



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Natural Resources**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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May 9, 2025

The Honorable Rebecca Himschoot  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 411  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: DNR Role in Invasive Species Management

Dear Representative Himschoot:

Your office requested a summary of activities and coordination on invasive species management by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in regard to House Bill 191, which you sponsor. This letter provides DNR's response.

The Division of Agriculture has broad statutory responsibility for managing both terrestrial and freshwater invasive plant species and agricultural pests and diseases. These responsibilities are carried out by an invasive species coordinator housed in the division; this position coordinates closely with the invasive species coordinator housed at the Department of Fish and Game, and works routinely with federal, local, tribal, and non-governmental partners concerned about invasive species. The two state coordinators work together roughly weekly in peak season to monitor and respond to public reports received through the online portal or through the toll-free hotline (1-877-INVASIV) and to plan and coordinate management actions.

Your staff asked DNR to describe the coordination that Division of Agriculture undertakes. DNR's statewide coordinator, as an example:

- Works regularly with three active Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (Kenai Peninsula, Northern-Interior, and Anchorage) that typically include local soil and water conservation districts and municipalities
- Works directly with soil and water conservation districts statewide and often works with the districts on projects
- Is a member of the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership (AKISP) Board of Directors; chairs the Statewide Elodea Committee (AKISP); and sits on the Mat-Su Elodea Task Force and the Southwest Alaska Elodea Task Force
- Partners with local working groups such as the Crescent Lake Elodea Working Group
- Works with local private landowners on advice, planning and treatments

- Serves on the board of the Alaska Statewide Weed Free Products Committee

These coordinating efforts are beneficial in making the most efficient use of resources, avoiding duplicative efforts, and sharing information and expertise. Through these relationships, DNR is more able to quickly identify partners/interested parties for any given invasive species management action and to participate in special committees or task forces created from time to time in response to particularly aggressive or concerning invasive species and new infestations.

On-the-ground invasive species management activities are largely seasonal. A substantial amount of time is spent off-season planning treatments; meeting with an array of working groups and task forces involved in invasive species management; consulting with state and federal landowners; conducting outreach; and securing funding and permits for planned treatments.

Because much of the in-season work (along with treatments) involves responding to reports of invasive species, those responsive actions are included in this summary of 2024 activities; some items may be listed multiple times as they indicate multiple activities over time. In 2024, those Division of Ag-led activities included:

- Assisted with Elodea treatments in the Interior with Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District
- Conducted successful full-lake treatment of Alexander and West Sucker lakes (Mat-Su Valley) for Elodea and surveyed both systems for further infestations (some new Elodea discovered)
- Investigated numerous reports of invasive plants (terrestrial and aquatic) received via the reporting hotline
- Surveyed Flat and Mirror lakes and parts of Big Lake in the Mat-Su area; discovered new Elodea and tracked infestation expansion
- Conducted several landowner/lake visits to identify and investigate aquatic weed growth
- Conducted successful herbicide treatment year one of three for Elodea in West Sucker Lake
- Conducted successful herbicide treatment year one of three for Elodea on Alexander Lake in the Susitna Valley area
- Conducted successful herbicide treatment year one of three for Elodea on Six-Mile Lake (Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson)
- Numerous calls regarding *Hieracium aurantiacum* (orange hawkweed), advised control measure and best management practices (BMPs) – Mat-Su Valley, Willow, Houston, and Talkeetna
- Respond to numerous calls regarding *Vicia cracca* (bird vetch) and advised control measures and BMPs (in Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage)

- Fielded calls regarding *Cirsium arvense* (creeping (Canada) thistle), mainly in Anchorage; advised control measures and BMPs
- Called and visited landowner and confirmed *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese knotweed), an extremely invasive weed, in Anchorage – somewhat new for Southcentral
- Numerous calls about removal and control of *Prunus padus* (bird cherry tree); advised removal and control options, connected landowners with soil and water conservation districts
- Herbicide treatment of Flat Lake, Mirror Lake, and Big Lake Elodea infestations in early August; surveyed known hotspots
- Second herbicide treatment of Big Lake's north shore; surveyed numerous new, large patches of Elodea
- Coordinated with DNR, Department of Fish and Game, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to contain and educate pet shops on possible dreissenid mussel importation into Alaska on marimo moss balls (ongoing); stopped the sale of, confiscated and destroyed some marimo balls that violated quarantine rules
- Contacted about possible perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) report near Chitina; working with Plant Materials Center (DNR), Department of Environmental Conservation, and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities for survey and control measures of this highly invasive noxious weed (ongoing)
- Conducted Elodea surveys on Mat-Su area lakes in response to reports and excessive weed growth
- Responded to several terrestrial weed reports and gave BMPs to private landowners
- Finished Elodea herbicide treatments and surveyed effects of prior treatments on Big Lake
- Traveled to Alexander Lake and Sucker Lakes to collect additional water samples and surveyed herbicide treatment results

The Division of Agriculture also receives federal funding on terrestrial invasive species through U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Agriculture Pest Surveys and Plant Protection Act. This federal funding pays for part of a position to work on pest detection programs focusing on invasive pests and pathogens. Pest detection efforts in 2024 included:

- Asian defoliating moths – deploy traps in areas that are considered high risk pathways for introduction
- Honeybee pest and disease survey – conducts surveys on apiaries for invasive pests and diseases
- Retail nursery survey – imported nursery stock is a pathway for invasive pests, weeds, and pathogens; division staff visited nurseries to inspect for invasive pests, pathogens, and weeds in or on nursery stock

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- Holiday tree and greenery survey – imported trees and greenery can be a pathway for the introduction of invasive pests and pathogens; division staff visited nursery retailers to inspect for invasive pests and pathogens

Please reach out if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rena Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rena Miller  
Acting Legislative Liaison

cc: Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office