

**Invasive Species Working Group
Monday, October 17, 2016
Department of Conservation and Recreation, Richmond, Virginia**

Invasive Species Working Group Members Present

The Honorable Molly Ward, Secretary of Natural Resources, Chair
Sandra Adams, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Bettina Ring, State Forester, Department of Forestry
Clyde Cristman, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Sharon Baxter, Department of Environmental Quality
Charles Kilpatrick, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Lori Chamberlin, Department of Forestry
Ray Fernald, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Karen Gruszynski, VDH
Scott Barras, USDA APHIS WS
Debra Martin, VDACS
Larry Nichols, VDACS

Staff Present

Jason Bulluck, DCR
Michael Fletcher, DCR
Kevin Heffernan, DCR
Rick Myers, DCR

Others

Jim Hurley, Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species

Welcome and Introductions – Secretary of Natural Resources, Molly Ward

Secretary Ward called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked members and staff to introduce themselves.

APHIS Feral Swine Program – Scott Barras, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

Mr. Barras gave an update on Feral Swine Management in Virginia.

Developing a National Strategy to Manage Feral Swine

In March, 2014 – APHIS received funding to implement a collaborative, national feral swine management program in states where there was a recognized feral swine population.

Primary Goal: Minimize damage caused by feral swine to protect agriculture and livestock, natural resources, property, and human health and safety.

APHIS will reduce problems by:

1. Suppressing populations in states where feral swine populations are large and widely distributed.
2. Eliminating feral swine in states where populations are low or newly emerging.

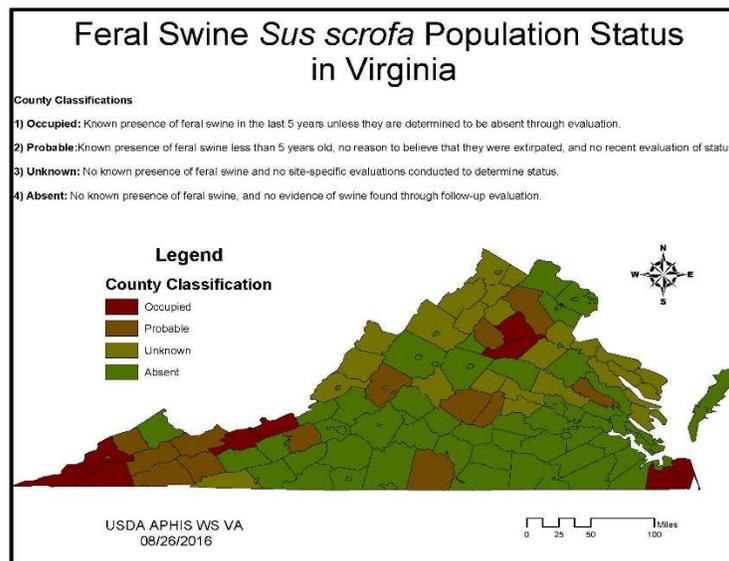
Virginia's Role in the National Program

- Level 3 (Intermediate level) state
- Known populations
- Unknown distribution
- Established base funding
- Opportunity for competitive projects

Program Approach

- Contact and partner with land management agencies (USDA, Forest Service, DCR, TNC, VDGIF, etc.)
- Print and broadcast media
- Contact landowners, investigate reports of feral swine
- Attendance at trade shows/industry conferences/public events
- Posting fliers, direct mailing – over 56,000 postcards were mailed to routes in 11 counties.

Feral Swine Sus scrofa Population Status in Virginia



Active Project Areas

- Culpeper/Orange
- Lee/Scott/Wise

- Bland/Giles
- Chesapeake/Virginia Beach

WS Feral Swine Management in Virginia – May 2014-July 2016

- 148 feral swine removed from 4 project areas
- Swine removed by traps (125), firearms (21), snares (2)
- Carcass disposal by incineration at regional VDACS labs or burial on site

Disease Surveillance – May 2014-February 2016

- 138 feral swine sampled
- Diseases of concern include classical swine fever, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, swine influenza

National Feral Swine Genetics Archive

- Hair samples collected from adults/sub-adults
- Used to assess region of origin, detect movement, determine genetic composition of feral swine

Positive Feral Swine Tests, May 2014 – July 2016							
County	PRV	IAV	SP	LEPTO	PRRS	TOXO	BTV
Bland	3 (1 suspect)						
Culpeper	1 suspect	2		14		6	
Lee	1	2	1	14	2	4	1
Total	4 (2 suspect)	4	1	28	2	10	1
PRV=Pseudorabies IAVS=Influenza A SB=Swine Brucellosis LEPTO=Leptospirosis PRRS=Porcine Reproductive Respiratory Syndrome TOXO=Toxoplasmosis BTV=Blue Tongue Virus							

Challenges – Recreational Hunting

- Shooting only removes a few animals
- Hogs disperse, become more wary
- Trapping becomes more difficult
- Hog hunting culture develops, may result in illegal releases

Other Challenges

- Free-ranging livestock
- Property Access

- Unanticipated such as other wildlife

What's Next?

- Continue mapping, control efforts, and disease monitoring
- Expand outreach/education
- Aerial shooting (Back Bay NWR/False Cape State Park)
- Coordination with WS programs in KY, TN, NC

Mr. Cristman asked if there had been much progress.

Mr. Barras replied that there had been progress in the areas where there was access. He noted that since the program is not regulatory permission must be gained to access landowner property were feral swine are found.

Mr. Barras reported that Kentucky and Tennessee are both making progress along their respective borders.

Wavyleaf Grass Update – Kevin Heffernan, DCR Natural Heritage

Mr. Heffernan gave an update on Wavyleaf Grass (*Oplismenus undulatifolius*).

In Virginia as of October 2016, there are over 50 known wavyleaf sites totaling over 500 acres of cover.

Seeds are dispersed on human clothing, on domestic animals, and by wildlife.

Project Wavyleaf in Virginia from 2013 – 2015 included:

- DOF & DCR
- Wavyleaf Grass Task Force
- Fact Sheet
- Surveys
- GIS Database
- Outreach and Training
- Treatment Study

Project Wavyleaf in Virginia from 2016 – 2018 will include:

- Wavyleaf Grass Task Force
- Surveys
- Wavyleaf Control Brochure
- Wavyleaf Workshop
- Wavyleaf Control Sites

Mr. Heffernan noted that the best way to control Wavyleaf Grass was to apply herbicide before the plant goes to seed. However, the life of the seed bank is unknown so controls must be applied annually until the growth is eradicated.

Mr. Heffernan reported that Maryland is controlling Wavyleaf Grass on selected sites.

Wavyleaf Grass is a concern because of the impact on other forest floor species. It suppresses seedlings for shrubs and trees. Diversity is lost on the forest floor and there is an impact on forest regeneration.

Dr. Myers noted that Wavyleaf Grass portends a profound change in the makeup of forest composition as well as wildlife habitat.

Mr. Hurley from the Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species advised that land management agencies such as the Forest Service and National Parks do not have the resources to address the known populations of Wavyleaf Grass.

Invasive Species Management Plan Revision Process – Kevin Heffernan, DCR Natural Heritage

Mr. Heffernan reviewed the Invasive Species Management Plan.

The plan has seven goals. There is no funding for the program. The goals are:

- Goal 1: Cooperation
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Invasive Species Advisory Committee
 - Invasive Species Working Group
 - Noxious Weed Steering Committee
 - Other Partnerships
- Goal 2: Prevention
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
- Goal 3: Early Detection
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Early Detection Plan List
 - Early Detection & Reporting Citizen Scientist Trainings
 - Development of Online Reporting and Mapping Tools
- Goal 4: Rapid Response
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Emerald Ash Borer
 - Wavyleaf Grass
- Goal 5: Management
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Feral Swine
 - Phragmites
 - Mile-a-minute
 - Hemlock Woody Adelgid

- Goal 6: Research
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Wavyleaf Grass
 - Feral Swine
 - Nutria
 - Snakehead Fish
- Goal 7: Education
Accomplishments or ongoing work includes:
 - Virginia Master Naturalist Trainings
 - Web-based Tools
 - Expanding Outreach

2017 Revision Process

- Advisory Committee
 - Review current plan 2016-early 2017
 - Discuss updates, changes, additions early 2017
 - Review draft spring 2017
 - Present draft to Working Group late spring/summer 2017
- Working Group
 - Vote to approve or reject draft
- Governor
 - Signs approval, or not

Mr. Cristman advised that members of the General Assembly are looking for more active recommendations from the Working Group regarding commercially sold products as well as homeowner rights when their property is being encroached upon by an invasive species from a neighbor's land.

Bamboo Fact Sheet – Kevin Heffernan, DCR Natural Heritage

Mr. Heffernan gave an update regarding the Bamboo fact Sheet. He noted that Senator Hanger had expressed concern regarding invasive bamboo and what recourse homeowners might have.

Mr. Heffernan noted that there had been discussion of freeing up localities to establish ordinances to deal with invasive bamboo and that consideration could be given to good neighbor laws.

DCR Natural Heritage, with cooperation from Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, is developing a bamboo fact sheet publication to help educate the public regarding the invasive nature of bamboo. There are some 1,400 species of bamboo worldwide. While it can create beautiful and interesting landscapes, Bamboo can be both invasive and damaging.

There are over 20 documented occurrences of golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*) outside of cultivation are documented in Virginia, but this is likely under-reported. It is important to note that not all bamboo species are invasive.

Recommendations in the fact sheet include: 1) choosing species wisely, avoiding aggressive/invasive species; 2) stand maintenance that includes implementing strategies to keep bamboo on one's property from spreading elsewhere.

The working group discussed ways to deal with invasive bamboo and noted it is important to educate the public regarding which species are not invasive. The fact sheet should contain control recommendations as well as advise to landowners who wish to plant bamboo.

Agency Updates

VDACS

Mr. Nichols gave an update for VDACS.

Noxious weed regulations

During the 2016 Session, the General Assembly amended the Noxious Weed Law through HB734. Previously the list contained noxious weeds not widely disseminated and did not allow commercially propagated or grown plants to be listed. The advisory committee is working to revise the regulations so that necessary changes can be made with regard to the list of plants.

Boxwood Blight

Boxwood blight causes leaf drop and severe die back, and can also cause mortality. A retailer in Southwest Virginia was found to be selling plants with boxwood blight. These plants originated in Oregon. VDACS approached the retailer and the retailer was able to remove about 1,500 diseased boxwoods from the market.

Thousand Cankers Disease

No new cases have been reported in recent years. VDACS is continuing to collect traps and analyze the spread of this disease.

Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Mr. Fernald said that the primary work of DGIF was to control the feral hog population. DGIF is also dealing with the spread of nutria along the southern border.

DGIF now has two nutria detection dogs that have been used in the Chesapeake Bay region. The intent is to use them elsewhere in Virginia.

DGIF is also working on the control of snakehead fish, blue catfish, Hydrilla at Claytor Lake and mute swans.

DGIF will be publishing a Mid-Atlantic field guide to aquatic invasive species. DGIF is also looking into wavy leaf grass on wildlife management areas as well as aquatic invasive species coming into the state from boats and trailers.

Department of Forestry

Ms. Chamberlin gave an update for the Department of Forestry.

DOF just finished the 2nd year of Non-Invasive cost-share funding. This provides to landowners up to 50% of the cost of treating invasive plants. In the 2nd year, 16 land owners have been able to treat 800 acres. It appears that enough funding will be available to cover a third year.

The summer of 2016 saw the first large outbreak of Gypsy Moth since 2009. Most of the outbreak occurred in Giles and Bland Counties on some 29,000 acres.

Department of Environmental Quality
Ms. Baxter gave an update for DEQ.

The Coast Zone Management Program has been working on regionally focused native plant guides for consumers and landscapers. This guide is being duplicated outside the coastal zone.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date is to be determined.

Adjourn

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.