

## **Invasive Weeds and Agriculture Pest Management Coordinator: Overview of Accomplishments**

Established in statute by HB 330 in 2008, the Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Coordinator (Coordinator) within the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture, has worked across multiple agencies and jurisdictions to further invasive plant management. Accomplishments of note include furthering key program components; initiating weed management projects; coordinating with industry, agencies, local entities, Canada and other states; providing comments to agencies on proposed projects; providing technical assistance; and participating in public outreach. Below are examples of accomplishments in each of these categories.

### **Core Program Components: Strategic Plan development and Regulation Revision/Development**

A strategic plan was developed with coordination and review of local, state, and federal entities. The plan is currently drafted and out for public review.

Regulations have been drafted and are being reviewed by the Commissioner's Office prior to a going out for the public review process.

### **Weed Management Projects**

The Coordinator has initiated 4 priority invasive species control and eradication projects:

- Canada thistle management in Anchorage;
- Spotted knapweed eradication in Anchorage, Kenai, Kasilof, Kake, Prince of Wales, Ketchikan, Valdez, Haines and Skagway;
- Purple loosestrife replacement in Anchorage; and
- Giant Hogweed Eradication in Kake.

### **Industry Coordination**

The Coordinator has worked with a number of industry groups and private sector companies on a range of invasive weeds and pest issues, including:

- horticulture industry to find solutions to identified problem species and vectors
- gravel producers through the Alaska Rock Products Association and Alaska Miners Association to develop a weed free gravel certification program
- agricultural producers and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to further the Weed Free Forage Certification Program by keeping records and organizing trainings for forage certifiers
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA) to incorporate invasive species prevention and detection measures in their "Adventure Green" certification program
- pest control operators to develop presentations about state invasive weeds and agricultural pest management priorities at the pesticide applicator recertification class, 2009 and 2010

### **Agency Coordination**

The Coordinator regularly works with state, federal, and local government employees to organize management of invasive weeds and agricultural pests. Examples of interagency coordination include:

- Participating in the Alaska Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM) by organizing the annual conference, coordinating multiagency weed management efforts, and participating in subcommittees
- Participating in the Alaska Invasive Species Working Group (AISWG) meetings, and presently leading an effort to further formalize the group by establishing bylaws and an advisory board
- Being identified as lead in coordinating response to potential *Spartina* infestations
- Working with Alaska DOT, providing presentations at the annual Environmental Expo in 2009 and encouraging their involvement in local weed management projects around the state
- Furthering coordination with federal agencies through participation in several committees including the Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee, Weed Free Gravel Committee, Weed Free Forage Committee, and others.
- Coordinating early detection border inspections for state priority weeds with U.S. Customs and Borders Protection staff
- Assisting in annual Integrated Pest Management trainings for the Cooperative Extension Service
- Participating in the Alaska Coastal Management Plan working group

### **Local Coordination Efforts**

The coordinator participates and facilitates local efforts to manage invasive weeds and agricultural pests by connecting organizations with similar efforts, focusing priorities, and providing assistance when necessary. Key examples of local coordination efforts include:

- Attended Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) meetings around the state in person and by teleconference
- Helped to coordinate local response for Garlic Mustard and Spotted Knapweed eradication
- Coordinates with Soil and Water Conservation Districts attending local and statewide meetings
- Assisted AACD in hiring their invasive plants coordinator
- Assisted the Anchorage CWMA in developing a strategic plan for invasive plant management
- Participated in coordinating response to a newly discovered *Elodea canadensis* infestation in the Chena Slough in Fairbanks

### **Coordination with Canada and Other States**

The Division of Ag has participated in coordination with the Yukon, British Columbia and Northwest Territories in Canada to share information and encourage management of high priority invasive weeds that threaten to spread to Alaska. Coordination with other states is done through participation in the Western Weed Coordinator Committee.

### **Comments on Agency Projects**

The state coordinator has provided comments to federal agencies seeking to manage invasive weeds on federal lands to ensure state invasive weed management priorities are addressed and management is done with effective and safe methods. Comments to agencies have included:

- USDA 2009 priorities
- National Park Service Environmental Analysis for invasive plants management
- BLM scoping Environmental Analysis for weed management on the Dalton Highway
- USFWS Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Analysis for invasive plant management

Comments were submitted on state projects and programs as well. Several DOT road construction projects have been commented on to include invasive plant management and prevention measures, often by request from DOT. The coordinator commented to DF&G that the scope of invasive species

issues eligible for funding from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund be broadened from just pike to any invasive species with impacts to salmon.

### **Technical Assistance**

Individuals and groups working on weed and pest management around the state are often dealing with these issues for the first time. The coordinator has worked to provide advice on controlling infestations in effective, economical, and safe ways. Examples of technical assistance provided include:

- Provided numerous recommendations for weed management and prevention at DOT's request
- Participated in the review committee for Alaska Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) Invasive Plant Program Grants
- Participated in ranking the invasiveness of invasive plants
- Provided guidance to Chugach State Park staff seeking to initiate invasive plant management
- Reviewed species included in a grass identification field guide and freshwater plants identification field guide
- Provided firsthand knowledge to USGS when modeling the spread of invasive plants in Alaska
- Reviewed strategic plan for Spartina prevention and management developed by NOAA
- Worked to develop protocol for an inventory of invasive weeds along the Trans Alaska Pipeline
- Provided assistance in project development to AACD Invasive Plant Program Coordinators
- Working with the Alaska Shorezone Committee who models habitat for invasive plants

### **Public Outreach and Presentations**

Many people in Alaska are unfamiliar with the impacts invasive weeds and agricultural pests pose Alaska. The Coordinator works to provide information to the public to generate awareness and increase participation in prevention, detection, and management. Recent examples of public events which the Coordinator presented or participated in include:

- Mat- Su Salmon Science Symposium 2008 and 2009
- Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Kenai CWMA workshops
- Alaska Forum on the Environment 2009, 2010, and scheduled for 2011
- Alaska Citizen Scientist Teachers Workshop in 2010
- Lead tour of weeds on Chester Creek greenbelt in Anchorage
- Invasive plants impacts to salmon and moose, the Eagle River Nature Center, September 2010
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association annual conference, 2009
- Alaska Greenhouse and Nursery Conference, 2009

### **Grant Writing**

The coordinator has worked to secure additional funds and grants from partnering agencies and other sources to assist the state in meeting its weed and pest management goals. Examples of such grants include:

- USFWS ARRA project grant to eradicate spotted knapweed (awarded \$100,000)
- USFS Forest Health Protection grant for coordination with horticultural industry (awarded \$80,000)
- USFS Forest Health Protection grant for management of Canada thistle in Anchorage (awarded \$8,000)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for management of Canada thistle in Anchorage (awarded \$80,000 but returned because matching funds were not appropriated)
- BLM grant for gravel pit inventory and initiation of a weed-free gravel certification program (awarded \$20,000)