

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Region Policy on Minimizing the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities

*Effective October 3, 2016*

Associated Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Pacific Region Template of Programmatic Guidelines to Minimize the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities

Appendix 2 - Compendium of Recommended Procedures and Best Management Practices Relevant to Minimizing the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities

Appendix 3 - Compendium of Laws, Regulations, and Policies Relevant to Minimizing the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities

## **1. What is the purpose and intent of this policy?**

- A.** Reduce the harm from invasive species<sup>1</sup> to the fish, wildlife, plants and habitats we work to conserve, protect, and enhance.
- B.** Increase Pacific Region employee<sup>2</sup> awareness about the risk of invasive species, and promote a culture of prevention<sup>3</sup>.
- C.** Direct Pacific Region employees to minimize the risk of invasive species introductions<sup>4</sup>, recognizing that absolute prevention may not be feasible.
- D.** Establish minimum expectations for invasive species prevention guidelines for field activities conducted, funded, reviewed, or authorized by Pacific Region employees, while extending flexibility regarding the specificity of those guidelines.
- E.** Complement prevention guidelines already adopted by Pacific Region offices and/or utilized collaboratively with our partners<sup>5</sup>.
- F.** Promote an adaptive and collaborative approach to developing and implementing guidelines (e.g., pilot projects or phased implementation) that encourages cross-program coordination and facilitates sharing of guidelines and lessons learned.

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<sup>1</sup> “Invasive species” are organisms that are nonnative to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or impact human health; includes nonnative pathogens and other microorganisms. Nonnative species are species that have been introduced into new areas which were not historically part of their native range.

<sup>2</sup> “Pacific Region employee” includes contractors and volunteers acting in the same capacity as Service employees.

<sup>3</sup> “Prevention” means the sum of all activities, including communications, which reduce the risk of introducing invasive species to any portion of the United States and its Territories.

<sup>4</sup> “Introductions” refers to transporting invasive organism to a new location where they do not yet occur and are unlikely to arrive without human facilitation. Introductions occur across a range of scales, from transcontinental to between adjacent watersheds.

<sup>5</sup> “Partners” are individuals or organizations that are funded to do work on behalf of or collaborate with the Service.

- G. Help ensure Pacific Region compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies applicable to Federal agencies, including Executive Order 13112<sup>6</sup>.
- H. Recognize that there are pathways<sup>7</sup> of introduction beyond direct Service control, and endorse collaboration between the Pacific Region and partners to address these when feasible.
- I. Acknowledge that while prevention is the ideal method to address invasive species, it is also necessary for the Pacific Region to invest in early detection, rapid response, and long-term control<sup>8</sup> in order to minimize harm.

## 2. What expectations are set by the Pacific Region's Policy on Minimizing the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities?

- A. The Pacific Region places a high priority on prevention as the most effective strategy for avoiding harm caused by invasive species. The Pacific Region will work to minimize invasive species introductions by (1) Service employees (2) actions that other parties carry out with Service funding; and (3) other parties' actions for which the Service has regulatory, permitting, coordination, or other authority.
- B. Field Activities by Service Employees

Pacific Region Programs<sup>9</sup>, whose employees conduct field activities<sup>10</sup> that could introduce invasive species, will adopt and implement invasive species prevention guidelines that address the following critical elements:

- (1) Some form of risk evaluation for activities that have an uncertain risk of invasive species introduction, and therefore require further assessment in order to determine effective prevention guidelines.
- (2) Use of pest-free or low-risk sources of plants, mulch, wood, animal feed, or other materials brought to a field site or Service-owned property.
- (3) Avoidance of unnecessary exposure to invasive species at a particular site (to the extent practical) to reduce contamination.

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<sup>6</sup> Executive Order 13112, Sec.2.1999. Federal Agency Duties: Each Federal agency whose actions may affect the status of invasive species shall, to the extent practicable and permitted by law, (1) identify such actions; (2) subject to the availability of appropriations, and within Administration budgetary limits, use relevant programs and authorities to: (i) prevent the introduction of invasive species...(3) not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere unless, pursuant to guidelines that it has prescribed, the agency has determined and made public its determination that the benefits of such actions clearly outweigh the potential harm caused by invasive species; and that all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm will be taken in conjunction with the actions. [Underlining added for emphasis]

<sup>7</sup> "Pathways", also referred to as vectors, are the physical means or agents by which invasive species are relocated, as well as the route by which invasive species are moved between locations. For example, a boat and boating both represent a pathway.

<sup>8</sup> Includes associated habitat remediation.

<sup>9</sup> "Program" means organizational unit within the Region that is led by a member of the Regional Directorate Team (such as Migratory Birds, Ecological Services).

<sup>10</sup> "Field activities" includes but is not limited to activities such as habitat restoration, land management, monitoring, construction, research, species recovery, education, law enforcement or any other field activity that poses a risk for inadvertently introducing invasive species (including eggs, seeds, and other propagules).

- (4) Inspection of clothing, gear, vehicles, watercraft, construction materials, and equipment; and decontamination or removal of any material that might include invasive species and associated parts (such as seeds or larvae); a) before going into the field, b) before moving between field sites, and c) before or upon returning from a field site.
- (5) Drainage of water from any equipment, watercraft, or other objects that can introduce aquatic invasive species at relevant sites.
- (6) Inspection, decontamination, and/or quarantine of animals being transported by Service operations from one field site to another, including but not limited to trust fish and wildlife species, cattle, goats, horses, and dogs.
- (7) Signage and other outreach materials, availability of decontamination resources, and other methods designed to reduce invasive species introductions by visitors to Service lands and facilities.

Given the dynamic nature of invasive species, and the lack of uniformly accepted prevention protocols for most organisms and pathways, Programs have the flexibility to adopt guidelines that best fit their range of activities, as long as those guidelines address items 1-7 above. Programs also have the option to use the guidelines template established in Appendix 1 and also may incorporate specific prevention protocols as appropriate from the extensive compendium of recommended procedures found in Appendix 2. In adopting guidelines, Programs should consider the need for more conservative measures (e.g., use of site-dedicated gear) for high risk or particularly sensitive areas such as designated wilderness, sensitive caves, or post-fire areas.

#### C. Service Funding of Partner Field Activities

When providing funding to partners for field activities that could introduce invasive species, Program employees should consider the risk of invasive species introductions from the funded work, collaborate with funding recipients to identify and address activity-specific invasive species risks, and include prevention stipulations in funding agreements and contracts as warranted (incorporating, where appropriate, the Program's guidelines established for Service employee field activities).

#### D. Service Oversight of Field Activities by Other Parties

When providing regulatory and technical oversight over field activities by other parties (including, but not limited to, Refuge Special Use Permits, Endangered Species Act consultations, Section 10 Incidental Take Permits, and project environmental reviews) that could introduce invasive species, Program employees should consider the risk of invasive species introduction and include stipulations in permits, consultations, technical assistance, and other oversight actions as warranted and as authorized (incorporating, where appropriate, the Program's guidelines established for Service employee field activities).

#### E. Evaluation and Revision

Program employees should consider methods to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of the guidelines they issue under this policy, and may consider reviewing and revising guidelines

and protocols that had been in place prior to adoption of this policy due to new invasive species risks.

**F. Timeline for Policy Implementation**

Programs should prepare and disseminate their final guidelines associated with this policy within one year of its adoption, and should fully apply those guidelines for all applicable activities within two years of policy adoption. This period is intended to facilitate piloting and phasing of new requirements.

**G. Implementation Capacity**

To the extent that employee or financial resources limit capacity to adequately implement guidelines that minimize invasive species introductions, supervisors will work with regional invasive species leads, members of the Pacific Region Invasive Species Team<sup>11</sup> and Program managers to identify gaps and seek additional capacity.

**3. What individual responsibilities are established by the Pacific Region's Policy on Minimizing the Introduction of Invasive Species by Service Activities?**

**A. All Pacific Region Employees will:**

- (1) Implement the guidelines adopted by their Program or field station/office pursuant to this policy.

**B. The Regional Director will:**

- (1) Communicate the need for invasive species prevention and the substance of this policy to all Regional employees.

**C. Assistant Regional Directors and other Regional Directorate Team members will:**

- (1) Oversee development, approval, and adoption of prevention guidelines for their Programs that fall under the scope of the policy outlined in Section 2 above.
- (2) Reinforce and ensure that Project Leaders are aware of these guidelines and follow the policy.

**D. Field Office Project Leaders and Regional Office Division Chiefs will:**

- (1) Facilitate employee awareness of this policy.
- (2) Understand employees' needs for time and resources to comply with the policy, and seek to gain this capacity as warranted (see Section 2.G – Implementation Capacity).
- (3) Identify at least one Invasive Species Prevention Lead<sup>12</sup> among their employees (or take that role themselves) and provide that name to the chair of the Pacific Region Invasive Species Team.
- (4) Ensure compliance with State and Federal invasive species laws and regulations (see Appendix 3).

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<sup>11</sup> “Pacific Region Invasive Species Team (PRIST)” is an informal cross-program team with open membership that is chaired by the Science Applications Program and was established to enhance coordination and promote a unified approach to invasive species management in Pacific Region.

<sup>12</sup> “Invasive Species Prevention Leads” are lead points-of-contact in each field office or Regional Office Division (e.g., Refuges' Land Division) designated to help with interpretation, application, and evaluation of the policy.

**E. Supervisors will:**

- (1) Facilitate employee awareness of this policy.
- (2) Understand employees' needs for time and resources to comply with the policy, and seek to gain this capacity as warranted (see Section 2.G – Implementation Capacity).
- (3) Ensure compliance with State and Federal invasive species laws and regulations (see Appendix 3).

**F. Contracting and General Services Managers will:**

- (1) Ensure that Programs incorporate invasive species prevention stipulations into all relevant contracts and agreements for funding recipients whose activities have the potential to introduce invasive species.

**G. Invasive Species Prevention Leads will:**

- (1) Help with interpretation, implementation, and evaluation of the policy.
- (2) Aid in dissemination of training materials and technical guidance as warranted, and provide technical assistance when feasible.

**H. Pacific Region Invasive Species Team (PRIST) members will:**

- (1) Meet periodically to assess overall progress with the policy and make recommendations to the Regional Directorate when changes are warranted.
- (2) Provide training and technical guidance as warranted.
- (3) Provide support to Invasive Species Prevention Leads.

**I. Pacific Region Science Applications Program will:**

- (1) Serve as primary Program lead for policy maintenance, interpretation and revision.
- (2) Provide online repository of specific guidelines, examples and other resources.
- (3) As chair of PRIST, facilitate PRIST support toward the policy and maintain a list of Pacific Region invasive species prevention leads.

**Primary Point of Contact:** Assistant Regional Director, Science Applications

Approved by the Regional Director on September 28, 2016: Robyn Thorson