

Inaugural Meeting of National Invasive Species Council

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The inaugural meeting of the National Invasive Species Council was held on July 22 at the International Trade Center in Washington D.C. The Administration brought out its heavy guns in support of Executive Order 13112 (EO) and its newly declared war on invasive exotics. The opening remarks and charge to the Council were given by the Council's Co-Chairs; Secretary Babbitt of Interior, Secretary Glickman of Agriculture, and Secretary Daley of Commerce. The meeting was temporarily disrupted during Secretary Glickman's remarks due to a reported bomb threat in the building. The meeting reconvened after a brief break when the decision to clear the building was tabled.

The Secretaries gave their general assessment of the problem and statements about the role of the National Council. Specific examples of on-going actions were given. Glickman mentioned progress on current pheromone trap research to combat the Asian longhorn beetle. Daley mentioned progress related to policy advances in ballast water management and important up-coming meetings. Babbitt's remarks were most noteworthy. He recognized the immensity of the issue and the present lack of necessary resources to combat it. He noted how late we were as a nation recognizing the scope of this insidious scourge, how little had been done, and how big an enigma it still remains to the average citizen.

Secretary Babbitt called for the Council and all of its supporters to transcend the Executive Order, realizing that the clock is ticking, and that the work of the Council would go beyond the longevity of this Administration. He stated that the national management plan was due to be completed in about a year. He advocated the use of a white list wherein introduced species are presumed guilty until proven innocent. He stressed the need for risk assessment which is called for in the Executive Order. Secretary Babbitt then asked members of the National Council to introduced themselves. The Council includes representatives from all the Departments referenced in the Executive Order with additional appointments expected.

The scientific perspective was given by Dr. Dan Simberloff, Professor and Nancy Gore Hunger Chair of Excellence in Environmental Studies Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, University of Tennessee. His theme echoed Babbitt's comments, noting that our successes were few. He said that scientists and professionals in the field could get the job done if there was sufficient political will. He alluded to the inherent failure in approaching the problem piecemeal by just reacting to it episodically. He contended that the war could be won. He advised that we look at successes elsewhere where model national exotic species

programs have been instituted. Dr. Simberloff stressed the need for diligence in assessment and monitoring, citing that many of today's seemingly harmless exotics may be tomorrow's toughest pests.

Bill Brown, Science Advisory to the Secretary of Interior facilitated the second half of the meeting which addressed more of the nuts and bolts responsibilities of the Council and its function. There were brief reports given on the Council's duties and plans for accomplishment. They included reports on NEPA, information collection and management, planning from local to regional levels, monitoring and evaluating impacts, international cooperation, and the national management plan.

The national management plan discussion focused on what is required under the EO. Some of the topics included the establishment of a risk assessment process, the review of existing laws and recommendations for new laws, and federal agency responsibilities. Specific actions were cited under Sec 2. Federal Agency Duties regarding: (i) prevention, (ii) detection and rapid response, (iii) monitoring (iv) restoration (v) research and (vi) and promoting public awareness.

Sally Yozell, Deputy Secretary of NOAA, discussed the establishment of the Advisory Committee to the Council. Its role will be to support the deliberations of the Council and advise it. A primary task will be to oversee implementation of it duties. This Advisory Committee is expected to be comprised of approximately twenty-five stakeholders possibly serving 1 to 2 year terms. It may meet 3 or 4 times per year, and preferably before each Council meeting. The Advisory Committee will be made up of individuals with balanced view points and sufficiently distributed geographically throughout the U.S. A purpose of the Advisory Committee will be to foster formation of smaller working groups in all regions. Announcement for nominations will soon be placed in the Federal Register. Also, staff positions will also be created to address the many objectives to be identified in the national management plan. These positions also will be announced in the Federal Register.

The National Council meeting concluded after allowing for public comment. An hour long reception provided opportunity for discussion and networking. This inaugural meeting provided incentive for immediate action in developing the national management plan. The clock is ticking with the plan due out in a year. EPPC participation on the Advisory Council should be a priority, and requires our coordination. Keep an eye on the Federal Register for pertinent information and announcements.

and reliably; (iv) provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; (v) conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction and provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and (vi) promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them; and

(3) not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere unless, pursuant to guidelines that it has prescribed, the agency has determined and made public its determination that the benefits of such actions clearly outweigh the potential harm caused by invasive species; and that all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm will be taken in conjunction with the actions.

(b) Federal agencies shall pursue the duties set forth in this section in consultation with the Invasive Species Council, consistent with the Invasive Species Management Plan and in cooperation with stakeholders, as appropriate, and, as approved by the Department of State, when Federal agencies are working with international organizations and foreign nations.

Sec. 3. Invasive Species Council.

(a) An Invasive Species Council (Council) is hereby established whose members shall include the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Council shall be Co-Chaired by the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Commerce. The Council may invite additional Federal agency representatives to be members, including representatives from sub-cabinet bureaus or offices with significant responsibilities concerning invasive species, and may prescribe special procedures for their participation. The Secretary of the Interior shall, with concurrence of the Co-Chairs, appoint an Executive Director of the Council and shall provide the staff and administrative support for the Council.

(b) The Secretary of the Interior shall establish an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App., to provide information and advice for consideration by the Council, and shall, after consultation with other members of the Council, appoint members of the advisory committee representing stakeholders. Among other things, the advisory committee shall recommend plans and actions at local, tribal, State, regional, and ecosystem-based levels to achieve the goals and objectives of the Management Plan in section 5 of this order. The advisory committee shall act in cooperation with stakeholders and existing organizations addressing invasive species. The Department of the Interior shall provide the administrative and financial support for the advisory committee.

Sec. 4. Duties of the Invasive Species Council.

The Invasive Species Council shall provide national leadership regarding invasive species, and shall:

(a) oversee the implementation of this order and see that the Federal agency activities concerning invasive species are coordinated, complementary, cost-efficient, and effective, relying to the extent feasible and appropriate on existing organizations addressing invasive species, such as the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, and