

**Guiding Principles (as identified during the June 2018 ANS Task Force meeting):**

- The Non-indigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (as amended by the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 and collectively referred to as the Act) directs the ANS Task Force to “develop and implement a program for waters of the United States to prevent the introduction and dispersal of ANS; to monitor, control and study such species; and to disseminate related information.” It should be recognized that the ANS Task Force serves to coordinate these functions, while the individual organizations, regional panels, and subcommittees constituting the ANS Task Force membership implement the program.
- Coordination is the primary function of the ANS Task Force; its role should be to provide resources and guidance on ANS priorities to Federal agencies, States and regions, such that an ANS program for waters of the United States is consistent with a national emphasis and coordinated across jurisdictions.
- The ANS Task Force should serve as a forum to receive recommendations from the regional panels on matters related to ANS and work within its organizational structure to address these recommendations.
- The ANS Task Force should review individual member accomplishments in order to survey the ANS landscape, identify gaps and opportunities, and make recommendations on how to fulfil ANS management needs.
- The ANS Task Force should identify potential gaps in policies or authorities and raise awareness with Congress and the Administration regarding these ANS needs.
- The ANS Task Force Strategic Plan should identify what can be accomplished as a unified organization, yet highlight how individual member activities roll up to advance a collective and national need.
- The plan should present feasible strategies and outputs that can be implemented within the next five years.
- Member and regional panel reporting should focus on how the work products and guidance developed under this Plan have improved their operations, thus showcasing the value of the ANS Task Force.

## **Goal 1: Coordinate a national ANS program for waters of the United States**

Goal Description: Maximize the organizational effectiveness of the ANS Task Force by establishing effective processes that create opportunities for members and participants to work collaboratively across agency and organizational lines.

### **Objective 1: Strengthen ANS Task Force operations to provide effective communication, information sharing, and decision making**

Strategies:

- Hold regular ANS Task Force meetings that have a focused agenda and specific outcomes that advance strategic plan goals, objectives, and strategies
- Finalize ANS Task Force bylaws and an information packet for new and existing members
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of each ANS Task Force member in implementing the ANS Task Force goals and objectives
- Regularly update the ANS Task Force website, ensuring that information is accurate and up-to-date
- Ensure relevant ANS announcements and notifications are communicated in a timely manner
- Increase communication with industries, stakeholders, and other parties involved with, or impacted by, ANS and encourage their participation in ANS Task Force activities and committees

### **Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity at State and regional levels**

Strategies:

- Facilitate and provide technical assistance to develop or revise State and Interstate ANS Management Plans
- Communicate and report on the collective progress of implementing the ANS Task Force – approved State and Interstate ANS Management Plans
- Hold regular All-Panel meetings with representatives from all regional panels that focus on implementing regional components of the strategic plan, collaborating on shared priorities within the regions, and developing recommendations for the ANS Task Force
- Establish a process for ANS Task Force members to consider and provide feedback to recommendations brought forward by the regional panels
- Leverage staff resources and funds of ANS Task Force members to advance State and regional priorities

### **Objective 3: Construct a national assessment of the ANS Program for waters of the United States**

Strategies:

- Annually report on ANS Task Force Member and regional panel accomplishments that support the ANS Task Force Strategic Plan
- Evaluate accomplishment reports from the ANS Task Force members and regional panels for collaboration opportunities, gaps, and redundancies to ensure activities are efficient and effective
- Make ANS Task Force Member and regional panel accomplishment reports accessible online to provide information on completed or ongoing ANS projects in waters of the United States
- Report to Congress on a regular basis to communicate accomplishments and build support for ANS Task Force priorities
- Identify opportunities where Federal agency authorities align with ANS priority needs that can be met with additional resources

**Outcome: Well informed, engaged ANS Task Force members and regional panels that work collectively to advance the goals of the ANS Task Force Strategic Plan**

**Goal 2: Prevention the establishment of new and slow the spread of existing ANS in the waters of the United States**

Goal Description: Develop strategies to identify, assess, and manage the risk of ANS and their pathways to prevent new introductions in the waters of the United States

**Objective 1: Evaluate and facilitate consistent science-based risk assessment, risk management, and screening procedures to assess potential ANS and pathways for introduction**

Strategies:

- Evaluate and refine existing risk analysis and forecasting tools
- Identify gaps in the knowledge and scope of risk analysis and forecasting methods and offer recommendations to improve or expand these tools
- Complete guidelines for the use and interpretation of risk analysis
- Make operating procedures, risk assessment, risk management, and screening results accessible online

**Objective 2: Coordinate actions to reduce the likelihood of ANS introduction**

Strategies:

- Evaluate and prioritize pathways and species of concern
- Identify and address information gaps for pathways or species where there is insufficient information to make a priority determination
- Recommend revisions to statutory authorities, regulations, and programs to strengthen ANS prevention measures

**Objective 3: Develop guidance and encourage implementation of measures to manage high priority pathways and species**

Strategies:

- Develop national strategies for priority pathways (identified in Objective 2) that define the pathway and recommend risk management measures
- Assess new ANS detections to determine where prevention measures may be lacking or ineffective
- Work with ANS Task Force members to inform their invasive species regulatory actions, consistent with their authorities and responsibilities, to reduce risk of ANS introduction and spread
- Facilitate the implementation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) planning into work conducted, managed, or permitted by natural resource managers
- Expand the implementation of non-regulatory approaches (e.g., Best Management Practices, no trade agreements, public-private partnerships) to prevent the introduction or spread of ANS

**Outcome: Cooperative efforts between ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and partners that prevent new introductions and spread of existing ANS in the waters of the United States**

**Goal 3: Facilitate Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) efforts to identify and respond to new species detections within a timely manner to prevent their establishment and spread**

Goal Description: Develop strategies to inform a nationally coordinated EDRR approach

**Objective 1: Facilitate survey and monitoring efforts to detect and report new sightings of ANS**

Strategies:

- Assess the effectiveness of existing survey and monitoring initiatives and identify gaps in coverage (e.g. taxonomic groups and monitoring programs)
- Develop and support the use of standardized protocols for surveys and monitoring to ensure consistency in methods and ensure timely notification of new species detections to the correct authority
- Employ horizon scanning to identify high-priority areas for targeted monitoring efforts and identify lead authorities for each area should a response be needed
- Increase the capacity of the USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species database to serve as a national EDRR alert system, including distributing notifications about ANS detected in priority areas to inform management responses
- Support and help build capacity for regional and State citizen science ANS training and reporting programs
- Enlist industry stakeholders to survey for ANS as part of their operations (e.g., foresters, transportation, ecotourism)

**Objective 2: Develop processes to rapidly assess new species detections and determine appropriate management actions**

Strategies:

- Maintain the ANS Task Force Expert Database and use it to identify and address gaps in ANS taxonomic or management expertise
- Develop decisional tools to translate patterns of positive eDNA detections into risk profiles interpretable by natural resource managers
- Identify available management options for rapid response based on particular circumstances associated with the occurrence of species
- Improve decisional tools that establish threshold criteria and provide guidelines for when, how, and by whom rapid response efforts should be taken
- Identify leads at national, regional, and state levels to evaluate if response to a new invasion is warranted and technically feasible based on the characteristics of the species and location

**Objective 3: Facilitate the development of capacities to respond rapidly to invasions**

Strategies:

- Standardize existing rapid response plans and templates
- Support development of additional rapid response plans for aquatic invasions based on taxonomic groups, jurisdictional authorities, and pathways
- Maintain a list of agency, partner, and stakeholder EDRR capabilities and coordinate with these entities on their assets (staff, equipment, authorities) to implement a response
- Develop agreements that allow sharing of capabilities and assets across jurisdictions and regions in implementing a response
- Facilitate Incident Command System processes by providing training and identifying personnel and assets that can be used to implement a response
- Identify obstacles and explore opportunities to establish an emergency rapid response fund
- Identify environmental processes and permits that may delay response efforts and recommend solutions to ensure a more timely response

**Outcome: ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and partners are equipped to detect new ANS early in the invasion process and prepared to rapidly respond to prevent the establishment or spread of ANS**

**Goal 4: Control established ANS and restore native species and ecosystems**

Goal Description: Facilitate capabilities to control established ANS populations and restore impacted habitats

**Objective 1: Coordinate the development and implementation of ANS Control and Management Plans**

Strategies:

- Evaluate viability of ANS Task Force approved ANS Control and Management plans. For all active plans, determine a lead entity to report annually on plan progress
- Identify priorities and timetable for development of new ANS Control and Management plans
- Provide technical support and expertise for development of new ANS Control and Management plans

**Objective 2: Identify and communicate effective control and restoration techniques**

Strategies:

- Make ANS control protocols and Best Management Practices accessible to ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and partners
- Encourage restoration of areas following ANS eradication or control efforts; develop guidelines to mitigate impacts of ANS during restoration activities
- Develop a reporting system to document control and restoration operations

**Objective 3: Identify gaps in available control and restoration measures and encourage innovation**

Strategies:

- Identify gaps where no control or restoration options are available
- Identify and partner with non-federal entities that have the resources and expertise to advance control and restoration measures
- Facilitate information sharing of newly developed control and restoration techniques

**Outcome: Cooperative efforts between ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and their partners that suppress or eradicate ANS populations and restore native ecosystems**

## **Goal 5: Facilitate research on ANS threats, impacts, and controls**

Goal Description: Facilitate research in support of implementing an ANS Program for waters of the United States by ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and partners

### **Objective 1: Identify and prioritize research needs, including emerging technologies**

Strategies:

- Promote investigation of the effect of environmental stressors (e.g. climate change) and synergistic effects on ANS invasion
- Encourage better understanding of the environmental and socio-economic impacts from ANS along with the cost and benefits of management efforts
- Inventory existing risk assessment, risk management, detection, and control tools and prioritize other research needs for ANS management

### **Objective 2: Facilitate research activities to assist ANS management efforts**

Strategies:

- Secure funding and administer a competitive research grant program as envisioned in the Act
- Leverage agency resources to conduct priority research
- Develop a communications plan to promote priority research needs within the scientific community
- Consider priority ANS research needs while evaluating future funding requests

### **Objective 3: Track and disseminate study results to incorporate into ANS management decisions and activities**

Strategies:

- Share new scientific information and results from prioritized research with members of the ANS Task Force, regional panels, and appropriate partners
- Make research results and scientific papers from prioritized ANS research accessible online to provide information on completed or ongoing ANS projects in waters of the United States

**Outcome: Ongoing research pursued by ANS Task Force members, regional panels, and their partners that supports prioritized needs from all aspects of ANS management**

**Goal 6: Conduct Outreach and Education to increase awareness concerning the threats of ANS, emphasizing the impacts and importance of prevention and containment**

Goal Description: Develop strategies to increase awareness and change behaviors responsible for introducing and spreading ANS in waters of the United States

**Objective 1: Evaluate ANS communication, education, and outreach efforts to ensure they are consistent and effective**

Strategies:

- Assess the effectiveness of existing ANS campaigns, ANS Task Force voluntary guidelines, and public marketing tools
- Identify and promote social science research to better understand how to achieve well-defined change in behaviors that prevent the introduction and spread of ANS
- Develop a long-range communications plan that provides guidance and tools for the development, implementation, and evaluation of ANS outreach campaigns and identifies target audiences and tailored messages to encourage ANS prevention behaviors

**Objective 2: Develop processes to share information and consistently implement ANS outreach strategies**

Strategies:

- Identify and engage members to participate in a community of practice that advance outreach strategies developed by the ANS Task Force
- Develop a process to share existing ANS outreach campaigns and materials and to analyze evaluation data from practitioners
- Identify and prioritize needs for outreach campaigns and other education materials
- Facilitate and support the implementation of outreach strategies and programs by ANS Task Force members, regional panels, partners, and stakeholders to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of ANS within priority pathways

**Objective 3: Raise the profile and communicate priorities of the ANS Task Force**

Strategies:

- Provide educational materials and briefings to legislators and agency decision makers to communicate ANS priorities
- Share ANS Task Force meeting summaries and outcomes with agency leadership
- Participate in National Invasive Species Awareness Week to educate the public on the impacts and management of ANS and priority needs

**Outcome: Consistent and coordinated outreach campaigns and materials that increase awareness and change behaviors to prevent the introduction and spread of ANS**