

**Invasive Species Working Group
Wednesday, September 17, 2025
Patrick Henry Building - Richmond, Virginia**

Working Group Members Present

The Honorable Stefanie K. Taillon, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Chair
The Honorable Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Vice Chair
Becky Gwen, Deputy Director, Department of Wildlife Resources
Missy Neff, Senior Advisor for Environmental Outreach, Dominion Energy
Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester, Department of Forestry
Larry Nichols, Division Director, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Jamie Green, Commissioner, Marine Resources Commission
Katie Hellebush, Executive Director, Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association
Dr. Mike Rolband, Director, Department of Environmental Quality
Matthew Wells, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Dr. Eleanor Labgold, State Public Health Entomologist, Department of Health
Mr. Martin Krebs, Environmental Stewardship Program Manager, Department of Transportation
Dr. Jacob Barney, Virginia Tech, Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science
Dr. Derek Aday, Director, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Working Group Members Absent

Nicole Rovner, Associate Director, The Nature Conservancy

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Taillon called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM and called for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM JUNE 2025

WORKGROUP ACTION

Director Wells moved to approve the June 11, 2025, meeting minutes. Director Rolband seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: Aday, Barney, Brich, Green, Gwen, Hellebush, Labgold, Lohr, Neff, Nichols, Rolband, Taillon, Wells, and Zimmer.

REPORT ON THE INVASIVE PLANT RETAIL SIGNAGE LAW

Mr. Nichols provided the workgroup with an update on the progress of the workgroup subcommittee, who have developed a template of the invasive plant species retail signage required by Senate Bill 1166. The subcommittee received feedback from the nursery industry, who provided edits to the language used within the sign. There are four versions of the sign template, all with the same language and the only difference between each is the formatting. The workgroup reviewed the sign template and Mr. Nichols indicated that there are two links or QR codes within the sign with one going to DCR's webpage and the other going to VDACS's webpage.

WORKGROUP ACTION

After review of the sign and information provided by Mr. Nichols, the workgroup agreed by consensus to approve the sign.

REPORT ON THE DCR INVASIVE PLANT WEB RESOURCES

Kevin Heffernan, DCR, presented information on the landing page of the QR code for the invasive plant species retail sign. The landing page includes a fact list on invasive plant species along with resources where the individual visiting the page can gather more information if they decide to look further into the invasive plant species. There are three options provided on the webpage to conduct further research, which includes links to “What NOT to Plant,” “What TO Plant,” and “Learn More.” Further, Mr. Heffernan informed the workgroup that the webpage will be updated in the future to include a story map for thirty-nine of the plants that are deemed invasive by law. Additionally, there will be maps embedded in the webpage, which will show where the invasive plant species are located and how they are spreading. DCR staff will upload this data as it is collected, and it will allow individuals to research how close the invasive species may be to the area they live in or where they conduct business. DCR will continue to work with other agencies to ensure the data provided is accurate and up to date.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Commissioner Green, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, stated there are no updates as they are continuing the work of the catfish removal workgroup.
- Dr. Aday, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, stated there are no updates.
- Ms. Hellebush, Virginia Nursery and Landscaping Association, indicated the association will continue to spread the word about the invasive plant species signage. Additionally, they are working on a webpage with updates about the box tree moth.
- Ms. Neff, Dominion Energy, indicated there are no updates to report at this time and Dominion will continue to work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Mr. Nichols, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, provided background information on the box tree moth, which was previously discovered in West Virginia earlier this year. The box tree moth has been discovered in Frederick, Clark, and Loudon counties after a survey was conducted on boxwood plants in these areas. A contractor has been hired to treat these areas for the invasive species; however, it may be too late to address the issue at this time.
- Director Rolband, Department of Environmental Quality, indicated they do not have an update and they will continue to implement the invasive species listed with the Department of Conservation and Recreation in the permits they issue.
- Mr. Zimmer, Department of Forestry, announced Katlin DeWitt is the Invasive Species Coordinator for the Department of Forestry and she will be in attendance at future workgroup meetings as a technical expert on invasive species.
- Dr. Labgold, Department of Health, introduced herself as the new State Public Health Entomologist and indicated there were no other updates from the Department of Health.
- Ms. Gwen, Department of Wildlife Resources, indicated they have continued the battle against two-horned trapa at public fishing lakes in Northern Virginia. At the end of August, their team removed 2500 pounds of the species from Lake Orange, located in Orange County, VA. Additionally, DWR has been working with the US Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station to use a recently approved aquatic herbicide to effectively eradicate the species. There were two treatments conducted within Lake Brittle in June and August, where vegetation surveys were conducted to determine the effectiveness of these treatments. DWR is

continuing their partnership with USDA Wildlife Services in the surveillance and eradication of feral hogs.

- Dr. Barney, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science, provided an update indicating they will be facilitating a workshop with six state agencies to discuss the state research agenda and connect these agencies to researchers on campus. Additionally, the Invasive Species Collaborative will be cohosting the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA) conference in November 2026, which will be held in Washington, D.C. or possibly in Northern Virginia.
- Director Wells, Department of Conservation and Recreation, informed the workgroup that the Natural Heritage Division is concluding basic treatment in regions funded by the US Forest Service of the Department of Forestry where fourteen different invasive plant species are being eradicated from natural area preserves. Unfortunately, Virginia is now being affected by the wavyleaf grass, as it has been discovered in Crows Nest within Stafford, VA. The department is working on conducting a survey to gather information soon. As for the State Parks Division, the department continues to collaborate with the Department of Forestry as they work to update GIS data gathered regarding invasive species. Ms. DeWitt and Mr. Heffernan briefly described the Virginia Invasive Species Accomplishment Report FY2025, which was provided to the workgroup to display the success multiple agencies have been apart of when addressing invasive species.
- Mr. Krebs, Department of Transportation, provided an update indicating the department is working to address Johnson Grass and emerald ash borer problems. To address the emerald ash borer problems, they are removing trees to prevent them from falling into roadways. The department spent \$3.1 million dollars last year and will spend another \$3 million dollars that has been allocated for this year to deal with the issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:43 PM.