



Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination Team Update Staff Report

This agenda item provides an update on the Conservancy's role in facilitating the Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team and the fifth biennial Delta Invasive Species Symposium.

DESCRIPTION

Since 2015, the DIISC Team has planned and facilitated the biennial Delta Invasive Species Symposium (Symposium). The Symposium is a forum for Delta managers, researchers, decision-makers, and stakeholders to meet, share, and synthesize information, and communicate best practices and lessons learned. The 2023 Symposium focused on connectivity with an emphasis on making ecological, social, and decision-making connections. The role of ecological connectivity is a major theme in the study of biological invasions and is particularly relevant in the Delta, which connects uplands to the estuary, species and nutrients among ecosystems, and water to people. The 2023 Delta Invasive Species Symposium sought to explore how we can harness connections among habitats, landscapes, agencies, researchers, and local communities to prevent, detect, manage, and control invasive species.

The 2023 Symposium took place on November 30, 2023 at the California Natural Resources Agency Headquarters in downtown Sacramento. It was a great success with 72 in-person attendees and an additional 156 individuals attending remotely. Participants were affiliated with local, state, and federal governments, NGOs, local land management groups, consulting firms, academia, community groups, and Delta residents. Agenda, abstracts, and a recording of the Symposium is available on the Conservancy's website: <https://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/diisc-team-activities/>. The sessions are summarized below.

The first session highlighted stories of connectivity from across the Bay-Delta and other estuaries. The Bay-Delta Estuary is hydraulically connected to both upstream riverine and downstream estuarine and saline habitats. The Delta is the convergence of California's two major river systems, and invasive species in these upstream watersheds are connected to the Delta by downstream flow. Similarly, the Delta and Suisun Marsh connect the Delta to its downstream bay and ocean neighbors, where water exchange occurs in both directions with tides. Finally, non-native species can move among estuaries by various means.

The second session highlighted how making connections among researchers, policies, and community members can aid invasive species management. Not only is the Delta a unique ecosystem, but it is also a place where communities, agriculture, and commerce connect with the environment. Invasive species are often seen as an ecosystem issue for science to solve, but their influence also has cultural, social, and economic impacts. Additionally, law and policy have direct connections with what management actions can take place and over what timeframes. This session featured a panel discussion with speakers.

The fourth session highlighted invasive species work through eight short, contributed talks. The final session highlighted the different roles connectivity can play in managing invasive species across the Delta and Suisun Marsh. When is connectivity a friend and when is it a foe? Connections support ecosystems and help maintain native species assemblages, but connections can also increase the spread of invasive species and create conditions that allow non-native species to thrive.

In addition to the Symposium, the DIISC Team held four quarterly meetings in 2023 that featured briefings on specific species (e.g. nutria, ribbon weed), projects (e.g. United States Fish and Wildlife Service California-Great Basin Aquatic Invasive Species Horizon Scan Report), and programs (e.g. State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways floating and submerged aquatic vegetation treatment). Each meeting also featured a round robin of updates from all the groups in attendance.

BACKGROUND

The DIISC Team was formed in 2013 to provide a venue for the exchange of information, coordination of research and management, and collective leveraging of funding relevant to invasive species management and study relevant to the Delta. To this end, the team has met quarterly since 2015, hosted five research and management symposiums (2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023), and maintains a table of relevant research needs. Due to past successes in coordinating regional efforts, the Delta Conservancy was identified as the facilitator of the DIISC Team. This facilitation role includes organizing quarterly DIISC Team meetings, leading strategic planning for the DIISC Team, organizing the planning of the biennial Symposium, and coordinating working group efforts. Delta Conservancy staff facilitate and co-lead the group with staff from the Department of Water Resources and Delta Stewardship Council.

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