



Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Initiative

Progress Report - May 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. A complete set of contacts has been compiled.
- Now that the Communication Protocol is in place, in 2008 we will be testing the responsiveness and effectiveness of the Protocol by conducting a mock AIS rapid response exercise. This exercise will take at Presque Isle, Pennsylvania in Late July or Early August. Pennsylvania has begun contacting State and local agencies that are likely to be involved. The meeting will include participation from management agencies beyond the state boundary, as well. We hope to have both a table top exercise as well as boats on the water.
- We are working on logistics to have opportunities for anyone who is interested to be involved, either as a participant or as an observer. We also want to hold a short media event to help get out the message on the importance of preventing introductions of invasive species in the Great Lakes.

Next Steps

- Conduct the Mock Exercise to test and refine the Communication Protocol. This event may also occur in conjunction with Pennsylvania's Clean Boats Day.