages of building support and determining the appropriate organization to staff a regional panel.

State ANS Management Plans

One of the most important ***ANS Task Force*** mechanisms is the state grants program. Since coordination is the primary Task Force function, state participation is essential for any type of prevention and control activity. NANPCA authorized the Fish and Wildlife Service to manage a cost-share grant program to help state agencies to develop and implement ANS programs. For information about the grants program, contact the ***ANS Task Force*** staff at the address listed below.

4401 N. Fairfax ❖ Arlington, VA 22203 ❖ Ph: 703-358-2148 ❖ Fax: 703-358-2210 ❖ Web: www.anstaskforce.gov