

Texas Invasive Species Coordinating Committee Minutes
July 16, 2010 Meeting Capitol Extension Room E2.018

The meeting was convened by Chairman Dr. Charles Hart, Texas AgriLife Extension, July 16 2010 at 10:04 am., Committee members attending were Dr. Earl Chilton, Vice Chair, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Dr. Ron Billings, Texas Forest Service, Katherine Calnan, Texas Water Development Board, Mel Davis, Texas State Soil Water and Conservation Board and Dr. Shashank Nilakhe, Texas Department of Agriculture.

Guests: Lucas Gregory (TWRI), Kevin Wagner (TWRI), Carla Guthrie (TWDB – TISCC Alternate), Jim Reeves (Texas Nursery & Landscape Association), Bob Gruner (TSSWCB-TISCC Alternate), Allison Scott (Chief of Staff -Rep. Swinford), Lauren Wied (Legislative Staff - Sen. Hegar); Jason Modglin (Staff- TDA); Garrett Doris (Staff- TDA).

January 27, 2010 Meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The committee agreed that the next TISCC Activity Report should be worked on in the months of October, November and December 2010 for submittal January 1, 2011. After the next submission, the report should be updated as needed.

Dr. Hart requested that Mel Davis check on rules regarding Open Meetings Act (OMA) policies/guidelines. Dr. Hart would like clarification on rules and decision making regarding business conducted through email (Google Group) and business conducted at official meetings; more specifically regarding approving letters of support from committee. Mel Davis stated that OMA applies to public entities, committees and agency advisory committees. Mel Davis will submit a request to the Attorney General for clarification on conducting business and making decisions through email and at official meetings.

Kevin Wagner with TWRI discussed the project "Improving Border Security and Ecosystem Function of the Rio Grande Through Invasive Species Control." Dr. Hart drafted a letter of support for the project from the committee (action item). Proposal will be sent the week following the July 16, 2010 meeting. Dr. Chilton made the motion to send the letter of support for the project, Dr. Billings seconded the motion and it was passed.

Lucas Gregory with TWRI works with the Center for Invasive Species Eradication (cise.tamu.edu). He explained to the committee that Senator Hutchison directed funding for Caddo Lake and Giant Salvinia control. The Center for Invasive Species Eradication is also spraying (aerial) salt-cedar along the Rio Grande, using biological control, encouraging landowner participation and distributing a newsletter called "Beetlemania." The website for the salt-cedar projects is pecosbasin.tamu.edu.

Dr. Chilton discussed the committee website progress. He is looking for a contract with a non-profit to host the website. There is a 2-3 week turn around for this to happen. Mel Davis suggested the possible name for the website: texasinvasivespeciescommittee.org. Dr. Chilton stated that there would be a website preview at the next meeting and a discussion of content for the site. Mel Davis stated that it might be possible to host the website on the TSSWCB server and would see what is involved in the process or the procedures to do so. Also, Mr. Davis said he would check with the TSSWCB Information Technology department to see if the server can work with Parks and Wildlife who is developing the website.

Dr. Billings discussed the draft of the “Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan for the State of Texas “. He stated that the draft has been sent out for review, the Borer is not currently in Texas, and that Texas AgriLife is conducting campground surveys to help direct the plan. Allison Scott commented on the individual Agency Activity Reports submitted by the committee to Representative Swinford’s office. She stated that finding new federal funding is still not the focus of each agency and that the committee was formed to seek out new federal funding for Invasive Species control.

Dr. Hart suggested that the committee send a letter supporting Texas Invasive Species control to agency heads and about TISCC activities after getting the website up and running and also compiling a database with available grant opportunities for funding to distribute. Mel Davis said each agency should also send out a newsletter regarding Invasive Species activities.

Mel Davis requested to establish a Border subcommittee on all border invasive species. This subcommittee would find funding, increase awareness for the need for research and information, the requirements for getting projects started. Mel Davis said other committee members should bring intent and possible subcommittee members to next meeting for an action item. The members of the subcommittee would possibly be TSSWCB, TPWD, USDA and TWRI.

Mel Davis asked the committee to seek out funding sources for the website, administrative functions, and supplies. Dr. Nilakhe said the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) might be a possible funding source. Dr. Chilton said a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with committee member agencies for \$10,000 each might be a possibility.

Katherine Calnan requested that Meredith Whitley compile a database on funding resources to include deadline, contact, etc. to be posted on website. She said this would be helpful to other entities looking for available funding. Dr. Chilton stated that Parks and Wildlife has a long list of federal sources and that he would share this list for the database. Dr. Hart requested that we have a database list started for the next meeting.

Dr. Hart said that the focus of the committee needs to be acquiring funding before focusing on how to prioritize invasive species. Dr. Billings stated that the individual agencies should prioritize invasive species. Mel Davis said that the invasive species should be prioritized according to the Texas Department of Agriculture starting with what invasive species are here and then focusing on what invasive species are coming to Texas. Dr. Nilakhe said that money dictates what invasive species to focus on.

In other business, Dr. Nilakhe talked about House Bill 1391 and Parks and Wildlife list including Algae. He asked that the committee provide input on this matter and that once the rules come out, decide if the committee should provide input. Dr. Chilton said that there is time for public comment from each individual agency if the committee does not agree. Dr. Chilton stated that he would send out the latest list and comments along with the approved non-indigenous list. The rules are out for comment on August 25. Dr. Hart suggested after sending a letter of support out, send a follow-up letter to get information about funding received and then post on website; success stories.

Dr. Hart said that the next meeting date will be determined by using the doodle calendar sent out by Meredith Whitley through email; dates considered will be in September and October.

Dr. Chilton made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Katherine Calnan seconded the motion. The motion passed to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.