

Texas Invasive Species Coordinating Committee Minutes
January 10, 2011 Meeting Capitol Extension Room E1.020

The meeting was convened by Vice-Chair Dr. Earl Chilton, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on January 10, 2011 at 10:08 a.m., 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: Bob Gruner (TSSWCB- TISCC Alternate), Allison Scott (Chief of Staff - Representative Lyne), Lauren Wied (Legislative Staff -Senator Hegar); Sean Cunningham (Vice Chancellor of Governmental Relations with Texas State University System); Sky Lewey and Karen Ford (Nueces River Authority); Tim Schumann and Chris Best (United States Fish and Wildlife Service); Jason Modglin (Texas Department of Agriculture).

September 24, 2010 Meeting minutes were approved. Mr. Davis made the motion to approve the minutes and Dr. Nilakhe seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Sky Lewey with the Nueces River Authority (NRA) came to the meeting to discuss their problem with the invasive plant, Arundo and what the Nueces River Authority does. She described the NRA as having a staff of 7, they are a fee for service business, participate in the Clean Rivers Program, have been working with landowners for 4 years, held 30 workshops for understanding the riparian areas in Uvalde. She said that Arundo has been on the Nueces since the 90's, now it's in the streambed.

Nutria are cutting off the stalks of Arundo and the stalks are floating down river and then sprout. The river is also having a flow problem. NRA doesn't have funding to fight the Arundo, all funding used thus far has been contribution from others. Temperature and pH are different above and below problem areas. In Bandera County, there are 8 miles of Arundo. In Uvalde County, there are 52 miles of Arundo. In Zavala County, there are 30 miles of Arundo.

Sky also addressed the need for help with funding for studies on Arundo on the Nueces. The NRA has received help from U.S. Fish and Wildlife with a study but needs a lot more help with funding. In 2007 the Arundo was treated with the introduction of native plants and in 2010, the Arundo in the treated area was destroyed. The NRA has spent \$20,000 on aerial and ground treatment of 75 acres of Arundo with the help of landowners.

Sky said there is a desire to get landowner participation and the NRA is estimating they will need \$150,000/year for 5 years in order to treat the Arundo problem on the Nueces River. Dr. Nilakhe asked Sky what exactly she wanted from the committee. Sky responded by saying any financial help that the NRA could get from any committee member agencies would be beneficial.

Kathie Calnan asked the committee if there was any federal funding available to do studies for the NRA. Dr. Chilton asked Sky to get in touch with him after the meeting to discuss possible options for funding studies. Sky asked the committee if she could return to a TISCC meeting at a later date to give an update on the progress of Arundo control and an update on any money received. Dr. Chilton said it would be good to come back and give an update to the committee.

The Texas Invasive Species Coordinating Committee (TISCC) website was discussed.

Mr. Davis said we need to archive all documents and correspondence on the Google group site before closing it. Jason Modglin with TDA suggested giving an informal call to the Attorney General's Open Meetings Act department for guidance on what to do with the Google group. Kathie Calnan suggested doing a conference call/Webinar when the committee has something to discuss.

Proposed legislation dealing with invasive species was reviewed and discussed.

Dr. Chilton updated the committee on the progress of the White list. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) received a lot of public comments about Elephant Ears being on the list because they are a big seller. Dr. Chilton said they don't do well in aquatic environments. TPWD received feedback from the nursery association about a new species of Elephant Ears that doesn't spread. Dr. Chilton also commented that if a species was in limbo from being either on the list or not, TPWD will look to the rest of the U.S. to see if it's a problem anywhere else. There were 230 species approved and 50 rejected for the list.

Dr. Billings updated the progress on the Soapberry Borer, saying that Texas Forest Service (TFS) added 1 more colony in the Wichita Falls area. TFS is conducting Athel tree trials to see if the salt cedar beetle damages trees in the Big Bend area and Presidio. TFS is looking for 3 year funding for increasing public awareness for moving firewood into Texas to avoid bringing insects into Texas.

Dr. Chilton asked Meredith Whitley (TISCC coordinator) about putting TexasInvasives.org as a reference link on the TISCC website. Mrs. Whitley said there were discussions at the September 2010 TISCC meeting that TexasInvasives.org has non-official invasive species lists on their website and shouldn't be associated with the state official lists that are referenced on the TISCC website by TDA and TPWD.

Dr. Chilton discussed the white list development. Since the last TISCC meeting in September, TPWD has reviewed all species and some species were sent back for re-review because of new information. List was published December, 24, 2010 and some species were added since then. Dr. Chilton updated the committee on the most recent meeting of the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council. The council is in the process of planning the next Invasive Species convention.

Dr. Billings asked Dr. Chilton for a copy of the risk assessment used in the white list. Dr. Chilton said he would make it available to all committee members. Dr. Chilton said that TPWD is avoiding any not clear information on species and that there may be a better risk assessment coming out this year. The white list will be re-reviewed if necessary.

Dr. Chilton updated the committee on the Zebra Mussel treatment in Sister Grove Creek. There was only a partial percentage kill and not 100%. TPWD thought they had killed the Zebra Mussels but they apparently only went into a temporary dormant state.. There is going to be water pumped from Lake Texoma into Lake Lavon and TPWD are looking to conduct more treatments.

Kathie Calnan asked Dr. Chilton about a report on the treatment results. Dr. Chilton said there is no report available yet on the results.

In other business, Lauren Wied with Sen. Hegar's office said there is no intent to add members to the committee right now. Texas Forest Service and Texas AgriLife are already a part of the A&M system and are represented on the committee. AgriLife Research is also a part of the A&M system.

The committee discussed having the next meeting in late March 2011 with a date to be determined. Dr. Chilton suggested using the Google Doodle calendar to survey dates for the next meeting in the last 2 weeks in March.

Dr. Nilakhe made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. Billings seconded the motion. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.