



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

AGENDA

INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Nicole Angeli (USVI)

Vice-Chair: Tom Woolf (MT)

Wednesday September 16th

1:15 pm – 3:15 pm

Commonwealth 3 (Lvl 2)

116th AFWA Annual Meeting

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Agenda

1:15 pm

Welcome

Nicole Angeli, (USVI)

- Introductions
- Approval of Minutes from April's 91st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference Meeting
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(14 attendees signed in using the QR code, and a head count identified 24 attendees in total)

- The minutes from April's 91st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference Meeting were approved
- The committee is moving away from meetings dominated by lengthy agency report-outs and toward more substantive working sessions. A recent virtual pre-meeting was viewed as a useful model for report-outs and information sharing.
- A central theme was avoiding "double work": preventing invasive species from undermining habitat restoration and other conservation investments.
- The committee also wants to become more action-oriented by selecting two or three aquatic and terrestrial priorities for the next two to three years, particularly areas where AFWA can provide policy support, educate decision-makers, improve coordination, and pursue sustained funding.

1:20 pm

Pennsylvania State Spotlight

Emily Boyd, (PA Game Commission)

Pennsylvania's Invasive Species Program: Scope of Impact, and Strategies for Management

Emily Boyd of the Pennsylvania Game Commission described Pennsylvania's invasive-species work. The Governor's Invasive Species Council brings together seven state agencies and 14 NGOs under a statewide management framework emphasizing prevention, control, early detection, and rapid response.

From the Game Commission perspective, major concerns include feral swine, invasive birds such as European starlings and house sparrows, mute swans, spongy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, and invasive plants such as mile-a-minute, Japanese stiltgrass, honeysuckle, and tree-of-heaven. Management includes pesticides, mechanical and chemical vegetation treatments, biological control, prescribed fire, and partnerships with USDA Wildlife Services. The Game Commission treated nearly 6,000 acres for invasive plants in 2025, while its spongy-moth response can be much larger during outbreak years.

Boyd emphasized that limited resources make prioritization, collaboration, education, monitoring, and rapid response essential.

1:40 pm **State Agency and Provincial Roundtable**

- One-minute updates
- Nebraska continues addressing eastern red cedar, Siberian elm, cheatgrass, phragmites, salt cedar, Russian olive, reed canary grass, and aquatic invasive plants, while prescribed burning has been constrained by wildfire conditions.
- Colorado reported zebra mussels in the Colorado River system and ongoing monitoring, treatment, and watercraft inspection efforts.
- North Carolina described what it considers a successful approximately two-year zebra-mussel eradication effort in a recreational waterbody, aided by eDNA monitoring, and is working toward its first comprehensive aquatic invasive species management plan. It is also integrating invasive-species safeguards into major Hurricane Helene recovery and habitat-restoration work.
- Florida described particularly extensive work on invasive plants and reptiles, including public removal efforts for cold-stunned iguanas and continuing early detection and rapid response for nonnative reptiles.
- Montana reported that it still had no detected invasive mussels and is maintaining an intensive prevention and inspection program.
- The U.S. Virgin Islands emphasized biosecurity as a major concern because of limited inspection barriers for incoming organisms. It plans biosecurity workshops and tabletop exercises with federal partners and has ended its annual red-tailed boa bounty program in favor of considering a more systematic management approach.

- Other states highlighted eastern red cedar, invasive carp, zebra/quagga mussels, invasive vegetation, nutria, feral swine, invasive reptiles, New Zealand mudsnails, and illegal fish introductions.

2:00 pm **Feral Swine Working Group Update**
Bryant White (AFWA) for Terri Brunjes, (KY)

- Updates and upcoming priorities

Bryant White reported for Terri Brunjes on the AFWA Feral Swine Working Group. He cited roughly 6 million feral swine nationally and an estimated \$3.4 billion in annual damage to agriculture, infrastructure, livestock, and ecosystems.

The federal-state eradication effort has reportedly eliminated feral swine from 10 states, with another three in surveillance status. The working group is also developing outreach products explaining impacts on native game species and materials aimed at policymakers.

The National Wild Pig Task Force is building a repository of scientific literature and a national/international contact database. Quarterly virtual coordination meetings have also begun.

A motion was made to consider Martin Coker of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks as vice-chair of the AFWA Feral Swine Working Group. The motion was unanimously approved by the committee.

2:10 pm **Federal & Partner Updates**

- US Department of the Interior
- FWS
- USGS (handout)
- USDA
- BLM
- Other Partners

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force charter was renewed July 17, 2026, allowing its activities to resume after an earlier pause. Work is underway on a new strategic plan and a national golden mussel management plan, emphasizing prevention, early detection, surveillance, response, containment, research, outreach, and data management.
 - For FY2026, approximately \$4.084 million is available through the state/interstate Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan grant program. The Service is also continuing work on injurious-wildlife listings and a Department of the Interior invasive-species strategic plan.
- USDA Wildlife Services discussed continued feral-swine eradication work, island restoration, toxicant development for invasive species, and an expansion of its authority that allows it to assist with certain invasive-fish management projects. The National

Wildlife Research Center continues research on control tools for feral swine, invasive rodents, reptiles, fish, and other species.

- USGS (**handout**) highlighted work on eDNA standardization, rapid field detection tools, horizon scanning for future invasive threats, invasive mussels, invasive carp deterrents, invasive reptiles, invasive plants, and invasive mosquitoes, among other research priorities.

2:25 pm

Legislative Update

AFWA Handout

- Section 42 of Title 18 of the Lacey Act

Lacey Act / injurious-species authority

A significant policy discussion concerned Section 42 of Title 18 of the Lacey Act. The committee discussed pursuing legislation that would restore or clarify federal authority to restrict interstate movement of species listed as injurious, rather than relying primarily on individual states once an injurious species is already inside the country.

Participants pointed to golden mussels and other aquatic organisms as examples where stronger interstate authority could be useful. Florida noted that it has had to establish its own state prohibitions to close this gap.

There appeared to be broad interest in continuing the effort, although participants recognized that legislation is unlikely to advance immediately. The committee plans to explore coordination with The Wildlife Society's Invasive Species Committee, which is working on the same issue, and potentially identify committee members to serve as liaisons or participate in an informal subgroup.

AFWA–U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opportunity

The committee also discussed two invasive-species recommendations among a larger set of AFWA recommendations being considered with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leadership. The recommendations call for stronger coordinated action against invasive species and illegal wildlife trade, expanded support for prevention, control and research, better information sharing, coordinated enforcement efforts involving commercially traded invasive species, and improved communication about funding opportunities.

Committee leadership characterized the coming months as an opportunity to turn those broad recommendations into specific, achievable actions before July 2027.

2:30 pm

Invasive Species Committee Working Session: Prioritizing Next Steps

Nicole Angeli, (USVI) and Tom Woolf, (MT)

Building on challenges identified by break-out groups at the April 2025 NAWNRC meeting:

1. Education of legislators, policymakers, and the public.
2. Underfunding of prevention and early detection compared to response.
3. Regulatory and policy tools lag behind emerging threats.

The committee will break into Aquatic and Terrestrial groups to identify their highest-priority challenge, realistic AFWA-level actions to address it, and top 2–3 priorities for the next two years.

The meeting then moved into separate aquatic and terrestrial breakout groups. Each group was asked to identify roughly two to three concrete priorities for the next two to three years, with an emphasis on initiatives the committee can actually advance through policy, funding, coordination, education, or federal-state partnerships.

Below are the priorities from the breakout groups:

- Terrestrial breakout group

* - Aquatic breakout group

#* Support for Lacey Act.

* Support for AFWA to advocate for continued AIS funding and timely approval to award funds.

* Assistance communicating the value of AIS prevention.

* Assistance communicating / distributing the SeaGrant Law Center's model AIS regulation publications.

<https://nsglc.olemiss.edu/projects/invasivespecies/index.html>.

* Support for the Safe Boating Act to allow states to charge fees associated with Coast Guard boat registrations (AIS fees)

* Advocate for Federal partners to engage with states prior to initiating AIS early detection surveillance. Particularly with eDNA. Ensure a mutually agreed upon communication plan and data sharing plan is in place prior to initiating early detection sampling. And ensuring the agency that has the management authority for that species is responsible for that information.

Discussed support for research on state trends and briefing outreach documents - pursue an extension or other entity multi-state grant application proposal - ideas include LEMIS database and trends and patterns, USGS overview, horizon scans, etc.

Create a State POC 'phone book' for relevant authorities, federal reporters, etc., so folks know who to direct inquiries to.

Law enforcement - attend the AFWA Law and Legal Committees and see if we can gain support for trade/facilities/enforcement/reporting

3:10 pm — ~~Committee discussion about length of in-person meetings~~

————— ~~Nicole Angeli, (USVI)~~

3:15 pm Wrap-up and Adjourn

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Or, email Melanie Steinkamp at msteinkamp@fishwildlife.org