

Action on Invasive Species in Nova Scotia - Roundtable Updates and Discussion

Open Meeting for Organization and Agencies Doing Invasive Species Work in NS
22 March 2012
Acadia University

Acknowledgements

Thanks to guest speakers Peter Darnell of Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd., and Gail Wallin of the Invasive Species Council of British Columbia for sharing their experiences related to the impacts of invasive species and the formation and growth of invasive species councils respectively. This meeting was organized with little notice, and both speakers were most accommodating with their time.

The *Action on Invasive Species in Nova Scotia* meeting was organized by: Alain Belliveau, Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute (MTRI); Lisa Isaacman, Fundy Energy Research Network (FERN); and Marika Godwin, Invasive Species Alliance of Nova Scotia (ISANS). It was jointly hosted by MTRI and ISANS, and facilitated by Dr. Graham Daborn, Acadia University. Alain and Lisa recorded the meeting minutes.

Meeting organizers were able to keep the event costs minimal thanks to the generous in-kind venue donation by the K.C Irving Environmental Science Centre, Acadia University. Minor costs associated with the meeting were provided by the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program (IASPP), a Government of Canada initiative.

Overview

On 22 March 2012, the Invasive Species Alliance of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute (MTRI) hosted an open meeting at the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The meeting had two purposes: to facilitate discussion amongst groups doing invasive species work in Nova Scotia, and to determine a path forward for ISANS beyond the end of the 2011/12 fiscal year. There were 19 participants, six of whom were ISANS Steering Committee members. An additional 27 people expressed interest, but unable to attend. A list of participants is included in Appendix A.

Meeting participants provided updates on invasive species-related activities (projects, publications, events, etc) within their organizations, and shared ideas about networking with others doing similar work.

The meeting featured two guest speakers, as well as a short presentation by the Chair of ISANS, Dr. Anna Redden. Anna described the challenges currently facing

ISANS, including a lack of funding and resignation of the both the group's Chair and Coordinator. A summary of ISANS' status and proposed options for its continuation are included in Appendix B.

Peter Darnell of Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd. shared how the aquaculture industry has been impacted by tunicates, particularly the species *Ciona intestinalis*. It appears that recent warming waters have benefitted tunicates, to the detriment of mussel farmers.

Gail Wallin, Executive Director of the Invasive Species Council of British Columbia (ISCBC), talked about the formation and success of the BC council, and about the direction of the National Invasive Species Working Group (comprised of all existing provincial/territorial councils). Gail informed meeting participants that most invasive species councils are going in the direction of forming societies and some are seeking charitable status. The national group will also be formalizing its structure in the coming year. Gail acknowledged that funding was a limiting factor when establishing the ISCBC too, particularly provincial support. They were able to succeed by seeking funding from other sources (e.g. municipal government), and the province later joined in. Gail also encouraged ISANS to seek project funding, and work-in salary funding for coordination where possible.

Following the presentations, the meeting discussion was focused primarily on the future of ISANS. Main points and resulting next steps are summarized below.

Future of ISANS

Meeting participants were in agreement on the following points:

- ISANS needs a paid Coordinator,
- ISANS needs a Chair/champion, and a host organization for long-term success,
- ISANS should be incorporated as a registered society under the *Nova Scotia Societies Act*,
- ISANS should be structured as a core partnership of non-government organizations and universities (and possibly be hosted by one of these),
- ISANS should start working to coordinate provincial information and expertise in a central repository,
- funding for ISANS needs to be diversified, and should not rely solely on the federal IASPP grants,
- initially, funding for ISANS may need to be project-based, and
- recommendations for projects including focusing on 'flagship' or 'mascot' species such as the European fire ant.

As explained by Anna Redden, and detailed in Option #4 of Appendix B (ISANS Organizational Planning Options for 2012/13), ISANS will be involved in discussions with the other Atlantic Provinces in the 2012/13 fiscal year around the possibility of

establishing an Atlantic Invasive Species Council. Meeting participants were not supportive of the establishment of an Atlantic Society or Council, but were interested in maintaining and building upon the existing network of Atlantic Invasive Species Councils/groups.

Next Steps

Following the meeting, the incoming and outgoing Chairs and outgoing Coordinator discussed and identified the immediate priorities for ISANS. Next steps for the group are:

- Chair to contact current Steering Committee members and other interested individuals/organizations to gauge interest in involvement with ISANS,
- identify members of an interim board of directors, based on feedback from step above,
- register ISANS as a non-profit organization under the *Nova Scotia Societies Act*,
- continue development of the ISANS website,
- investigate ways to link Project UFO (www.projectufo.ca) and ISANS,
- participate in ongoing regional and national IAS initiatives, and
- investigate funding opportunities for ISANS.

ISANS Contacts for 2012/13

Dr. Katherine Jones of Cape Breton University and Project UFO will take over as Chair of ISANS from Dr. Anna Redden. The following individuals also expressed interest in being involved in moving ISANS forward:

- Alain Belliveau, Mersey Tobetic Research Institute (funding-dependent)
- Kira Krumhansl, Ecology Action Centre
- Danielle Goodfellow, Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia
- Susan Horton, Independent
- Claire Wilson O'Driscoll, Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Dawn Sephton, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Dr. Bob Pett, Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

Appendix A – Meeting Participants

Plus eight others registered but did not attend, and 15 expressed interest but were unable to participate.

Name	Affiliation
Alain Belliveau	Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute
Alice Morgan	Nova Scotia Nature Trust
Anna Redden	Acadia University
Bob Pett	Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
Claire Wilson O’Driscoll	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Danielle Goodfellow	Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia
Dawn Sephton	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Dennis Garratt	Nova Scotia Nature Trust
Denyse Kyle	Blomidon Naturalists Society
George Alliston	Blomidon Naturalists Society
Graham Daborn	Acadia University
Katherine Jones	Cape Breton University
Kira Krumhansl	Ecology Action Centre
Lisa Isaacman	Fundy Energy Research Network
Marla Bojarski	Nature Conservancy of Canada
Pamela Mills	Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
Peter Darnell	Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd.
Reg Newell	Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
Susan Horton	Independent

Appendix B – ISANS Organizational Planning Options for 2012/13

Background

In the 2009/10 fiscal year, ISANS formed a 'strategic planning' committee whose task was to consider organizational planning/sustainability options for the group.

ISANS contracted Richard Bridge (Barrister & Solicitor) to compile and present a number of options that included incorporation under the *Nova Scotia Societies Act* or the *Co-operative Associations Act*, as well as formal and informal possibilities short of incorporation. Though Mr. Bridge recommended a more formal governance approach than ISANS had at the time, the group elected to maintain its informal structure and operation, largely due to uncertain funding prospects.

ISANS does have a draft Terms of Reference (2009), as well as a five-year Strategic Workplan (2011 – 2016) (see attached docs). Limited federal funding, in years when it has been available) is seen as the greatest limiting factor to progress in both governance and activities of ISANS.

The Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program (IASPP), ISANS' sole funder, has indicated that they would like to see invasive species council groups establish themselves as independent organizations (i.e. as opposed to being hosted by another organization, in our case, Acadia University). Most other provincial/territorial councils are registered non-profit organizations or societies, or are planning to go that route.

Current Status (fiscal year 2011/12)

- ISANS did not receive support from its Steering Committee to submit a 2012/13 funding application to IASPP under the 'coordination' theme
- ISANS did submit a 2012/13 funding application to IASPP under the 'project' theme (development of a lake risk assessment tool aimed at determining the risk of invasion by smallmouth bass and chain pickerel), project lead is Trevor Avery (Acadia University)
- the current ISANS Coordinator is resigning from the position at the end of the fiscal year
- the current ISANS Chair is resigning from the position at the end of the fiscal year
- the ISANS Steering Committee has not identified potential replacement candidates for either the Coordinator or Chair positions
- ISANS is involved in activities/discussions at both the regional and national levels through the *IAS Atlantic Network* and the *National Invasive Species Working Group*, both of which involve commitments already laid out for the 2012/13 fiscal year

Limiting Factors

- no 'coordination' funds for the 2012/13 fiscal year

- lack of financial support from the province of NS
- too few non-government members of the steering committee
- lack of leadership from within the current steering committee
- resignation of both Coordinator and Chair at end of the 2011/12 fiscal year
- no commitment to date from members of the current steering committee to maintain contact or pursue ISANS commitments (e.g. website, email, region/national obligations, etc) beyond the end of the 2011/12 fiscal year
- other?

Fiscal Year 2012/13 and Beyond

Option #1 – Put ISANS on hold indefinitely until the perceived need and funding for an invasive species council-type group arises in Nova Scotia.

Questions:

1. What happens to the existing steering committee?
 - a. Disband?
 - b. Continue and recruit others?
2. What notice do we provide other provincial groups, the national group?
3. What notice do we put on the website?
4. How do we address email inquiries?
5. Do we withdraw from regional/national invasive species groups commitments?

Option #2 – Identify interim (6 mos – 1 year) Chair or co-Chairs and maintain group function in a reduced (volunteer-only) capacity.

Needs:

- identify interim Chair(s)
- maintain ISANS website, including email function
- maintain commitments to regional/national initiatives
- pursue federal and/or provincial funding for a Coordinator

Questions:

1. What assistance is required?
2. Need independent organization?
3. Do we recruit new members to help sustain ISANS in the long term?

Option #3 – Place ISANS in the care of a suitable established ENGO that may be able to offer space and greater stability over the long term and to more easily access a part-time coordinator for ISANS. Note: there are no funds for a coordinator for 2012-13 but ISANS is eligible to receive coordination funding in the following year.

Option #4 – Support the creation of a proposed regional Atlantic Council or NS+NB Council (led by NB).