

Guidelines for Forming and Conducting a Local or Regional Invasive Species Coordinating Group

Created by the Western Integrated Pest Management Center
Invasive Species Signature Program

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Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines on the creation of a State or Regional Invasive Species Coordinating Group. The group's goals can include the following:

- Provide a forum for planning and preparing for early detection, confirmation, response, mitigation and recovery following the introduction of an invasive.
- Develop trusted relationships to facilitate a rapid, coordinated and efficient communications and activities pertaining to response and recovery during an invasive species introduction.
- Facilitate communications to balance protection of market trade with mitigation actions.
- Facilitate communications to balance existing integrated pest management practices with mitigation actions.
- Avoid unintended surprises as much as possible by assuring all affected stakeholders are included in the process of planning, detecting, responding and mitigating adverse consequences of invasive species introductions.

In many cases such groups already exist, in those cases, this document may provide guidelines to enhance or expand such a group. State or local governments, university extension or diagnostic networks in many states have formed such groups.

Forming the Invasive Species Coordinating Group

Ideal Composition of the Core Coordinating Group.

- Ideally the core group should include at least one member of each major stakeholder group.
- The Core Group should not be too large especially at the start; ideally core group should be around 10 people.

Potential member/stakeholder groups include:

- University Extension/IPM Specialists
- University Researchers in applied disease/ pest/ weed management
- Diagnostic Network- National Plant Diagnostic Network - www.npdn.org
- Industry -Commodity, Producers/Packers/Shippers/Processors.
 - *Target one commodity focus to start, don't let scope get too big initially.*

- Director of Experiment Station/Dean-ad hoc member(s)
- Regulatory- State SPRO and in some cases Local Government Department of Ag
- State Pesticide Regulator-ad hoc member
- Federal and International Government-ad hoc member(s) - Invited as ad-hoc member(s) on invitation by the State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO).
 - See list of State regulated pests (available from SPRO)
 - see list of Federally regulated pests (available from SPRO or SPHD)
 - see list of internationally traded commodities (available from the SPRO or the SPHD through EPPO, NAPPO or the NPB).

The State Plant Regulatory Official (the SPRO) is the highest-level state official for plant regulation. The SPRO has existing relationships with the other regulatory agencies that are defined by law. In most states, the SPRO has the final decision in how to engage with other regulators. The State Plant Health Director (the SPHD) is the highest-level federal official in a state. Each state has a SPRO and a SPHD who work closely together on plant regulatory issues.

Depending on the commodity/ies involved the state or federal Forest Service, soil conservation service, tribe(s), environmental agency, emergency management agency, or others may be appropriate to serve as members or ad-hoc members.

Responsibilities of Members:

- Select a Leader
 - The Leader should be a good team builder, facilitator and organizer.
 - The Leader should be widely respected amongst the group.
 - The Leader will set and organize meetings/ activities.
 - The Leader will insure steady progress towards the group's goals.
- Attend meetings regularly (at least twice a year, preferably).
- Share results of discussions widely within each member's organization (reach-back).
- Share and train on protocols widely within each member's organization (reach-back).
- Discuss concerns and offered resources-trust, information sharing, roles, responsibilities, authorities, emphasize professional integrity.
 - Each member organization brings resources to the table involving invasive species introduction.
 - Each member organization has concerns and risks involving invasive species.
 - Matching resources and concerns early builds trust and improves timeliness of actions needed involving invasive species.
- Members can call an additional meeting through the leader as needed.
- Plan for attrition. Establish a protocol for rotating members.

Activities of Invasive Species Coordination Group Members

Preparation: Develop Seamless Protocols and Procedures, then Practice Them

Most organizations have protocols or procedures for detection, response and recovery, however, when multiple organizations are conducting a coordinated approach, protocols need to be harmonized and made seamless so that members do not overstep their role or conduct activities that are counterproductive to the role of another. Such cross-purpose can greatly slow the detection, response and recovery processes. Expand upon existing protocols/infrastructure where feasible.

A. DETECTION PROTOCOLS:

First and Second Detector Roles

First Detectors are usually the commodity professionals. Extension and NPDN may have an active first detector program in your area. They often are the same people or work together and may also work with the State Department of Agriculture.

Second Detectors are the next level of triage of a suspect sample. Cooperative Extension, the National Plant Diagnostic Network Diagnosticians, in some states professional crop advisors as well as state or county inspectors may serve this role.

Example of a seamless protocol: Chain of Communication/Chain of Custody Protocol for Suspect Samples- https://www.npdn.org/exercise_resources

B. RESPONSE/MITIGATION PROTOCOLS:

State Response Protocols for regulated invasive species are available from State Plant Regulatory Official. Example <http://www.azgovernor.gov/ais/Documents/AISMP2008.pdf>

Federal Protocols are available from State Plant Health Director (SPHD) or from sources listed at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/biosecurity/index.shtml

Universities, Extension and Industry may also have established protocols or response plans for invasive species.

C. RECOVERY PROTOCOLS:

There are a number of organizations that are key to recovery from an invasive species. Each has its own protocols and procedures. Many of these programs also provide funding to assist with financial recovery from an invasive species introduction. The more these are coordinated prior to an introduction, the more like a recovery is as rapid as possible.

- University Cooperative Extension and Integrated Pest Management Programs serve to coordinate activities, training and coordinate non-regulatory response/recovery activities. Some examples are:
 - The soybean rust PIPE <http://sbr.ipmpipe.org/cgi-bin/sbr/public.cgi>
 - The IPM Centers <http://www.ipmcenters.org/>

- Numerous State Members of a National Spotted Wing Drosophila Coordination Group Example: <http://horticulture.oregonstate.edu/group/spotted-wing-drosophila>
- The USDA Risk Management Agency (Crop Insurance) or <http://www.rma.usda.gov/>
- The USDA Forest Service http://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/Bark_Beetle/ example
- The USDA Natural Resource Conservation System has programs such as EQIP that fund IPM and other management practices through farmer contracts. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>
- The USDA APHIS Emergency Programs http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/
- National Disease Plant Disease Recovery System produces specific response plans, but does not provide recovery funding. <http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/docs.htm?docid=14271>
- The Governor or President may declare a state of emergency releasing compensation funds through RMA, FEMA or State Departments of Agriculture or Emergency Response. The specific protocols are activated through protocols known to the SPRO and SPHD.
- State or Federal Public Assistance Programs may provide social services to aid in the recovery of severely impact communities. Each has its own protocols known to FEMA and the State Emergency Response Agencies.

Seamless Protocol Challenges and Solutions

- A. **CHALLENGE:** Dwindling staff in each organization makes it difficult to find people who have time to work on the harmonizing seamless protocols before an invasive appears. During an introduction it is also difficult to locate these people quickly if no prior relationship exists. Possible solutions:
- Increase the number and quality of relationships through training and practice. Conduct exercises and practice sessions to identify gaps in protocols and build relationships between organizations. *We don't want to be exchanging business cards DURING an emergency but should know each other before an invasive arrives.*
 - Leverage existing communication channels, such as cooperative extension, private consultant organizations, industry. State Departments of Agriculture and APHIS have trained exercise facilitators who can help organize exercises. Extension, IPM and the National Plant Diagnostic Network has trainers skilled in teaching.
- B. **CHALLENGE:** Private Industry may work only with private labs and not share information. A culture shift may be needed. Possible solutions:
- Try exercising with a private lab from a major industry in your area.
 - Private consultants, Commodity Groups and/or the SPRO may have an existing relationship to work on information sharing protocols.
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During an Event the Coordination Group Works Together to Coordinate Activities

A. Detection and Reporting

University Extension and IPM specialists coordinate with Industry, Consultants, Commodity Groups and Regulators to conduct training and outreach to First and Second Detectors. Instruction is focused on what to look for, whom to call and how to collect a sample. Also covered is the need to share information confidentially with need-to-know individuals and coordinate public information through lead organizations which are agreed upon by the Core Coordinating Group based on the specific scenario of the event.

- B. A generic message for training on notification could be that First Detectors should call Cooperative Extension, IPM Specialists, Diagnosticians or Crop Consultants (Second Detectors). If it's a regulatory invasive the SPRO should be contacted immediately by the Second Detector.

Rapid Assessment

The Coordinating Committee Members mobilize reach-back into each organization to share what is known about the specific invasive species. Additional information is available through experts, Technical Committees, Data Sheets, Proceedings and other documentation.

The following are potential knowledge sources:

- University Expertise
 - Cooperative Extension/IPM
 - Research
- Regulatory Expertise
 - State Department of Agriculture
 - Federal – Center for Plant Health Science and Technology CPHST
 - International EPPO Pest Risk Assessments or http://www.eppo.int/QUARANTINE/Pest_Risk_Analysis/PRA_intro.htm
 - International NAPPO – Pest Risk Assessments <http://www.nappo.org/en/>
 - CABI- Descriptions <http://www.cabi.org/default.aspx?site=170&page=1016&pid=328>
- Industry Expertise
 - Commodity Groups have contact lists-prior relationships
 - Companies have internal knowledge that is critical and financial leverage with producers.
 - Crop Consultants and Registrants have in depth knowledge on certain control strategies and field observations.

The Core group meets by phone or in person for knowledge shared during briefings. Knowledge gaps are identified and a plan is made to fill knowledge gaps through research, translation to education, and outreach during the event. A survey is usually conducted (a delimiting survey) to determine the extent of the introduction and over time document any spread or eradication.

C. Rapid Response

A Response Plan is Established

THIS IS THE STAGE WHERE PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF AN INTRODUCTION OF AN INVASIVE SPECIES.

At this point the Core Coordinating Group and any ad-hoc additional members as appropriate, to the scenario meet to agree upon a response plan for response activities. There is a major separation into two types of plans:

- For a Regulatory Invasive- The State Departments of Agriculture takes the lead in partnership, with the SPHD and with support from the remainder of the core group under the Incident Command System, an arrangement that is mandated by U.S. law.
- For a Non-Regulatory Invasive- Cooperative Extension working with the affected Commodity Group(s) take the lead with support from core group. Commonly the plan involves a survey. Additionally, public education and outreach is conducted through town hall meetings, crop consultants, county extension agents, websites, fact sheets and other media such as radio and television. Extension, IPM and crop consultants work with individual producers to develop management strategies tailored to their farm.

The Response Plan is Activated

The response plan is activated. Each organization understands its particular roles and responsibilities during the response as well as understands the roles and responsibilities of the other organizations. The Core Group meets regularly throughout the response to continually assess the situation and examine next steps in the plan.

D. Recovery:

Recovery comes through several channels. Research is conducted to fill management or mitigation method knowledge gaps. Extension, IPM Specialists and Industry/Commodity Groups coordinate education and outreach on new methods. They also coordinate guidance to affected producers on appropriate management practices to mitigate adverse impacts from the invasive species introduction, sometimes on a farm specific level. Regulators may work with trade partners to defray adverse market impacts.

Funding from recovery programs to reduce any economic damage resulting from the invasive species introduction may be available through the programs described in Section C above.

The impact of an invasive species may be financial or societal. The activities required to recover from an invasive species introduction involve extension, education, and management in the short term. Long term recovery and management involves Integrated Pest Management strategies, and also financial and social assistance in more extreme events.

Government Research Grants can provide long-term research dollars for developing new management strategies for pest/disease/weed control and mitigation. Commodity Groups and Industry (Producers, Processors, Packer/Shipper) can also provide the political clout needed to channel government funds towards research and response/recovery funds.