

NEAEB Café Summary for Table 17

Our Questions

We've become very interested in eradicating invasive plants at huge costs, but when is the treatment worse than the plant?

Can there be effective treatments on a piece of land without whole town/community/region cooperation?

How can we come up with effective policies with so much confusion over terminology: invasive vs non-native vs nuisance vs exotic...?

Moderator Shana Stewart – UVM

Table Attendees

Brian Duffy – VTDEC

Bob Estabrook – NHDES

Eric Howe - VTDEC

Jim Kellogg - VTDEC

Sue Kiernan – RIDEM

Susannah King - NEIWPC

Sarah MacDougall - ENSR

Leslie Matthews – VTDEC

Sacha Pealer – VTDEC

Tom Torcher – Metcalf and Eddy

Tara Trink - UME

Ashley Wright – UVM

States are struggling to cut through bureaucracy and red tape to create effective management. (RI is working on their first invasive species program, an aquatic invasive species plan.) As states, we often don't know how widespread the problem of invasives is in the first place; citizens don't have a clear vision of what to control and why. There were also many different definitions for invasives and non-agreement on their effects to point out that we're not all speaking the same language when it comes to these species – but we all seem to agree that something must be done (the plants are moving faster than we are, for sure).

Why care?

Habitat loss, reduced recreational abilities, reduced property value, threats to endangered species, richer natural communities, biotic integrity – all these were reasons given to care about invasives, but we're falling through with making this meaningful to a lay audience.

What are the measurable outcomes of treatment; what's good?

Folks are struggling with a definition for what effective treatment is. Is 15% a good reduction in purple loosestrife. If patch density is reduced by 15% have the biological control initiatives then succeeded? If these plants can come back like cancer in a few years can we ever say we've eradicated a plant from an area? The need for priorities and goals was illustrated.

Early detection/Priorities

Successful management plans are adding in early detection realizing that once an invasive is established and builds a seed bank it's relatively impossible to eradicate. Prioritizing which species to manage is important, but may only be possible to decide on a parcel by parcel basis. Looking at the biology of the plant, why it's invasive, and the long-term consequences of its presence/dominance is a

great place to start prioritizing. Many states use ‘weed-watchers’ to catch early invasions in order to prioritize small/new infestations and take care of them before they become a widespread problem.

\$

Politicians give \$ if they perceive that their constituents care. There’s often funding to start initiatives, but frequently getting money for monitoring and long-term initiatives is a hard sell. Volunteer monitoring may be the salvation if invasive monitoring – folks are looking to initiatives in Maine and the Adirondack park for inspiration.

Showing people that we can save money in the long run by the actions we take today goes a long way in getting funding.

Education

Much of our discussion led back to the need for education and outreach, and the conundrum of funding for ed and outreach being the first to go when things get tight.

The term “environmental hygiene” (coined by Leslie Matthews). A need to build environmental awareness into our culture so it’s second nature like washing your hands after visiting the restroom, or vaccinating yourself against major diseases.

Rapid Response

If response is quick money is saved and plants don’t spread to epidemic proportions. How can we create region-wide knowledge and response to keep exotics in check? No matter what, a one time treatment isn’t enough, we need to continue treatment every few years or so-you don’t get all of them forever.

Chemical use

The concern was raised that repeated chemical use in low batches may lead to chemically resistant plants...knocking them out hard first may be a better approach.

Community/Regional scale

There was a struggle in our discussions between the needs of areas being so different that a regional policy on invasives is impossible to the need for a region to work together in order to have any hope in reducing the spread of invasive species. The Northeast Plant Management Society was mentioned as a possible source of a regional initiative to coordinate states (and help with coordinating rapid response or bureaucracy). Overall, folks agreed that there is a place for both local and regional scale to invasive species management, and that all management plans need to be dynamic and adaptive in order to manage an evolving problem.

To Do

Some interesting initiatives are occurring in the Northeast with respect to invasive species including: sticker programs, weed watchers, volunteers monitoring boat access, and educational opportunities for kids and adults. We need to coordinate somehow and stop reinventing the wheel.