

Regulations and Policy

Goal B: Establish and enforce sound invasive weeds and agricultural pest regulations and policies

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has several authorities related to invasive weeds and agricultural pest management. Many of these authorities were granted at the time of statehood with few revisions since their adoption. In recent years Alaska State government and agencies realizing the growing threat of invasive weeds and agricultural pests have pushed for updates to regulations and increased management and prevention activity.

The response of Alaska’s state government is very timely. Alaska has a rare opportunity to prevent the costly and often irreversible damage to natural resources, wild areas and the agricultural industry caused by invasive species. Effective regulations are one of the most important elements to invasive species prevention and management. Now is the time to address these issues before Alaska suffers the preventable losses experienced in the other 49 states and around the globe.

The State of Alaska, DNR, and Division of Agriculture (DOA) have several tools that pertain to prevention, regulation, and enforcement (Appendix D). The Environmental Law Institute (ELI) reviewed existing state laws for invasive species and developed “Model” invasive species laws to assist states in developing their laws (ELI 2002). According to ELI there are

many state tools that are important for effective invasive species management and they encourage the addition of components that foster control, management, and coordination.

Alaska regulations have several of the ELI identified state tools in place and several that are missing (Appendix D). Already present is the authority to declare pests, inspect infested areas, quarantine, and eradicate pests. Missing is a process to declare a pest, clearly linking invasive plants as part of pest management, clear description of what happens and who is responsible when applicable invasive species are found, regional prioritization of regulated species, and a board or council. According to the ELI 2002 study Alaska is missing three tools to have just more than the minimum required invasive species regulations and authorities in place. These missing tools are a definition of invasive species, an authorized board or council, and emergency authority.

Another study (Rice 2008) looked at structures for invasive species management lists that are used, and evaluated the pros and cons for different approaches. The DOA hosts a noxious weeds list that is subject to review under [AS 03.05.027](#). Table 4, modified from Rice 2008, summarizes possible categories for invasive weeds and agricultural pests regulatory listing.

Public identified priorities

Participants in scoping had mixed levels of understanding of the current regulations for invasive weeds and agricultural pests. Participants overwhelmingly found development of an invasive species list separate from the weed seed list to be important to highly important. Respondents tended towards wanting lists separated by taxa. The majority of respondents felt it is important to identify the priority for management for a pest when developing a regulatory list for invasive weeds and agricultural pests. All respondents found value in promoting voluntary cooperation. All respondents found value in increasing the inspections of commodities known to be vectors of invasive weeds and agricultural pests.

Table 4. Possible categories for invasive weed and agricultural pest lists

Category	General Purpose
Clean list	Plants considered non-invasive and not subject to regulation
Watch list	Collect information on potentially invasive plants
Quarantine for complete exclusion	Prevent introduction into the state
Eradicate	Eradicate or contain new invaders already in the state
Contain	Regionally abundant weeds. Suppression or eradication where appropriate
Suppress	Suppress statewide abundant weeds
Quarantined Beneficial	Containment of established beneficial plants with invasive traits
Emergency	New weeds to the state, previously not thought to be capable of establishing themselves.

Table 4, modified from Rice 2008, describes categories that are used for invasive species regulatory lists in other parts of the world.

Objective 1:

Ensure appropriate invasive weeds and agricultural pest regulations are established.

Action Strategies

1. Review and revise regulations to make them more comprehensive and easier to understand.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA
Timeline: June 2011
2. Develop noxious weed list separate from the current Prohibited and Restricted Noxious Weed Seed Lists.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA, SWCD, CWMA, CES, and stakeholders
Timeline: June 2012
3. Develop agricultural pests list separate from the invasive weeds list.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA, SWCD, DOF and stakeholders
Timeline: June 2012
4. Biannually, establish and update invasive plant and agricultural pest lists that identify species for quarantine, eradication, containment or suppression.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA, stakeholders
Timeline: June 2012 with biannual updates
5. Coordinate development and regularly review of local priority lists of invasive plants and agricultural pests identifying species for eradication, containment and suppression for established CWMA or SWCD groups.
Suggested participants: SWCD, conservation organizations, DNR, DOF, DOA Local land managers
Timeline: June 2012 with biannual updates



Objective 2:

Promote cooperation with established regulations, and increase enforcement where necessary.

Action Strategies

1. Educate the public to promote compliance by developing a fact sheet about invasive plant and agricultural pest laws in Alaska.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA, SWCD, CES, CWMA, DOF and others
Timeline: June 2012
2. Increase the number of state regulatory inspections of domestic items for invasive weeds and agricultural pests by at least five additional inspections annually.
Suggested participants: DNR, DOA
Timeline: June 2012-2016