

Weeds Across Borders Conference IV in Banff, Alberta

by Bonnie Harper-Lore, Restoration Ecologist, Federal Highway Administration, USDOT

Much of the trip was unexpected: rainy and cool temperatures, unfrozen lakes, \$125 Park Pass to drive to Banff from airport, fire alarm evacuation from hotel on first night, poor exchange rate, \$5/gal gas, and minimal wildlife sightings. The rest of the unexpected was all positive!

I had no idea that the Canadian Rockies would be SO spectacular! The views were stunning. The people were so friendly. The food was always yummy. And no, this was *not* my vacation, rather the conference experience at the Banff Park Lodge. A group from the United States volunteered to host the WAB 2010 in the eastern U.S. The standard for conference agenda, networking, and context will be difficult to match.

As in previous Weeds Across Borders Conferences in Tucson, Minneapolis, and Hermosillo, the agenda showcased weed research, BMPs, early detection, rapid response, partnerships, new issues including climate change, and national status reports from Mexico, Canada, and the United States. The scientists, practitioners, and policy-makers were encouraged to share information and to network. The conference concept continues to make sense. During the week the group agreed to an *ad hoc* idea, The Banff Accord (see below), a signed agreement to continue to reach across jurisdictional borders to cooperatively prevent and control the spread of invasive plants.

As for conference content, I will try to share the many papers and my notes in bullet format. Please contact me if you need to connect with the author. I have that information to share until the conference proceedings are published.

STATUS REPORTS

Claire Wilson, Canadian Food Inspection

Agency: developing a pre-import screening tool and creating black and white plant lists for intentional introductions. Unheard of!

George Beck, Invasive Species Advisory

Council/USA: ISAC has written a white paper on invasive species – all taxa – and suggests a disconnect between government and ground.

Francisco Espinosa-Garcia, Instituto

de Ecologia: In Mexico, awareness lacking at state and local levels. No weed control coordination. Government is reactionary only.

Ian McDonnell, North American Plant

Protection Organization: Will deal with risk species at country of origin. Coming, an alert system & “Plants for planting” to be certified.

COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Anna Lyon – Okanogan County, WA

working with Ferry County BC to share inventories and treatments with State and Provincial transportation support. Billboards in progress.

Merci Hillis, Gitksan First Nation

is partnering with BC Ministry of Forests. First Nations can now manage many infested acres through a single agency delivery model.

Hilary Oles, TNC works with NYSDOT and other agencies on demonstration control projects of all species taxa, not just invasive plants.

Nelroy Jackson (NIWAW Chair) reported on the annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week that has evolved over nine years and has increased awareness at the federal level.

APPLIED RESEARCH

Lisa Surber, Montana Sheep Institute:

Targeted grazing results vary with type of animal, intensity of event, and timing. Success shown on leafy spurge, knapweed and toadflax.

Raj Prasad, Pacific Forestry Centre:

BC top problems include Scotch broom, gorse, Daphne (spurge laurel), English ivy and Himalayan blackberry. 15 years of research and conclusions.

Mara Johnson, Center for Invasive Plant

Management: Flowering rush now in both countries and threat to Columbia River system. Flathead Lake partnership research.

Anne Legare, Agri-Food Canada: Weed Science Society of America is developing issue papers to increase awareness. Ex.) fire management costs (\$1.3B/year) increased by cheatgrass!

NEW ISSUES

Sylvan Kaufman, Adkins Arboretum:

Showed invasion of Callery pear on Route 50. Promoted “Enhancing Delaware Highways” effort. Promotes native alternative plants.

Judy F. Shearer, USACOE:

Explained new version of the Aquatic Plant Identification System (APIS). It runs on PDAs and smartphones. Useful for aquatic weeds ID!

Richard Old (University of Idaho ret.):

Demonstrated identification tool using few characteristics, easy enough for children. Can do county level identification work!

FIELD TOUR on second day: During the day, opportunities for three presenters were given. Adrienne Peterson of Sublette County, WY, explained gravel pit certification. Bob Parson of the Park County Weed and Pest Control District in Wyoming later explained how Weed Management Areas began in the

The Banff Accord

Purpose: The economic and ecological threat of weeds (invasive plants and noxious weeds) continues to increase without respect to jurisdictional borders. The scientists, practitioners, and policy makers in attendance view cooperation, collaboration, and communication as part of a North American strategy to address this issue of continental concern. In order to prevent and control the spread of weeds, we agree to share information including but not limited to:

technical transfer, training tools, status assessments, public awareness, best management practices, and research results. By pulling together, Canada, Mexico, and the United States will save time and resources far into the future. Signed May 30, 2008



U.S. Dawn LaFleur of Glacier National park reported on her park in the U.S. working with their Canadian counterpart, Waterton Lakes National Park. They focus on prevention, control and native plant restoration. We visited a gravel staging site, a coal mine reclamation, and a parkland restoration. Invasive plants plague disturbance sites, but successes were obvious throughout the Banff National Park. Park Specialists briefed us throughout.

EVENING BANQUET: "13 Ways to Juggle Our Conception of Invasive Species" by Brendon Larson. A thought-provoking treatise with actual juggling to make his points! The networking continued.

EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE (EDRR)

Cory Lindgren, University of Manitoba: Described predictive and spatial modeling of invasive species.

Randy Westbrook/Leslie Mehrhoff on Early Detection: EDRR in progress. Eradication difficult. California has eradicated 14 species in 100 years. Partnerships critical! Invasive Plant Atlas of New England founded a 6-state partnership in 2001. Kudzu is now found in northeast Massachusetts! In the IPANE system, anyone can report!!!

Al Tasker, USDA-APHIS Weeds Unit: The Federal Incident Command System might have application to weed detection. Seven new weeds under consideration for Federal Noxious Weed list. A Federal Import Quarantine Order on Old World Climbing Fern just released!

Crystal Klym, Invasive Plant Council of BC: 200 agencies involved. They use spotters and specialists for EDRR and are developing a Provincial Invasive Plant List.

BEST MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND PRACTICES

Scott Millar, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development: Alberta is developing a North American plant classification system for industry. This parallels the ranking work already accomplished by the U.S. NatureServe effort.

Kim Mackenzie, AMEC Earth & Environmental: Working for the oil and gas industries, they created a web-based tracking tool that allows evaluation of control work! Their weed management plans are considered living documents. Cost is no issue. Need more land managers to do the work! Any DOT have a standard for spray reporting?????

Val Miller, Ministry of Forests and Range, BC: "Google" invasive alien plant program. There are 14 bioregions in BC alone. Maps of inventory displays for anyone to use.

Heike Vibrans, Professor, University of Mexico-Toluca: She manages, single-handedly, a Weeds of Mexico website with 850 species. Distribution maps to be added shortly. Weeds on the move in Mexico include buffel grass, water hyacinth, and mustards.

ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

Lewis Ziska, Agricultural Research Service, USDA: Lew used a Jurassic Park quote to underscore the importance of climate change and increased weed spread. He

reported that the existing 8M acres of kudzu, 60M acres of cheatgrass, and 8 M acres of star thistle will expand as CO² increases. See www.climateandfarming.org.

Bruce Bennett, Yukon Dept. of the Environment: Since WWII, rivers, pipelines and highways have been vectors for weed spread in the far North. Sweet clover has been spreading since 1935. Roadside grading appears to exacerbate weed spread in the Yukon.

Jenny Ericson, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuges: She described their volunteer training system. They use predictive modeling to place volunteers in hot-spots. Of their 96.2 M acres, 2.4M are already infested with weeds. Canada thistle and feral pigs are worst problems.

PUBLIC POLICY AND AWARENESS

Polly Knowlton Crockett, University of Calgary: see www.natureground.org/ An excellent example of community and student education. Terrific signage!

Ana Carolina Coelho Maran & Kat Shrier, Colorado State: An educational approach to water-consuming weeds like tamarisk & their threat to water supplies.

Indira Singh, USDA/APHIS/PPQ: The number one goal of APHIS is exclusion. They monitor pathways: food & spice, Asian medicines, handicrafts, hitchhikers, and the aquarium trade. But since 2003 border inspections are done by Homeland Security.

Make plans now for the 2010 WAB V Conference to be held somewhere in the eastern United States!

Welcome, TIPPC

Texas has joined more than 25 states with organizations established specifically to protect native species from invasive plants and pests. The Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council (TIPPC) has 96 charter members, including representatives of state and federal agencies, local governments, higher education, landowners, conservation organizations and the green industry. The Council was born at the second statewide Invasive Plant Conference held last November and approved its bylaws and appointed a steering committee earlier this year.

Texas is under attack on every front by a host of plants and pests from exotic places: Tamarisk, giant salvinia, hydrilla, emerald ash borer, channeled applesnail and many others threaten the health of Texas' native ecosystems by decreasing biodiversity, threatening the survival of native

plants and animals, and interfering with ecosystem functions like fire, nutrient flow, and flooding.

The objectives of TIPPC are to promote understanding and awareness of invasive plant and pest impacts in Texas, provide a forum for the exchange of scientific, educational and technical information, and support research and restoration activities that reduce the impacts of invasive plants and pests in Texas.

According to acting Board President, Damon Waitt, Senior Botanist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, "Forming the Texas Council will not only help Texas pull together, it will also foster national cooperation to address a threat that knows no geopolitical boundaries."

www.texasinvasives.org