2025 Binational Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species Forum

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Adventure Center,
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Interstate Early Detection and Rapid Response Communication update

Overview of intended outcomes

Lindsay Chadderton (TNC) & Sam Tank (GLC)

- The Great Lakes Regional AIS Response Framework Communication Plan (hereafter, called "communication plan") is a document that lays out best practices for communication new AIS to regional partners, and is not a jurisdictional requirement.
    - The geographic scope of the plan covers the Great Lakes basin and bodies of waters within the drainage basin of the Great Lakes
    - While the communication plan is designed to cover plants, algae, invertebrates, and other non-fish vertebrates. Communication regarding fish should follow the Invasive Fishes Communications Protocol
    - The communication plan does not cover AIS detected via eDNA
- In the Interstate Early Detection and Rapid Response (IEDRR) Phase 4.5 project, a part of the grant objective is to revise and update the regional communication plan and add communication protocols to eDNA and metabarcoding detections
- The goal of this meeting today is to talk through the current process, understand how jurisdictions have utilized the communication plan in the past, and how can we update the plant to better fit agencies' needs. It is also important to have an idea of what information is necessary to be communicated and how timely of a manner
- Chadderton guided attendees through the timeline of the response process and highlighted the Novel AIS Detection Description Form. Past case studies were used to develop the communication plan
- There was discussion on whether the goal of the communication plan is to also inform new state detections (i.e. EFB), even if it is already in the basin
    - A reason to communicate for that kind of example would be to let your neighbors know of species spread and keeping others informed (even if it does not need immediate action)

Traditional sampling case studies

Red swamp crayfish in Michigan

Justin Bopp & Kathleen Qubedeaux Michigan DNR, Ceci Weibert Michigan EGLE

- Michigan specifically opted to use the communication plan for their red swamp crayfish (RSC) detection
- Bopp provided an overview of the hatchery where the detection took place

- On July 2025, hatchery staff reported two dead RSC
    - A few days later, 15 minnow traps were set in three ponds, and one live female RSC was captured
- Michigan decided to not communicate step one of the plan, since the hatchery is a highly sensitive area and a very active site. They also wanted to pursue additional trapping and there were questions surrounding source of the RSC
- Michigan staff established a state command team, with Kahleen as the lead
- Michigan DNR and Michigan EGLE set 165 traps in all ponds at Wolf Lake State Hatchery
    - Only native crayfish burrows were observed
    - Pond 20 was the only pond that RSC were observed
- Michigan staff determined at step three of the communication plan that yes, this was a regional threat and that regional resources and actions were not required based on current information and this would be a Michigan only response
    - This detection was determined to be a potentially high-risk pathway due to hitchhikers in the bait trade
- On July 23, Michigan sent along an embargoed press release along with RSC detection timeline
- They did not send partners the New Detection form in the plan's suggested five business days but rather eight
    - The press release was sent to partners out the following day
- For step four of the communication plan, Michigan staff provided many regional resources such as a narrative description of the detection and all elements of step 4 (except the risk assessment) were communicated to partners
- Michigan staff are currently in step five of the communication plan

<u>Prickly water lily in Minnesota</u>

Kelly Pennington, MN DNR

- In 2024, Minnesota DNR was notified by a partner of the interesting plant in Ramsey County, which is not in the Great Lakes watershed
- The plant was a new species that staff had not heard of before and DNR had to work with botanical experts to determine an accurate species confirmation. The species confirmation process may take longer than finding a well-known species like RSC
- It was confirmed that the prickly water lily was localized to the regional watershed
- Species experts recommended hand removal. Based on limited knowledge on the plant's biology, they did not think the plant would overwinter in Minnesota, but it was found in lake again in 2025
- Response risk assessment for prickly water lily is available on Minnesota DNR website
- Once found, staff did communicate to regional partners (the Great Lakes Panel, local counties, and others). They asked if people had information on this species and used the communication as an opportunity to lean on colleague expertise
- DNR staff are not certain of plant's pathway of introduction

- This detection was considered a local response and not communicated as a regional threat. Staff used the existence of the communication plan to highlight the need to share information, even if exact steps were not followed

Hydrilla in Ontario

Francine MacDonald, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR)

- Ontario is not a member of the EDRR core team (only an observer), but they try to be an active participant as much as possible
- Hydrilla is not federally regulated in Canada but there is a duty to immediately notify the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) of any new suspected plant pest in an area where it is not known
- OMNR staff received report of possible hydrilla from the University of Waterloo on July 3rd, 2025
    - That same day, they shared photos with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for visual confirmation
    - On July 3rd, it was confirmed as hydrilla and the OMNR's Response Framework for New Invasive Species was engaged
- Hydrilla was found in a wetland cell adjacent (but technically separated) from Lake Erie
- The next day, OMNRF staff surveyed the population's spread and notified CFIA of the detection and asked them to confirm the species by DNA sequencing
    - On July 19th, DNA sequencing is confirmed
- The next few weeks reports of hydrilla from iNatralist come in
- From July 23rd- through the 26th, the detection is communicated with key Canadian partners and First Nations are notified. On the 26th, the detection is communicated to the region as a letter is sent to the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers and the ANS Task Force
- Following the regional letter, OMNR engaged with state agencies (MI, OH, ID) for expertise on response and management
    - OMNR director requests MI EGLE for assistance with surveillance
    - A joint surveillance operation of six agencies is enacted and no detection of hydrilla is found outside the Hillman Marsh West Cell
- OMNR staff held a conference call with local conservation agencies and First Nations
- Public access to Hillam Marsh was closed until present and closure of controlled waterfowl hunting areas remains
    - Staff held a public communication with conservation authorities and made a provincial media release (worked with Invasive Species Centre to draft)
- Throughout August, a hydrilla working group was formed to evaluate response options. ProcellaCOR (which has been used for water soldier in Canada) was determined to be best management option and on October 17th, herbicide application was initiated. This was not formally communicated

Hydrilla in Illinois,

Mindy Barnett, Illinois DNR

- Illinois created an EDRR plan for hydrilla in 2019
- In 2019, the first hydrilla infestation was detected in a small private pond by a consultant in a, which greatly complicated the response
- IL DNR staff were largely unfamiliar with the IEDRR communication plan, so most communication was largely informal. Staff noted it would have been advantageous to understand how to communicate the information out in a timely manner
    - Currently the hydrilla in the pond is no longer detectable
- In 2024, there was a large infestation found in Ginger Creek in IL with 10.5 acres of hydrilla found
    - Ginger Creek does eventually does lead to the Great Lakes
- Illinois is applying for grants for multi-year response and application
- Mindy highlighted that this detection and the following communication response has been talked about a lot in previous regional meetings
- Claire Snyder has been leading hydrilla response effort

Discussion

- Meeting participants were encouraged to think on how much communication is needed at each step of the plan and is the response description form necessary at each step?
    - Michigan noted that the form is not necessary in the initial step and may be duplicative from what is in an embargoed press release.
        - There are a lot of time sensitive steps already and condensing would help with the timeliness of communication
        - The communication plan has some guidance on the press release, and each jurisdiction will have their own press release protocols
    - Minnesota added that it may be good to step back and see the communications plan as a goal. It is good to be mindful that these are not requirements
        - Minnesota does not do embargoed press releases and is very limited on what can be shared with partners before a release goes out
    - In the invasive carp communications protocol, there is language on confidentiality. It might be worthwhile adding similar wording to this plan
    - The group was asked where in the steps do you start informing people if the detection is not a major threat, on private land, or exact location is not known
        - From a detection standpoint, it is still good to communicate detections on private land. Is it good to communicate to private landowners that management can be completed with no cost to them
        - CWMAs have helped with conversations with landowners, as they are not seen as “government”
    - The group agreed that the plan’s goal of sending communication within “five business days” of detection does not need to be followed exactly but is necessary to help guide urgency. It may not always be practical, but it is good to hold each other accountable to a sense
        - It should be clearly stated that the “five days” recommendation is guidance, and every situation can be different
        - While it might not be necessary to focus on the “five days” but rather the focus should be that all jurisdictions should be reporting communications

    - In the plan, we should review and consider a preamble about reasons, rationale and benefits of communication. It might be good to rename the plan to be clear it is a guidance document and maybe add a checklist of things to consider when communicating
        - We need to think about how we communicate the benefits of using this plan
- Participants noted that when a novel species is detected, the communication timeline will be extended just out of the necessity of needing a valid species confirmation
- There are several communication plans in the Great Lakes: The Great Lakes Regional AIS Response Framework Communications Plan (for non-fish), the Great Lakes Fishery Commission plan (for fish), USFWS (relaying EDM results), individual jurisdictional plans. How can relay how these are interconnected and when each should be engaged?
    - The EDRR webpage is public facing but can be updated and as new people join and require additional context. We can all do a better job to inform people of the existing Great Lakes plans
- It would be good to add a part on the communication form about source (or potential source) of introduction. The source of introduction is good to communicate even if there is uncertainty!
    - Participants expressed caution to add this to communication form, as the pathway can be a bit sensitive and jurisdictions may not be ready to put into words what that source is. As an alternative, maybe the prompt is "can you share what the pathway is? If so, is there risk to other jurisdictions?"
        - For communicating about the pathway, we might want to connect with the GLFC Law Committee about the protocols that they have in place to deal with potential interjurisdictional violations/ issues
    - It was suggested that pathways risk be highlighted in the first few steps of the plan, as that is what people may need to take immediate action on. For example, when Michigan received notification regarding hydrilla in Ontario, they surveyed their own nearby waterfowl areas
- Can we add better language in the response plan and communication plan to what is considered "high-risk"?