

MARCH 2008

NEWSLETTER OF THE INVASIVE SPECIES TASK FORCE

Created by the Natural Resources Study Committee, October 2007



Victim and Vector.
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Photo by Arpingstone.

Since our last newsletter, three more groups of invasive species were presented to the Task Force by Dr. Sandra Norman, of the Indiana State Board of Animal Health, and Doug Keller, of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife. They shared headline-worthy accounts of invasive fish that can literally knock people out of boats and a weed that can destroy a lake for fishing and boating (photo right.) We also heard an account of an animal disease infecting pet prairie dogs (photo below left) that was stopped before it could spread,

possibly threatening human health and native animals such as squirrels. To read more detail on the first two meetings, go to www.invasivespecies.in.gov.

We have now heard from experts on: terrestrial invasive plants, invasive insects and plant diseases, aquatic plants and animals, vertebrate invasive animals, and animal diseases. Experts have shared information about the species of concern to them and their organizations, the status of these species, methods of controlling and/or eradicating, state laws and regulations governing each taxon and any needs for changing statute or regulation.

Consideration of Subgroup Document

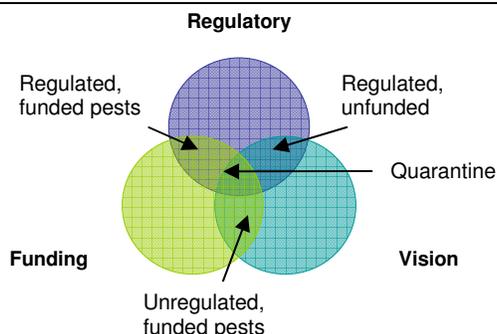
A subgroup of the Task Force met in December to discuss issues raised at the first task force meeting and develop 'straw man' suggestions for addressing those issues. The subgroup focused on the need for more coordination on invasive species, as well as the need for better data management. They also considered the lack of capacity to address invasive species, and the benefits of stronger, clearer, and more consistent policies on invasive species in state agencies. Most of the discussion was spent on the coordination issue, using the Venn diagram at right to guide them.



Hydrilla overtaking a Florida lake.
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Did You Know?

- Hydrilla was found for the first time in the Midwest in August 2006 in Lake Manitou (near Rochester, Indiana).
- This aquatic weed has destroyed hundreds of lakes for fishing, boating and swimming in the southern U.S.
- To keep this weed from destroying Lake Manitou and spreading to other lakes it will cost **\$2 million over five years** to eradicate it.



INVASIVES SPECIES TASK FORCE: Phil Marshall, Co-Chair, State Entomologist; Ellen Jacquart, Co-Chair, Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group; Doug Keller, Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, Department of Natural; Dr. Robert D. Waltz, Indiana State Chemist and Seed Commissioner; Keith Ruble, Superintendent, Vigo County Parks Department; John Miller, President, Oak Heritage Conservancy; Dr. Chris Pierce, CAPS Coordinator; Dr. Steve Yaninek, Professor and Head, Department of Entomology, Purdue University; Dr. Sandy Norman, Indiana State Board of Animal Health; Dr. David Lodge, Director Aquatic Conservation, University of Notre Dame; Rick Haggard, President, Indiana Nursery and Landscape Association; Jack Seifert, State Forester Department of Natural Resources.

At the full Task Force meeting in January, the subgroup presented a model structure of an Invasive Species Council, its roles and duties. There was lively discussion about the formation of such a Council and the associated responsibilities. A new draft of the model structure incorporating these comments is being shared by Task Force members with their constituencies to get broader input on any necessary changes. At the March meeting, the Task Force will be compiling, debating and refining the model, based on input from various constituencies. A finished document will be prepared and shared with the selected legislators for their input and guidance.



Gambian rats sold as pets can carry monkeypox infections
(Photo source unknown.)

Dangerous Pets...

- RATS! In April 2003, Gambian Rats (photo left) were imported from Ghana to Texas.
- After an outbreak of monkey pox, the infection was traced back to these rats.
- After arriving in Texas, some of the rats were purchased by an Illinois exotic pet dealer, where they came in close contact with prairie dogs.
- Infected prairie dogs were sold as pets, which then infected humans (see photo below) and other pets.
- At the time of this infection the CDC knew little about the disease.
- Indiana officials were quick to react and 41 quarantines were eventually issued after measures were taken to locate and euthanize infected animals.
- Prairie dogs seemed to be both the victim of the monkeypox and the vector for human infection.
- Such exotic animals are frequently sold at "swap meets" in Indiana.



Close-up of monkeypox lesions on the arm and leg of a female child. (Photo source unknown)

Six easy ways you can help stop the spread of invasive species:

- Verify that the plants you are buying for your yard or garden are not invasive. Replace invasive plants in your garden with non-invasive alternatives. Ask your local nursery staff for help in identifying invasive plants!
- When boating, clean your boat thoroughly before transporting it to a different body of water.
- Clean your boots before you hike in a new area to get rid of hitchhiking weed seeds and pathogens.
- Don't "pack a pest" when traveling. Fruits and vegetables, plants, insects and animals can carry pests or become invasive themselves. Be sure to clean your bags and boots and throw out any food when you travel from place to place.
- Don't release aquarium fish and plants, live bait or other exotic animals into the wild. If you plan to own an exotic pet, do your research and plan ahead to make sure you can commit to looking after it.
- Volunteer at your local park, refuge or other wildlife area to help remove invasive species. Help educate others about the threat.

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