

MISSISSIPPI AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES TASK FORCE

Tuesday, October 19, 2004

9:05 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. CST

Minutes of Meeting

Participants: Phil Bass and Robbie Wilbur (MDEQ); Dale Diaz (MDMR); Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary (SARP/Louisiana Sea Grant); Jim Lipe and Gene Robertson (MDAC); Dennis Riecke and Ron Garavelli (MDWFP); Tom Herrington (FDA/GoMP); Stephanie Showalter (Sea Grant Law Center); John Madsen (GRI-MSU); Brent Bailey (MS Farm Bureau); Jim Avery and Craig Tucker (MSU National Warmwater Aquaculture Center); Harriet Perry (GCRL-USM); Douglas Meffert, Richard Campanella, and Alysia Kravitz (Center for Bioenvironmental Research).

I. OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION

P. Bass called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m. CST.

P. Bass welcomed the Task Force and gave a general overview of the Task Force structure and goals for the meeting. He explained that Governors Musgrove and Barbour asked Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to coordinate the effort in identifying aquatic invasive species (AIS) issues and developing a plan for Mississippi. The five state agencies currently involved with the development of the Mississippi AIS Management Plan are: MDEQ (lead), Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP), Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC), Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), and the Department of Health (MDH). MDH, however, does not currently have a representative appointed to the Task Force.

The goals of this meeting were to further develop the Mississippi AIS Task Force and to start developing the management plan. P. Bass explained that Governor Barbour, DEQ, and other state agency officials decided that the most cost-effective way to develop Mississippi's plan would be to start with the Louisiana plan and modify it to meet Mississippi's needs. R. Campanella and A. Kravitz from the Center for Bioenvironmental Research (CBR) at Tulane University and Xavier Universities were chosen to lead the Mississippi effort because they coordinated and wrote the Louisiana management plan. R. Campanella and A. Kravitz will also serve as Task Force meeting facilitators.

II. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: ONGOING INVASIVE SPECIES ACTIVITIES IN MISSISSIPPI

R. Campanella stated that the goal for completion of this project is to hold four or five meetings to produce a single Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan for the state of Mississippi by June 2006. The plan will need to be developed according to the guidelines of the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force in Washington, D.C., so that eventually some funding could be received from the federal government. In order to establish a baseline of knowledge, R. Campanella asked each attendee to introduce himself/herself and give a brief description of any ongoing invasive species management or research projects within their respective organizations:

- H. Perry of the Gulf Coast Research Lab described three current projects, the first of which is the now completed study of a recent invasion of exotic jellyfish in the Gulf of Mexico. The second project is an ongoing total inventory of marine organisms in Mississippi though extensive literature reviews (both white and gray literature.) The third project is a Rapid Assessment of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, which took place in September 2004. Most invasives found and identified were plants, but the two invasive animals collected were *Corbicula* and tilapia.
- D. Riecke of MDWFP stated that he is involved with issuing/reviewing aquaculture permits and his agency is working on establishing a statewide early alert system for invasive fish sightings. His agency is also working with MDAC's Bureau of Plant Industry to combat *Salvinia molesta* (giant salvinia) in a 40-acre lake near Hattiesburg. The lake is being treated with chemicals to kill the salvinia.
- C. Tucker of Mississippi State University's National Warmwater Aquaculture Center is involved in conducting research to support the catfish industry in Mississippi. He and his colleagues are not involved in invasive species research per se, but rather are currently engaged in several projects to develop new management procedures for catfish producers so that the industry would not have to rely upon invasive species for effective pond management.
- J. Avery of Mississippi State University's National Warmwater Aquaculture Center is working with MDAC to develop soft screens to keep animals in the aquaculture ponds. He is also working with farmers to develop various options in pond management for control/eradication of a trematode that infects catfish. Currently the most effective method is to utilize Black Carp, which eat the snails that host the trematodes.
- B. Bailey of the Mississippi Farm Bureau (MFB) stated that his organization deals mainly with environmental issues related to agriculture. MFB is a non-profit member-owned organization that provides outreach opportunities.

- J. Lipe of MDAC described his agency's agriculture issues, such as cogongrass control and performing location assessments. The other arm of the MDAC regulates agriculture permits.
- D. Meffert of the CBR described the ongoing efforts to develop effective invasive species communication materials. Currently the CBR is creating a Citizens Guide to Invasive Species in Louisiana.
- T. Herrington of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Gulf of Mexico Program described FDA's concern with invasive species with in regard to the impacts on food. The FDA relies on the state to identify species that may get into the food market, such as oyster viruses (*Vibrio Cholera*).
- R. Lukens of GSMFC described his organization's involvement with the Aquatic Invasive Species Plan, both in Louisiana and Mississippi. In general, GSMFC provides a vehicle to coordinate multi state activities, one of which is invasive species. R. Lukens sits on the federal Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force as well as on the National Invasive Species Advisory Council, and he chairs the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel for ANS, of which Mississippi is a member. He recommended that a rapid response element be included in Mississippi's AIS plan in order to be eligible for federal funds.
- P. Bass of MDEQ stated that DEQ has no direct involvement with invasive species, however it is involved in many other environmental issues. MDWFP is required to put together a list of concerned species and DEQ currently has biologists in the field collecting species and recording their locations. He would like to see a collaborative effort in the Task Force to put the "concerned species list" together.
- S. Showalter with the Sea Grant Law Center at the University of Mississippi works with Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant, researching laws and legislation dealing with aquatic species. She volunteered to help provide information and research on the legislation and laws relative to developing a plan for Mississippi.
- J. Madsen with the GeoResources Institute (GRI) at Mississippi State University described several ongoing projects related to invasive species. One is a research and outreach coordination program working with the USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species program in Washington, D.C. Species topics include various aquatic plants and the cactus moth, which has made its way into the U.S. The GRI is involved in research collaborations with federal agencies to use remote sensing for detection and rapid response of invasive species. Also, GRI is developing a Web-based program for people to submit location information for invasives found in the field.
- D. Diaz with MDMR works with the Gulf of Mexico Regional Planning and participates in a two workgroups: (1) Education outreach workgroup and (2) Early detection/rapid response. He reported recently observing a jellyfish invasion from Pass Christian to the Gulfport Harbor. MDMR also performs sampling for harmful algal blooms in conjunction with the shellfish program, which is ongoing. MDMR spends about \$25,000 per year on Chinese tallow tree control within the coastal preserves, and an additional \$15,000 on cogongrass control on the coastal preserves. MDMR performs inter-jurisdictional fisheries sampling—a passive sampling network taking trawl, gillnet and oyster dredging samples and reporting anything out of the ordinary to MDWFP. MDMR's website provides a link to the federally sponsored "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!" program. This website provides information on what the public can do to prevent the spread of invasive species. MDMR also co-sponsors the Alabama-Mississippi Rapid Assessment Team (AMRAT) with GCRL and the Mobile Bay National Estuaries Program.
- M. O'Leary with SARP/Louisiana Sea Grant works with an alliance of thirteen states on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts as well as some inland states. SARP's goal is sustaining habitat. She is working with SARP in several areas, but a primary objective is to help coordinate the exchange of information between states in developing AIS management plans.
- R. Wilbur with the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) at MDEQ stated that his program is providing funding for the management plan.

R. Campanella then asked the group "for purposes of the management plan, how should Mississippi define aquatic species?" He explained that Louisiana expanded the traditional definition to include species that arrived by aquatic pathways. The expansion of the definition allowed Louisiana to be more inclusive and address a wider range of species as well as emphasize the role pathways play in invasive species introductions. After discussion, the group consensus was to keep a traditional definition of aquatic species, but expand the scope of the management plan to also address invasive species that (1) are associated with aquatic pathways, and (2) may impact other aquatic species and environments, even if the invasive is not itself aquatic.

III. OVERVIEW OF ANS TASK FORCE GUIDELINES AND GUIDED TOUR OF THE LOUISIANA AIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. Kravitz and R. Campanella gave an overview of the guidelines for management plans as provided by the federal ANS Task Force, and then explained how Louisiana chose to incorporate or address those guidelines in its management plan. (Reference handout entitled "Items for Inclusion in State Management Plan: Based on ANS Task Force Guidelines.")

IV. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

R. Campanella explained the first homework assignment to the Task Force and provided a handout entitled "Homework 1. Designing Mississippi's Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan." Task Force members should download the Louisiana management plan and review it with the perspective of how Mississippi's situation (geographical, biological, socio-economic, infrastructure, political) differs from Louisiana's, and how these differences should impact the layout and emphasis of the Mississippi plan. The homework can be downloaded from the Mississippi Task Force web page, located at <http://is.cbr.tulane.edu/MississippiANS.html>.

ACTION: Mississippi Task Force members write up and submit their homework/comments to A. Kravitz by Wednesday, December 22, 2004. A. Kravitz will present the results of the homework to the Task Force at the next meeting.

V. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 26, 2005, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. CST. The meeting will be in the second floor conference room at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Bolton State Office Building, located at 1141 Bayview Avenue in Biloxi.

VI. CLOSING REMARKS

In closing, P. Bass asked the Task Force members if they were aware of any group or individual who may have an interest in participating in the management plan process. He requested that current Task Force members relay to him the names and contact information for potential members.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m. CST.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Bass
Chairman, Mississippi Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force

Subject to Approval