

**GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

**Monday, November 8-10, 2004**

**Biloxi, Mississippi**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ron Lukens called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

**Members**

Diane Altsman, EPA, GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS (*Proxy for Bryon Griffon*)  
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA  
Phil Bass, Mississippi DEQ, Jackson, MS  
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX  
Pat Carter, U.S. FWS, Atlanta, GA  
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Pam Fuller, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL  
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL  
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL  
Tom Herrington, FDA, Stennis Space Center, MS  
Peter Hoar, NOAA/NCDDC, Stennis Space Center, MS  
Tom Jackson, NOAA-NMFS-SEFSC, Miami, FL  
Jim Kruse, Texas A&M Sea Grant, Houston, TX  
Herb Kumpf, Member at Large, Panama City, FL  
Jim Lester, HARC, The Woodlands, TX  
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico  
John E. Meyers, US Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA  
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bob Pitman, U.S. FWS, Albuquerque, NM  
George Ramseur, Jr., The Nature Conservancy, Ocean Springs, MS  
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA  
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL  
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL

**Staff**

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Richard Campanella, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA  
Chad Case, NBII/National Wetlands Research Center, Lafayette, LA  
Vincent F. Cottone, Chevron Texaco, New Orleans, LA

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Ted Hendrickx, Georgia DNR, Social Circle, GA  
Steven De Koslowski, Columbia, SC  
Alysia R. Kravitz, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA  
Marshall Meyers, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, Washington, DC  
Doug Nygren, Mississippi River Basin Panel, Bettendorf, IA  
Glenn Rhett, Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, MS  
Todd Slack, MS Natural History Museum, Jackson, MS  
Jay Troxel, FWS, Atlanta, GA  
Bill Zattau, Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville, FL

Lukens provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

### **REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

The following changes were offered for the agenda.

#### **Tuesday:**

Remove 8:40 am agenda item "North Carolina State Report". Scott Van Horn was unable to attend.

9:20 am "Work Group Reports" - Harriet Perry was unable to attend so a full report of the Research and Development Work Group will not be given.

2:30 pm "Species Updates" - Harry Blanchet will give black carp update. John Teem and Herb Kumpf will give a *Caulerpa* update.

#### **Wednesday:**

11:05 am "Other Business" - add Election of Officers.

**A motion was made by Herb Kumpf to adopt the agenda with the additions/changes noted. Dale Diaz seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.**

### **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES** *(March 31 - April 1, 2004, Mobile, AL)*

It was noted that on Page 11, Ad Hoc Work Group for Symposium, the reference to Hart Association should read Harte Institute.

**With that change noted, Phil Bass made a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 31-April 1, 2004 meeting held in Mobile, Alabama. Marilyn O'Leary seconded the motion, and without objection the minutes were approved.**

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## US PET INDUSTRY PRESENTATION

Marshall Meyers from the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) in Washington, DC, gave a presentation on the United States pet industry.

### Pet Ownership

- Pets Are an Integral Part of American Society
- 64% US Households
- More Pets Than People > 300 Million
- Multi-billion Dollar Industry
  - 2002 \$28.5 billion
  - 2003 \$31 billion
  - 2005 \$34 billion (estimate)

### Market Share

- Mass Merchandisers = 27%
- Superstores/Chains = 26%
- Supermarkets = 19%
- Independents = 14%

### Retail Channels (Live Organisms)

Independent Pet Stores	Mass Merchandisers
Multi-store Pet Chains (3+)	Discount
Pet Superstores	Farm/Feed Stores
Garden Centers	Warehouse Clubs
Home Improvement/ Hardware	Mail Order/Catalogue Internet

### Historical Perspective

- Fish Keeping – 3,000 Years
- 1611 First Dragon/Porcelain Bowls Imported Americas
- 1849 First West Coast Pet Store
- 1910 Importers and Growers
- 2002 Importers and Farmers
  - 800+ Species Farmed in Florida
  - 2,500+ Freshwater/marine Species in Trade
- Global Industry

### Where Fish are Acquired

- Fish/Aquarium store 35%
- Pet Stores 35%
- Discount Stores 22%

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- Pet Superstore 22%
- Friend/relative 11%
- Bred at Home 8%
- Gift 8%

## Fish Owners Length of Time

- < 1 year 10%
- 1- 5 years 48%
- 6 years + 41%

Average years 6.7

## Aquarium/Pond Ownership

13-14% of US Households (14 million households)

## Pond Market

- 16% Freshwater Fish Households Also Have Garden Ponds
- 70% Pond Owners < 500 Gallons
- > 2 Million Ponds
- One of the Fastest-growing Categories

## Pathways

Import/Export	Breeder
Wholesale	Retail Outlets
Hobby Shows	Swap Meets
Flea Markets	Internet
Public	

## Industry and Regulation

- 1970s Lacey Act Proposed Clean List
- Funded Research Early 70s
- Federal vs. State Regulation
- Federal Regulations
- State Regulation
  - Facility Standards
  - Health Standards
  - Species Lists
- Codes of Conduct
- Best Management Practices

## Industry Involvement

- Screening/Risk Assessments
- Science-based Dirty Lists
- Codes of Conduct/Best Management Practices



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- Industry/Public Awareness
- Emergency Response Network
- Invasive Species Advisory Committee
- ISAC/ANSTF Prevention Committee
- ANSTF Western Regional Panel
- ANSTF New England Regional Panel
- ANSTF Mississippi River Basin Panel
- State Councils/Panels
- CBD
- CITES
- EU
- IUCN
- GISP

### Industry Concerns

- Poorly Crafted Laws and Regulations
- Regional Differences - One Size Does Not Fit All
- Screening/Risk Assessments
- Data Gaps
- Junk Science
- Ill-trained Enforcement Officers
- Acronyms and Jargon Create Confusion
- Lack of Standard Terminology
  - Aliens, Invasive Aliens, Invasive, Non-Native, Non-Indigenous, Exotic, Foreign, Nuisance
- Misinformation/disinformation
- Endangered Species Passé - Invasive Species in Vogue

### Surrender Centers - Unwanted Exotics (Under Discussion)

- PIJAC - Member Pet Stores
- Resell/Place in Breeding Program/Humanely Euthanize
- Illegal Specimens
  - Receive for FWS or State Pick-up
  - Amnesty Program
  - FWS/State Acknowledge Relinquishment

### Public Awareness from Industry Standpoint

- Educational Outreach
- Programs That:
  - Clearly Articulate Issue
  - Explain Risks and How to Minimize
  - Provide User Friendly Identification Aids
  - Provide Guidance on What to Do

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- Aquarium/Pond Magazines
  - Consumer
  - Hobby
- Pet Stores
  - Flyers/Fact Sheets
  - Posters
  - POP Handouts
- Pet Consumer Shows
- Aquarium Societies/Clubs
- Internet

### Codes of Conduct/Best Management Practices

- Marine Aquarium Council
- National Reptile Improvement Plan
- National Avian Welfare Alliance
- National Pet Improvement Plan (under development)

For additional information, Meyers can be reached at [mmeyers@pijac.org](mailto:mmeyers@pijac.org).

### **“DO YOU HAVE A HABITATTITUDE™”**

Marshall Meyers, Washington, DC, gave a presentation entitled “Habitattitude™ - Protect our Environment - Do Not Release Fish and Aquatic Plants.” Habitattitude™ is a national campaign to prevent releases of fish and aquatic plants. It was presented on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Sea Grant Partnership, and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.

### Aquarists Abound!

- Pets are an important part of our culture
- Independent retail sales ~ \$1.4B
- Over 13M household aquaria with thousands more in offices, etc.
- Various specialties contribute to a strong industry

### Water Gardens are Blooming!

- Water garden popularity rising rapidly
- Fastest growing segment
- “Parade of Ponds” - Community outings similar to parade of homes are growing substantially in many metro areas

### Benefits Create Challenges

- Keeping live species requires financial investment, specialized knowledge, effort, time for care, and responsibility
- Owners create a connection with the environment
- Situations occur where..

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- Owners are faced with disposing of unwanted aquatic plants or fish
- They inadequately contain fish and aquatic plants and escape occurs.

### Other Challenges...

- Increasing frequency of aquatic plants, fish and other animals associated with pet industry being found in the environment
- Potential to cause negative environmental, economic and human health impacts
- Translates into increased scrutiny and negative public perceptions about hobbies
- Potential for increased regulation
- Disconnected players in private and public sectors
- Long-standing adversarial relationships
- No unifying agenda
- Confusing, competing and incorrect messages conveyed to consumers

### So What?!

- Complex problems require innovative solutions
- Situational analysis:
  - Think systems change!
  - We all need to think differently about aquatic invasive species and their relationship to the issue
  - With higher priorities and scarce resources, unifying agendas need to be set and collaboration needs to become standard

### Meeting the Challenges...

- Habitattitude™ is a proactive solution! A unique partnership - industry, academia, and government joining forces to address these challenges
- Focus -
  - Raise public awareness
  - Engage people
  - Promote unified environmental messages with corresponding beneficial action
- All segments of industry are part of the solution.

### What is Habitattitude™?

- Nationally branded campaign targeting aquarists and water gardeners
- Links environmental messages with beneficial actions
- Designed to reach targeted audiences

### Habitattitude™ Advisory Panel - (Under the leadership of the National ANS Task Force)

- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- NOAA Great Lakes Sea Grant Network Partners

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## Habitattitude™ Partners

- PIJAC
  - Represents 90% of U.S. aquarium industry
  - Council and its members committed > \$1.1+ million
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
  - Lead federal agency addressing fish and wildlife
  - Contributed > \$100,000
- NOAA/National Sea Grant College Program
  - Research, outreach, and communication expertise in 31 states
  - Awarded a \$300,000 2-year grant
- State and Local Pet Owner Organizations
  - Beginning to spread the word
- This is only the beginning...

## Habitattitude™

- Educational outreach
- Programs that
  - Clearly articulate issue
  - Explain risks and how to minimize
  - Provide user friendly identification aids
  - Provide guidance on what to do

## How is Habitattitude™ Different?

- Moves “beyond brochures”
- Seeks to raise awareness, engage people, and change behaviors!
- Unifies government, industry, academia, and consumers to expand ownership and promote solutions
- Uses built-in evaluation to assess measurable impacts (e.g., behavioral change)

## Habitattitude™ - What You Get!

- Access to:
  - Brand and campaign materials
  - Web site ([www.habitattitude.net](http://www.habitattitude.net)) as a central resource
  - Other campaign resources available to interested partners
- Support for:
  - National promotion of campaign through partner networks
  - Experienced partners ready to help you connect with aquarists and water gardeners
  - Marketing evaluation to measure behavior change at state levels

## Habitattitude™ - Components

- Web site ([www.habitattitude.net](http://www.habitattitude.net))
- Campaign partnership packets

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- Brand and brand standards manual
- Guidelines providing alternatives to release
- Floor, table top displays and banners
- In-store partnership certificates
- Ad placement in trade/hobby magazines
- CD with camera ready artwork (in prep)
- Industry sponsored products (in prep)
- PowerPoint presentations
- Evaluation surveys in progress

### Habitattitude™ - Industry Promotion

- Aquarium Magazines
  - Hobby
  - Consumer
- Pet Stores
  - Flyers/Fact Sheets
  - Posters
  - POP Handouts
  - Fish Bags
- Trade/Pet Consumer Shows
- Aquarium Societies/Clubs
- Internet

### Habitattitude™ - Industry Activities

- Trade/Hobby press
  - Free ads
  - Cover stories
  - Periodic articles
- Company Newsletters, Alerts, etc.
- Brand on aquarium product labels
- Trade Shows
- Florida's "Dive-In" Campaign
- Pennsylvania Farm Show

### Habitattitude™ - Industry Promotion - 2004/2005

- Materials appear in > 2,000 retail stores
  - Care sheets
  - In-store signage
  - Door decals
  - Partner certificates
- Direct mail - 20+ million US homes (30% of US pet owning households)
- Brand on > 20 million fish bags, > 4 million fish boxes
- Starter kits being designed for small, independent retailers/nurseries

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### What Can You Do? Become a Habitattitude™ Partner

- Industry:
  - Integrate campaign into marketing materials
  - Provide link to campaign Web site
- Agencies and Academia:
  - Integrate into educational programming
  - Provide link to campaign Web site
- Societies and Consumers:
  - Learn how to be a responsible hobbyist and the potential consequences of your actions
  - Model and promote responsible consumer behaviors
  - Become involved in the campaign

### Habitattitude™ Benefits

- Unifies industry, government, and academia with consumers
- Promotes simple and consistent environmental messages and beneficial actions
- Provides credibility and accountability
- Leverages communication through diverse networks
- Helps to promote local action to address a global challenge
- Benefits you, us, and our clientele

For more information, visit [www.habitattitude.net](http://www.habitattitude.net).

### STATUS OF STATE PLANS

Florida - Don Schmitz reported that Florida's state plan has been finished, but it still needs to be reviewed by the federal agencies. There is some confusion on how they are going to send it to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, and Lukens indicated that he would assist with that procedure. They are currently in the process of implementing the 22 action items in the state plan. They recently updated their web site incorporating a link to the Panel. Florida is currently determining how much money is spent each year dealing with invasive organisms by state agencies. They are developing a standardized reporting form. Once it is finalized, he will make it available to the Panel, because it is something other states may want to do. Schmitz added that they now have 3 sub-working groups: *Caulerpa taxifolia*, Risk Assessments, and Outreach. The Outreach Sub-working Group is planning to hold an educational summit in Gainesville, Florida sometime in 2005. As more information on the summit becomes available, he will forward that information to the Panel.

Scott Hardin reported on the Risk Assessment Sub-working group. Once all agencies signed on to the MOU which formalized the invasive species working group, they worked at their most recent meeting toward identifying risk assessments that are needed. They approved a group of 10 individuals who will be reviewing the literature for plants and animals and see if they can come up with some recommended procedures for consideration by the full group. At that point they will begin to run species through the process as they are petitioned. The topic of terminology came up

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and there was a difference of opinion on what constitutes an invasive species. The definition that they came up with was somewhat similar to that in the National Plan with the addition that it needed to be defined based on a accepted science based risk assessment.

The *Caulerpa* working group reviewed the situation in California and the fact that Florida is a potential site for an invasion of a Mediterranean strain of *Caulerpa*. Florida has no plan in place to deal with such an invasion. A serious issue is there is no clarification of what agency is responsible for the management and control of marine plants in Florida.

John Teem added that Linda Walters has been looking at different sources of *Caulerpa taxifolia* that could be obtained commercially. She tries to buy it on the Internet and then sends it to a collaborator in Europe who does DNA analysis. Thus far they have not found any *Caulerpa taxifolia* in her efforts. She is also looking in some selected places locally in Florida. Plans are to do a more extensive survey over time with public participation. Any persons interested in participating in the survey can check the website [www.Florida.aquaticspecies.com](http://www.Florida.aquaticspecies.com) for more information.

Alabama - Leslie Hartman reported that the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources asked the Governor to be named the lead agency for invasive species issues and this was granted. Hartman has been making agency contacts with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, and a variety of other agencies and now have a number of biologists on board. However, they are missing two things - a sense of urgency from anybody in the cabinet, and the absence of any viable legislation and regulation that allows ADCNR to act. Since a lot of agencies are on board, plans are to push for a greater sense of urgency from the Cabinet to get an MOU among the agencies in the event of an emergency. Even though it has been a little slow, there is now a lot of internal momentum.

Mississippi - Phil Bass reported that Mississippi has made some progress since the last meeting. A new Governor was elected, and based on consensus with Governor's staff, the cabinet agencies, and other agencies that make up the Task Force, DEQ remains lead agency to develop a state plan. Plans are to take Louisiana's plan and adapt it for Mississippi, which will be beneficial due to the limited resources they have been given to complete this task. Like ADEM, DEQ does not have legislation that authorizes actions regarding invasive species, other than the environmental best management practices. The goal is to have the plan completed one year from June 2005. The first meeting under the new administration was held in September 2004. Assignments from that meeting are to be turned in early December, and plans are to meet again in late January 2005.

Louisiana - Alysia Kravitz reported that the Louisiana effort started in the Summer/Fall 2002. They have held 5 or 6 Task Force meetings since then. The previous Governor Foster issued an Executive Order in early summer of 2002 which created an Louisiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force charged with creating a management plan. That is the entity that has been working on the plan over the last two and a half years. The last meeting was held in early March of this year. Louisiana chose to define the problems in the state into 3 sections: Pathways and media; Species or Groups of

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Species; and, Exacerbating Circumstances. A copy of the nearly final plan was available at the meeting.

Regarding the Louisiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, there is an interest in passing legislation to create a permanent entity which would not be subject to changes by subsequent administrations. A Bill was introduced and passed called the Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Council Act. It created a Council and Advisory Task Force. The Council is composed of various state agencies and the Governor's office. The Advisory Task Force is comprised of federal agencies, stakeholder groups, industry, and people that could bring additional expertise to the table. The Bill passed without a single vote against it in both the House and Senate and was signed into law by the Governor in July 2004.

### **GEORGIA STATE REPORT**

Ted Hendrickx, Senior Fisheries Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, gave a presentation entitled, "Status of ANS in Georgia." He indicated that Georgia was not a member of a regional panel. They would like to begin developing a state plan. The state is divided into 7 regions, with only one port in the state.

#### **Georgia Facts**

- 250+ species of fish have been collected
- 20+ species of "exotic" and non-indigenous fish species reported in Georgia
  - Rainbow trout to Pacu...
- 10+ species of "exotic" or nuisance aquatic plants found in Georgia waters
- Other ANS (mussels, invertebrates, etc.)

#### **Fish**

- Pacu
- Oscar
- Grass carp
- Red shiner
- Asian rice/swamp eel
- Tilapia (blue & Mozambique)
- Bighead carp
- Arowana

#### **Invertebrates and Others**

- Asian clam (*Corbicula*)
- Green mussel
- Freshwater jellyfish
- Crawfish sp.
- Lionfish (saltwater)



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### Aquatic Plants

- Hydrilla
- Eurasian watermilfoil
- Brazilian elodea
- Water Hyacinth
- Giant Salvinia
- Common Salvinia
- Alligator Weed
- Parrot Feather

### State Authority

- Georgia DNR (WRD)
  - Aquaculture registration
    - “Domestic species”
  - Wild animal licensing
    - Exotic species
    - Commercial (no pets)
  - Fish dealer licensing
    - Certain exotic
    - Native
- State Department of Agriculture
  - Pet trade
  - Food fish sales (dead or processed)
  - Pesticide licensing
  - State veterinarian
  - Processing facilities
  - Plant sales (retail & nurseries)

### Georgia Issues

- Illegal releases
  - Intentional and deliberate establishment
  - “Kind-hearted” dumping
- Angler-related movement
- Escaped ornamentals/exotics
- Commercial transportation
  - Ballast water
- Aquaculture and research
- “Hitchhikers”

### Intentional Illegal Releases?

- Spotted bass (compete with largemouth bass)
  - Native to some Georgia Gulf drainages in NW Georgia

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- Flathead catfish (predation on other species)
  - Native to extreme NW Georgia
- Blueback herring (competition & predation)
  - Native to Atlantic slope drainages in Georgia
- Tilapia
  - Culture? Forage stocking?

### “Kind-hearted” Dumping?

- Pacu
  - 25+ locations around the state since 1980s
- Oscar
- Silver arowana

### Escapes?

- Salvinia (water gardens?)
- Hyacinth (ornamental?)
- Grass carp (flood events)
- Tilapia (research)

### Challenges Ahead

- Develop ANS/AIS plan
- Funding
- Limited plant regulations/laws
- Coordination with other agencies
- Eradication and control activities
- Education

Visit the WRD website: [www.georgiawildlife.com](http://www.georgiawildlife.com).

## **SOUTH CAROLINA STATE REPORT**

Steve De Koslowski from South Carolina gave an overview of the state’s aquatic nuisance species program. They are having a hard time finding an agency to handle the administrative part of the program. Hydrilla is the state’s number one problem; however, they do have a rapid response plan when it comes to aquatic plants. They do not have zebra mussels, but are still concerned about them. The biggest marine concern is fish, shellfish, and shrimp diseases.

### Marine Species

- Rapana whelk
- Green mussel
- Aquarium pets (Lionfish)
- Fish, shellfish, and shrimp diseases
- Invasive aquaculture species
  - Oysters and shrimp

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## Pathways

- Recreational boaters
- Intentional introduction

## State Legislation

- State Noxious Weed Act (Title 46, Chapter 23)
- State Crop Pest Act (Title 46, Chapter 9)
- Aquatic Plant Management Act (Title 49, Chapter 6)
- 50-13-1415 Importation, possession, or placing of hydrilla and water hyacinth
- 50-13-1630 Importation, possession or selling certain fish in unlawful

## Aquatic Plant Management Act

- APM Program
  - Prevent, investigate, monitor, manage aquatic plant problems in public waters
  - Identifies lead agency
- APM Council
  - Multiagency board
  - Coordinates activities, approves plans
- APM Trust Fund
  - Provides funding flexibility

## Illegal Aquatic Plants

Alligatorweed	African oxygen weed
Brazilian elodea	Lymnophila
Common reed	Giant salvinia
Eurasian watermilfoil	Water lettuce
Hydrilla	Purple loosestrife
Slender naiad	Water spinach
Water chestnut	Water primrose
Water hyacinth	Exotic bur reed

## Illegal Freshwater Fishes

Freshwater electric eel	Stickleback
Candiru catfish	Mexican banded tetra
Diploid grass carp	Sea lamprey
Walking catfish	Rudd
Piranha	Northern snakehead

## State Agencies with ANS Interests

- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council
- South Carolina Department of Agriculture
- Clemson University Department of Plant Industry

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- Clemson University Extension Program
- South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium

### South Carolina Aquatic Nuisance Species Communications Project

South Carolina was selected as a pilot state for IAFWA's communications project. This is a three year project and they are currently completing the first year.

- Objectives
  - Reduce the spread of ANS caused by:
    - Recreational boating, fishing, and hunting
    - Seafood consumers and industry
  - Achieve contact with 25% of the target audience by June 2006
  - Test the effectiveness of direct and indirect contact with key audiences
- Target Audience
  - Freshwater - recreational boaters, anglers, and waterfowl hunters
  - Marine - seafood consumers and industry
- Freshwater Strategies
  - Enhance and test delivery of information through a combination of sport shows and agency web sites
    - Conduct surveys before and after education
  - Enhance and track ANS outreach
    - Add SAH logo to DNR material, share web links
    - Put message in new sites e.g. TV shows, Rules and Regs, magazine
- Marine Strategies
  - Expand existing outreach to encourage shell recycling
    - Oyster shell recycling
    - Proper disposal of shrimp parts
  - Develop voluntary partnerships with the seafood industry
- Statewide Strategies
  - Increase institutional capacity
    - Formalize multi-agency ANS Task Force
    - Pursue partnerships with industry and NGO
    - Develop and implement SC ANS Management Plan

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lukens again provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

The meeting on Monday recessed at 5:00 pm and reconvened on Tuesday at 8:30 am.

At the beginning of Tuesday's session, Lukens provided an opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

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### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Resolutions - For informational purposes, Lukens provided the Panel with copies of two resolutions. The first was the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Resolution "State Wildlife Agency Leadership for Aquatic Nuisance Species." The second was IAFWA Resolution #4, "Supporting Development of a Multi-National Screening Process for Invasive Species Introductions into North America."

Additional State Agency Membership - At the last meeting, the Panel voted to add a membership seat from the Alabama Freshwater Division. That recommendation will go before the ANS Task Force at their meeting next week. Steve Rider from Alabama will be that representative if the Task Force approves. There was also a recommendation from the Panel to the ANS Task Force that the States of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina be added to the Panel. Due to lack of communication and misunderstanding that recommendation was dropped. At this meeting, the Panel received presentations from Georgia and South Carolina. There was a request from Georgia to be added to the Panel. **Paul Carangelo made a motion to invite the State of Georgia to become a member of the Panel and to then change the name of the Panel to the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. The motion was seconded by Marilyn O'Leary. With no objection, the motion passed.**

The Panel indicated that they are still receptive to the States of South Carolina and North Carolina also becoming members of the Panel.

**A motion was made by Marilyn O'Leary and seconded by Pam Fuller that the Panel extend an invitation to both North and South Carolina to join as Panel members. There was no objection to the motion.**

These actions will be reported to the ANS Task Force at their next meeting.

ANSTF Update - Lukens provided an ANSTF update. The ANS Task Force held its Spring Meeting in May in Columbia, Missouri. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Mississippi River Basin Panel Meeting and included some great presentations on Mississippi River aquatic nuisance species issues. The meeting included a commitment by the Task Force members to review the ANSTF Strategic Plan and begin to focus more on implementing the various parts of the plan.

The Fall ANS Task Force meeting was scheduled for November 16 and 17, in Crystal City, Virginia. A few things that were tentatively scheduled to be on the agenda include: a presentation of the *Caulerpa* Draft Management Plan; a presentation on the new Habitattitude Public Awareness campaign; and an update from ITAP, the new taxonomically-based Invasive Terrestrial Animals and Pathogens Committee.

Regarding the ANSTF Executive Secretary, the Service had still not advertised for the position. When Sharon Gross left the Service for USGS, it was the intention of the Assistant Director of

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Fisheries and Habitat Conservation to split her position into two positions - a Branch Chief and the Executive Secretary of the ANS Task Force. They are still working on getting it advertised. In the meantime, Everett Wilson, the Chief of the Division of Environmental Quality, serves as the Acting Executive Secretary. The Service is looking for someone who might be interested in coming in on detail to act as the Executive Secretary for a minimum of 2 weeks and, depending on availability, up to 4 months. Anyone interested in coming in and doing a detail should contact Kari Duncan, Chief of the Branch of Invasive Species at (703) 358-2464.

NISC/ISAC Update - Chris Dionigi, National Invasive Species Council staff, provided an update to Lukens on the ISAC Meeting held October 13-15, 2004 at Shepherdstown, West Virginia. At that meeting, ISAC recommended that NISC accept the Draft Guidelines for Ranking Invasive Species Projects in Natural Areas, Version 1, August 2004. ISAC recommended that NISC amend the ISAC Charter in order to provide for the more efficient and effective operation of ISAC (Charter amendments are being reviewed by NISC staff). ISAC recommended that NISC implement an "invasive species early detection and rapid response fund" (this corresponds to Plan action item #24). ISAC also recommended to NISC the interim appointment of ISAC officers as follows: E. Shippen Bright, Chair; George Beck, Vice-Chair; and Dianne Cooper, Secretary. The NISC Policy Liaison met November 4, 2004. NISC Co-Chair Principals are working to schedule a Fall 2004 meeting. ISAC will be working with Definitions of Invasive Species. The timing of the next NISC meeting is being discussed.

Legislative Update - A spreadsheet of invasive species bills as of 9/09/2004 was provided for the Panel.

### **WORK GROUP REPORTS**

Information Management Work Group- Lukens indicated that a conference call was held to discuss the item of the disposition of the GSMFC data base. It was a database that was inherited from the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory along with the website. It became increasingly apparent that there was no effective way to feed new data into the database. It is either one that is dynamic and continually gets updated or it is a static database. The expectation was that it was going to be dynamic; however, the Commission does not have the staff to keep it current. Lukens went to Commission Director and expressed concerns that if the Commission were to really manage this database, extra staff would be needed as well as an infrastructure of people to provide information to feed the database. Before a decision was made, the Commission Director instructed Lukens to present the issue to the Information Management Work Group to discuss alternatives. The result of those discussions and the recommendation from the Work Group to the Panel, is that the GSMFC maintain the current database as a static database; recognizing that the Commission does not intend to continue to add new collection records of invasive species. But from this point forward, new records would be referred to the USGS database as the national database. The Commission will keep the records that it currently has, and the USGS program will continue to function as the national database to support Panel activities. The Commission intends to maintain the species summaries database and continue to develop additional species summaries which would be available on the website. Lukens also intends to continue to work with the distributed query program that USGS and

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SERC have developed. The only difference is the acknowledgment that the GSMFC database is a static database and new updates for invasive species records will be managed by the USGS program. On behalf of the Work Group, Lukens submitted that recommendation to the Panel.

Herb Kumpf asked why not turn it all over to USGS rather than have 2 databases. Was there a purpose to hold on to the older database? Lukens indicated that the databases each had different fields. Kumpf suggested that efforts be made to transfer all the data to the larger USGS database.

Marilyn O'Leary stressed the importance of keeping the older database because it contained museum records. Staff may be added to maintain the database in the future.

Lukens replied that no information would be lost. No new information has been added to the system in 6 years.

**A motion on was made on behalf of the Information Management Work Group to make the GSMFC database on invasive species a static database and refer any new records to the USGS database. The motion was seconded by Scott Hardin. Marilyn O'Leary re-emphasized that nothing be lost from that database.**

**The motion was amended to send back to the Information Management Work Group during this interim process the USGS will try to incorporate the old database into one. At some time in the future, the static database will be eliminated. The amendment was seconded by Tom Herrington.**

**John Teem added that some notation be put on the old system that all new information will be reported to the USGS.**

**There was no objection to motion.**

Early Detection and Rapid Response - Lukens explained that NOAA, through Sea Grant, provided each of the Regional Panels with \$20,000 to develop regional rapid response contingency plans through their panels. The Panel has received that \$20,000 and is in the second year of development. The Early Detection and Rapid Response Work Group was convened to begin to work on this. The work group relied heavily on the Great Lakes draft guidelines for rapid response plans. A copy of the draft Rapid Response Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Region prepared for the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force was distributed for informational purposes. No action was required at the time of the meeting. Lukens asked that the Panel provide comments on the document by early December. The grant period ends December 31, 2004.

Research and Development Work Group - Harriet Perry reported that Work Group has been busy compiling lists of research priorities in each state. They are looking for funding to develop rapid assessment guidebooks for use by rapid assessment teams. The last scheduled Work Group meeting



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was cancelled due to Hurricane Ivan. John Teem volunteered to assume the position of work group leader for the Research and Development Work Group.

Marilyn O'Leary indicated that she has also been trying to find a replacement to serve as leader of the Education and Outreach Work Group. She announced that Chuck Jacoby from Florida Sea Grant offered to accept that role.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Lukens reported that one of the discussion items at the Panel Heads meeting held after the ANS Task Force meeting, was development of strategic plans by the Regional Panels. Facilitation was provided at the last meeting to initiate work on a strategic plan. A Steering Committee meeting was held in Jacksonville, Florida, the day before Hurricane Ivan. The Steering Committee was charged with taking the follow up steps to further develop the strategic plan. Members present were Lukens, Pam Fuller, and Marilyn O'Leary. A copy of the document developed by the steering committee was distributed to the Panel. There was much discussion on how to effectively review the draft and provide comments.

Due to the enormous task of reviewing the plan, a motion was made to generically approve the plan, subject to comments from the Panel by a deadline of December 15. The Plan will be revisited by a sub-group, and based on comments received, have a final plan approved by January 2005. The motion was seconded by Cynthia Sarthou. The motion was tabled pending more discussion.

The next day the Panel agreed to adopt the plan's goals and objectives and allow Lukens to present the Panel's progress at the upcoming ANS Task Force meeting.

### **MRBP REPORT TO THE GULF REGIONAL PANEL**

Doug Nygren gave an overview of the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP). The MRBP is a fairly new Panel, having only been existence for approximately one year.

#### **Meetings in 2005**

- Fourth meeting in January/February - undetermined (looking for southern host)
- Fifth meeting is proposed for September with Western Regional Panel - Kansas

#### **Members**

- Membership at 46 plus alternates
- 21 interested parties
- Total of 71 in coordination directory
- Others interested



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## Panel Participation at Events

- Western Panel - Tom Mosher (KS) attended and reported
- Gulf Panel - Doug Nygren (MICRA) planned
- ANSTF - Mike Hoff (Vice Chair) attending
- Midwest ANS Workshop - Jay Rendall (Chair) participating

## Issue Priorities

- Developing state plans is a priority in many states
- Increasing federal funding to implement plans is a priority of the states with existing plans and those preparing plans

## Panel Progress and Direction

- Committees are working on their responsibilities and work plans
- Examples of Prevention and Control Committee projects:
  - List of priority species/matrix status
  - Position Statement on barriers and fish passage
  - ANS harvest issue paper
  - Position Statement supporting national screening process for intentional importation into US
  - Request clarification on Lacey Act from USFWS
- Examples of I&E Committee projects:
  - Identify products, messages, audiences
  - Began inventory of I&E products on ANS
  - Purchased and distributed new *Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers* brochure
  - Developing a *Field Guide to Aquatic Invasive Plants and Animals* for Mississippi River Basin for 2005
- Examples of Research Committee projects:
  - Database of experts and current research
  - Risk assessment workshop at next MRBP meeting
  - Research priority list
  - Sponsor a symposium on ANS research at 2005 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference

## Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that the Task Force place a high priority and strong focus on prevention - especially on introductions into the country, as well as interstate, interbasin, and intrabasin spread of ANS
  - States are limited in their responses to international and interstate commerce as well as funding projects outside of their borders, so federal leadership and funding is needed in several areas
- National prohibitions on transport of aquatic plants and priority ANS on public roads would be helpful
- MRBP recommends establishment of a national contingency fund for rapid response.

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### **BROWN TREE SNAKE UPDATE**

Marc Hall, a graduate student from Texas A&M at Kingsville, gave a presentation entitled, "Development of a Rapid Response Initiative for Brown Tree Snakes."

#### **Summary of the Brown Tree Snake**

- Arboreal, nocturnal, rear-fanged snake - mildly venomous
- Habitat is thick arboreal habitat, adaptable to less dense habitat
- Diet: wide and varied. The snake will eat anything it can.
- Juveniles - ectothermic prey
- Adults - endothermic prey

#### **Distribution**

- Native range is north and eastern Australia through New Guinea and surrounding islands
  - Density is extremely low
  - Malaita, Solomon Islands 0.10/ha
- Expanded range includes Guam, with sightings on several other islands
  - Density on Guam 24-120/ha

#### **Environmental Issue**

- The brown tree snake has contributed to the loss of native avian, and reptilian species on Guam

#### **Economic Issue**

- Snakes in search of prey cause electrical outages on power lines. The added cost of control is a burden on the economy

#### **Human Issue**

- The snake poses a limited threat to humans. The bite of the snake can cause some minor irritation. The old and the young are most at risk.

#### **Rapid Response Team**

- What is it?
  - Part of three pronged approach to prevent the spread of the BTS
    - Prevention
    - Interdiction
    - Rapid Response
- New Program (2002)
  - Limited to Pacific region
  - Primary goal: find reported snake
  - Detect incipient populations
- How it works:
  - Sightings outside of Guam

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- Call is made to a hotline
  - An investigator conducts an interview
  - Search area defined, a search is conducted
- Secondary Benefits
  - Develops a database of potential prey for future monitoring
  - Education of local population

### Rapid Response in Texas

- Major points of entry
  - Ports
    - Corpus Christi
    - Houston
  - Major Airports (2)
  - Military bases (18)

### Rapid Response on Gulf Coast

(The Gulf Coast region is likely to support brown tree snakes)

- Temperature
- Humidity
- Rainfall
- Entry points - ports (several hundred, only a few receiving traffic from Guam)
- Nothing elaborate
  - Need to ensure any snake sighting is investigated as best as possible
- A Communication Network
  - To respond to and quickly deal with the information

### Similar Programs - Existing Programs that Show Success

- Zebra Mussels
- Salvinia
- Established groups that monitor certain areas, conduct information/prevention programs

Contact information: [www.nabtsct.org](http://www.nabtsct.org).

If anyone has any pictures of native snakes, please send them to Scott Henke - [kfseh00@tamuk.edu](mailto:kfseh00@tamuk.edu) or Marc Hall - [kasmah00@tamuk.edu](mailto:kasmah00@tamuk.edu), so they can add them to their website.

## **STATE PROHIBITED SPECIES LISTS AND THE LACEY ACT**

Bob Pitman briefed the Panel on injurious wildlife, The Lacey Act: 18 USC 42, 50 CFR 16. Injurious wildlife are defined as those species and offspring and eggs that are injurious to the interests of human beings, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, wildlife, or wildlife resources of the United States. Wild mammals, wild birds, fish, mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians, and reptiles are the only organisms that can be added to the injurious wildlife list. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife

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Service (Service) does not have the authority to regulate plants or other organisms under the Lacey Act. Species listed as injurious may not be imported or transported across state lines without a permit issued by the Service. Permits may be granted for the importation or transportation of live specimens of injurious wildlife and their offspring or eggs for bona fide scientific, medical, educational, or zoological purposes.

The Lacey Act: 16 USC 3371-3378

#### Two Step Violation Process

1. That the wildlife was *taken, possessed, transported, or sold* in violation of a state, federal, foreign, or tribal law or regulation, **and**
2. That, in addition to the above violation of underlying law, the wildlife was *imported, exported, transported, sold, received, acquired, or purchased*.

#### Coordination Opportunity

- Identify contact person(s) within each state that can assist in identifying state prohibited species list or website location
- Relay persons contact information to Erin Williams at [Erin\\_Williams@fws.gov](mailto:Erin_Williams@fws.gov) or (703) 358-2034
- Erin will work to develop centralized website for linking these webpages.

Pitman wanted to emphasize how important the species list in the individual states are and how the Lacey Act can be used. Lukens added that the Lacey Act could be mentioned in the state plans as a potential enforcement tool.

For more information: [www.HACCP-NRM.org](http://www.HACCP-NRM.org).

### SPECIES UPDATES

Asian Carp - Harry Blanchet reported that Louisiana has had records of 3 species of Asian carp in the state for some time. Louisiana now has records of 4 species. Thanks to cooperation with commercial hoop net fishermen, they have collected 5 specimens of black carp. They tried to draw blood from them, but the blood was too degraded to analyze and find out if they were triploid or not. However, eye balls were collected and analyzed by the USGS lab in Lafayette, who found that 3 out of the 5 were triploid. Asian carp can occur in very large numbers in any of the major rivers in Louisiana (large numbers being several hundred pounds in a hoop net).

Pam Fuller reported that she went through their Alert System and pulled the various reports that have come across as being new in the past few months:

Snakeheads - Confirmed as reproducing in the Potomac; they have caught juveniles. They are also reproducing in a location in Philadelphia where they have been collected. They have been found in Massachusetts, and, although reproduction has not been confirmed so far, the person who originally

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found them said that there were two snakeheads rounding up a school of minnows. There was a single specimen collected off Chicago, and a lot of effort was spent trying to find if there were any others; they did not find any others. There was a reporter from the New York Times who was looking into snakeheads in prayer release, an Asian cultural practice. In the Buddhist religion it is common for people to buy live animals and then release them. They found there were Buddhist temples located very closely to the primary site in the Potomac and to the location in Philadelphia. They may be investigating to see if those are actually prayer release animals. There is also one other location in the country that appears somebody has been breeding them in a pond.

Swamp Eels - They are out of the ponds in the Nature Center and into the Chattahoochee River in Georgia. There is some work going on to find out exactly what the extent of the population is in that area.

White Perch - Are now moving down the Arkansas River. They were accidentally stocked in an Oklahoma reservoir and escaped. They were a contaminant in an intentional striped bass stocking. They are now moving downstream into Kansas and have been confirmed in 2 reservoirs in Kansas.

Cuban Tree Frogs - Moving northward and have been found in Duvall County in the Jacksonville area of Florida, and more recently in Savannah, Georgia. They are looking around Savannah to see if the one frog they found was just a lone hitchhiker or if there is actually a population there.

Charru Mussel - Has been found in Cape Canaveral. It is a species that was found off St. Augustine about 20 years ago and disappeared. This is the first sighting since then. No word yet if that is a population or a single individual.

Jaguar Guapote - Found in eastern Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They shocked a pond and determined it was just a single individual.

Pacu - A couple found in coastal Mississippi.

Rud - Recently found that Rud are reproducing in Falcon Reservoir, Texas.

Fuller also mentioned that she recently attended a Canadian carp risk assessment meeting in Toronto, Canada. The Canadians are looking at whether they want to ban all importation and possession of silver, big head, grass, and black carp. The Canadian government is under persuasion to do that because of all the money that the U.S. is spending on the electric barrier in the ship canal. If the U.S. can be invaded, especially through the Great Lakes region from the north, then they are essentially throwing money away on this barrier to prevent invasion from the south. They also spent quite a bit of time touring the Asian live fish markets, and found lots of grass carp and at least one location with both silver and big head carp live in tanks. That is the first documented occurrence of silver carp in the food fish trade. She also noted that these silver and big head carp were obviously caught from the wild in the U.S. and then taken to Canada because of the marks from the fish nets.

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Caulerpa - Herb Kumpf reported that the National Management Plan for the Genus *Caulerpa* which was prepared by the *Caulerpa* Working Group will be submitted to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force next week. The purpose of this National Management Plan is to guide the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and other interested parties in managing *Caulerpa* species already present in U.S. waters as well as species of the genus *Caulerpa* that may become introduced to U.S. waters to which they are not native.

### **Status of Texas Plan**

Earl Chilton reported that Texas still does not have a completed plan. Two letters were sent to Governor's office over the past year to get started on a plan, but no response has been received. If no reply is received in the next couple of weeks another letter will be drafted and signed by the TPWD Executive Director. They do have a framework plan and are currently forming a TPWD invasive species committee.

### **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT SYSTEM**

Pam Fuller reported that the USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Program has launched an alert system that allows users to register to receive e-mails of new aquatic introductions in the United States. Users can sign up for "State Watches", "Group Watches", and/or "Species Watches". Detailed explanations of each of these can be found on the registration page. The system also allows users who are not registered to review and query archives of alerts that are sent. A demonstration of the program was shown to the group.

To register to receive e-mail alerts: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/AlertSystem/register.asp>.

To view alert archives: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/AlertSystem/>.

The program was launched in July and at the current time approximately 250 individuals have signed up for alerts.

### **NILE TILAPIA IN THE PASCAGOULA RIVER**

Todd Slack with the University of Southern Mississippi presented an overview of his project "Non-indigenous Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) in coastal watersheds of southern Mississippi." Other investigators on the project include Mark S. Peterson, Christa Woodley, Mark A. Dugo, Nancy Brown-Peterson, Ches Vervaeke, Gretchen Waggy, Jennifer McDonald, and Jeremy Finley. The project is funded through MDWFP.

#### **Phase I - Distribution**

Objective 1: Examine spatial and temporal distribution of tilapiine fishes in coastal watersheds of Mississippi.

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Objective 2: Examine the influence of tilapiine fishes on the structure of the native fish assemblages.

Objective 3: Quantify the degree of trophic interaction among tilapiine fishes and native freshwater fishes (e.g., sunfishes, black basses).

- Database contains 97 records for aquaculture facilities
- 61 facilities permitted for tilapia (including 5 out-of-state)
- 27 of the 61 noted as “active producers”
- Fixed monthly stations: 2 - Robinson Bayou 4 - Simmons Bayou
- Semi-random monthly sampling (seines, hook and line, trammel nets, modified crab traps)
- Year-round spawning at low levels
- Peaks in March-May and August-September
- Multiple broods
- Smallest female w/mature oocytes is 79.9 mm TL: 50% maturity in females is 113 mm TL
- BF correlated w/TL and EBW

#### **Phase II - Dispersion and Habitat Association**

Objective 1: Examine movement patterns through telemetry - Plant Daniels (Year 1)

Objective 2: Field verification - Biotelemetry of cichlids in the wild within the Pascagoula system to identify movement patterns (i.e., population contraction/expansion on a seasonal basis) and the use of thermal refugia in a natural setting (Year 2).

#### **Phase III - Management Implications**

- Advocate a plan that promotes an integrated committee composed of representatives from those agencies charged with protecting, maintaining, and regulating the state’s aquatic natural resources (i.e., MDEQ, MDWFP, MDAC). Members of this advisory committee should not function in an adversarial manner, but rather members should strive to work together on developing mutually agreeable strategies, protocols, and procedures to promote responsible use of the resources based on a long-term vision.
- Adapt and enforce regulatory plans that prevent release and establishment of non-indigenous taxa. Incorporated within this strategy is to promote an open line of communication among state and federal agencies, the general public, and industry regarding the issue of release of non-indigenous taxa and potential problems that may result following their establishment.
- Promote the development of a management plan that incorporates and emergency protocol for flood prone areas (coastal counties). What can be done at facilities that will minimize release from culture facilities when faced with natural disaster?



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- Develop monitoring programs that may lead to early detection and, if possible, elimination of incipient invaders should be instituted, particularly if the population can be prevented from increasing in number of total individuals.
- Do nothing. Initially the least costly of all options but potentially could manifest as the most costly because of the potential loss of resources through direct elimination, reduced growth, and change in community structure, and/or loss of ecological services attributed to the loss of native taxa. Essentially, the cost of doing nothing results in the loss of ecological services gained by maintaining the biological integrity of our landscapes which in turn, results in natural, functioning ecosystems.

### **SARP UPDATE**

Marilyn O'Leary reported that she is one month into a 3 year project to help all of the states in the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership develop invasive species management plans. Those states include all of the Gulf states, Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky and North and South Carolina. She will work with both coastal and interior states. The whole idea of working on management plans is not an exercise in writing. It is an exercise in approaching and thinking about managing resources in a broader way with consideration to habitat, the human aspect involved, and neighbors. O'Leary distributed a paper "How to Produce a Management Plan" which contains the major things for states to think about when developing management plans.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

While discussing strategic plans and management plans, Steve De Koslowski from South Carolina mentioned that this should be a part of the planning process of all state's comprehensive wildlife conservation plans.

Don Schmitz mentioned that they wanted to put together a "Florida Invasive Species Day." Biologists and agricultural scientists who work with invasive species could go into the public school systems and give presentations, particularly to elementary school students. It is something that could be addressed on a national level.

The meeting recessed at 4:50 pm and reconvened Wednesday, November 10, 2004 at 8:30 am.

### **ALABAMA - MISSISSIPPI RAPID ASSESSMENT TEAM**

Dale Diaz reported on the 2004 Mississippi Sound rapid assessment. Goals were to provide a "snapshot" inventory of organisms present in Mississippi Sound and adjacent marine waters in order to identify non-native or exotic species; to provide information on the distribution and abundance of invasive species that have already established populations in local waters; and, to gather information useful for developing management strategies and for planning needed research.



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Assessment originators were Harriet Perry from the Center for Fisheries Research and Development, GCRL-USM and David Yeager from the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. Funding was provided by NOAA Fisheries - Mississippi Research Consortium, Coastal Impact Assistance Program, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. Twenty-eight agencies participated with 115 personnel. Over 500 samples were collected and over 400 species identified. Two invasive animal species were identified, as well as 17 invasive plant species. AMRAT united scientists from diverse agencies, disciplines, and experiences in a common cause - tracking aliens in coastal waters.

### **NEXT MEETING PLACE AND TIME**

Don Schmitz suggested that the Panel coordinate their meeting with the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium to be held May 9 -11, 2005, at the Wyndham Casa Marina Resort in Key West, Florida. Many of the Panel members will be attending the Symposium and Lukens was asked to make a presentation on the Regional Panel at that meeting. The Panel agreed to look at the possibility of coordinating the Panel meeting with the Symposium. Texas in April was selected as a secondary location and timeframe.

The agenda for the Symposium can be reviewed at: [www.fleppc.org](http://www.fleppc.org).

### **ISAC PATHWAYS RISK ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Pam Fuller distributed a report to the Panel entitled "Invasive Species Pathways Team - Final Report." The Pathways Task Team was established at the ISAC meeting at Chico Hot Springs, Montana in June 2002. This team was expected to work in close coordination with the Screening Task Team, which was formed at the same time. The Pathways Task Team's primary goal was to reduce the risk of unintentional introductions by examining pathways. It was to assist in the delivery of action items 16, 17, and 20 in the National Invasive Species Management Plan related to unintentional introductions and prevention. Its jurisdiction included both introductions from outside the U.S. and movement of species between ecosystems with the U.S. Intentional imports of plants and animals appear to be among the most likely pathways for introduction of associated but unintended organisms, including insects, other invertebrates, aquatic animals, terrestrial vertebrates, disease pathogens, and plant seeds and propagules. Therefore, the Pathways Task Team coordinated with the Screening Task Team, to address these overlapping concerns. The necessary coordination was to be provided through an overarching Subcommittee on Prevention.

In practice, the Pathways Task Team focused on a portion of Plan Action Item 20: Developing a system for evaluating the significance of invasive species pathways. They believe the system developed can be used to identify "significant" pathways and to assign them to a broad, five-tiered ranking category (ranging between "high, medium, or low" risk).

Panel members participated in an exercise to rank 3 different pathways using the Draft Questionnaire for Determining the Priority of an Invasive Species Pathway. The first pathway they ranked was

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ballast water. The second was a pathway of their choice of interest to their state. The last was to pick a pathway they knew nothing about.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Harriet Perry made the nomination to re-elect Ron Lukens as Panel Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Dale Diaz. With no objection Lukens was re-elected Chairman.**

**Cynthia Sarthou made the nomination to re-elect David Yeager as Panel Vice-Chairman. The motion was seconded by Leslie Hartman. With no objection Yeager was re-elected Vice-Chairman.**

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Dale Diaz announced that he had organized a field trip for all Panel members. A boat has been chartered to conduct an eco-tour of the Pascagoula River System. The trip was sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

Lukens again offer the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

***There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.***