

## **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES STRATEGY TEAM**

### **Great Lakes Regional Collaboration**

**December 3, 2004**

#### **Co-Chairs:**

***Ken DeBeaussaert, Director, Michigan Office of the Great Lakes***

***Chris Goddard, Executive Secretary, Great Lakes Fishery Commission***

***Gerry Jackson, Asst. Regional Director, Midwest Region, USFWS***

Congressman Ehlers provided some introductory remarks noting the importance of prevention. His legislation is aimed at preventing the introduction of new species. The Congressman asked the members of the Strategy Team to support the NAISA reauthorization. He urged people to write their congressmen and support the legislation.

The chairs established that this is a “housekeeping” meeting, to get the process started. The EPA will compile an overall list for the strategy team and will set up a mechanism to collaborate.

The chairs noted that this is an opportunity to make a real difference on the issue of invasive species. Governor Leovitt has made the point that this is about coalition building. Therefore, this group is charged with building on the work that has been done previously. The time frame is to have a plan established a year from now.

The chairs outlined the time frame for the work ahead. During the next year, there will be a number of regularly scheduled conference calls. It was proposed that the first conference call occur week after next. These conference calls will be facilitated by EPA. February 21 and 22, there will be a meeting of executive group and strategy teams. Also, another meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup>. July 11 and 12, there will be a release of a draft plan; the comment period on that will close September 10. October 3 and 4, there will be a meeting and the final plan submitted December 12 and 13.

The AIS tasks will include: ballast water management, the reauthorization of the invasive species act, the carp barrier, rapid response protocols, prevention, mitigation, outreach & education, and applied research. There are also areas that are not listed. There are three areas that are overarching across all strategy teams. Those areas might include monitoring, human health, and tribal considerations. One page documents on each issue area will be produced, peer reviewed, and distributed. The intent is to break the larger group into “subcommittees” to allow for more expedient consideration of the particular issue areas.

The role of the chairs is to lead and facilitate the work of the strategy team. The chairs report to EPA. The chairs will be facilitating the conference calls and setting the dates. The chairs will be looking for members with expertise, who can write the various components. Participants were again reminded that there has been a lot of work done already, and this group will be relying a lot on that.

The document itself will be a 4 to 5 page strategy, backed up with other materials. The outline is:

- Problem statement
- Establishment of performance-based goals
- Identify ongoing efforts
- Alternative approaches
- Costs associated with approaches
- Feasibility
- Recommended actions

All participants were urged to read the framework. It will serve as the foundational document for this effort. There were also urged to read the executive order.

Is this just aquatic invasive species? Yes, it's designed to focus on aquatic species. The framework document says "aquatic" invasive species, though it is an amendable document. [The chairs did an informal poll and asked whether the focus should be on both aquatic and terrestrial species. Not many wanted to extend the work to terrestrial species. Given the frame and the resources available, we might not be able to cover both. The chairs agreed to discuss this with the habitat people and get their take.] Also, are we talking about just the Great Lakes or the basin as a whole? The focus is on the basin.

The first task might be to come up with a consensus definition of an "aquatic invasive species."

Under recommended actions, will this group take a stand on pending legislation, or on drafts of treaties yet to be entered? Or, is this a more exercise in providing technical advice? The chairs suggested providing technical advice, though there was room to take a stand on legislation. The chairs agreed to discuss the issue of advocacy over legislation with Governor Leovitt.

Is there any way the group could identify or recommend existing goals, recommendations, etc. to meld into this process? Absolutely. The intent is to build on existing work. Nobody is interested in re-inventing the wheel. In fact, the chairs asked the group to look at the list of supporting documents and let them know if there are things to add to the list.

Will the strategy have a communication component, so that people outside of the strategy team will know what's going on, both communicating about the issue and the process itself? The charge did include an outreach component. The chairs were not sure about the extent to which the EPA would be communicating the process. There will be a public comment period after the drafts are done. We just want to make sure that after all is said and done, we will have a way to get the public involved. The assumption is that at a higher level, there will be a communications blitz.

The strategy team can use a lot of the resources of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. Roger Eberhardt, staff of the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes, is the chair of the Panel.

Are we going to break this down by section (i.e., will a sub-group look at "feasibility," and one look at "alternative approaches," etc)? It would be a good idea to put together a list of what the

document should address and then reach consensus at that. Then, individuals or groups could volunteer to draft that portion of the document and to draft short support documents for each item. So, the first three to four months will be spent in subgroups with the rest spent on integrating the documents.

It is worth considering the recommendation of adoption of the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act. This act is already out there, it will help us from not re-inventing the wheel, etc. We need to recommend adopting the act as part of the strategy. When we get to the recommendation phase of the document, we will probably want to support the act. At the end of the day, we will want to have more support for an existing initiative rather than a whole new initiative. This discussion also applies to draft treaties that are under development. (For example, treaties dealing with ports of origin.)

How will the strategy team deal with the international component? If this remains a unilateral effort, particularly with regards to ballast water, we will have failed.

The issue of evaluating the history of impacts and then repairing the impacts is important. Can we better understand the federal role of impacts and repairing the impacts. How will this plan affect invasions that have already occurred? Will we be dealing with control? On the one hand, we have to deal with prevention. On the other hand, we have to deal with restoration as well.

What is the nature of a strategy document? What is the level of a strategy? Can we get into proper detail in a 4-5 page document? The chairs' sense was that the document would be used by states, tribes, feds. etc. to help them devote resources. The implementation can be a part of the supporting documents. It was the sense that we will need to pay a lot of attention to details; about how we're going to get from here to there on issues. We don't want another wish list. The emphasis should be on action.

Some stressed that there is an enormous amount of frustration over AIS; we need a strongly worded document. This is a huge opportunity and this is not the time to "wimp out." The documents will be the underpinnings of the resources that will address the issue.

For the next meeting, a scoping document will be done that will provide an outline of what will be addressed and what we want to get out of the call. The intent is to negotiate out consensus during the conference call. Also, when will the subject matter experts be identified? The hope is when we agree on when we agree on the subjects, the experts will volunteer to be a part of the drafting team.