

A Governance and Biosecurity Framework for AIS in Commerce in North America

Purpose: To develop an action plan that incorporates best management practices, voluntary codes of conduct, and enhanced outreach and regulatory mechanisms that help to ensure the continuance of the plant and animal trade while minimizing transport and spread of aquatic invasive species in North America.

Accessible Information

Goal: There is readily available access to updated and accurate information on aquatic organisms in trade in North America.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
AI1. Develop a user-friendly, accessible, searchable, shareable, interoperable electronic dataset of non-native aquatic species being imported and sold in North America. Include the ability to obtain information at the state and provincial level of allowable and restricted species as well as a curated and maintained species search tool that provides information on and photos of each species.	Contractor	USDA-APHIS PPQ, USFWS, Industry representatives			Database is created and maintained.
AI2. Create a training handbook for retail staff that includes information on how to access online state and provincial allowable and restricted, and invasive species lists, including information about common names and scientific names.	Sea Grant	Industry representatives, state and provincial agencies, state invasive species councils, NGOs			Training handbook is created and made available online.
AI3. Expand engagement with legislators, including producing one-to-two-page briefings for legislators on AIS in Commerce issues and addressing policy gaps.	State agencies via AFWA	Legislators, USFWS, USDA-APHIS PPQ			Briefing documents are created & used to engage with legislators.
AI4. Expand outreach to suppliers to ensure they understand the legal requirements for state and provincial regulations and Lacey Act issues.	USFWS, USDA-APHIS PPQ, state fish and wildlife agencies	Aquatic plant and animal suppliers			Suppliers demonstrate understanding of legal issues.
AI5. Create U.S./Canadian database/resource with search capabilities that addresses which state/provincial and federal agencies are responsible for their respective animal and plant trades and specific elements of these trades. Provide hyperlinks to those agency lists in one location online. Achieve uniformity among states and provinces on a regional basis re: allowable and restricted species.	Sea Grant	State and provincial agencies			Database is developed and maintained.

Voluntary Industry Practices

Goal: Voluntary Industry Practices and Protocols lessen the spread of AIS and are widely accepted, used, and promoted by industry.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
VIP1. Identify and assess existing voluntary industry practices, protocols, and guidelines, create new BMPs to fill existing gaps, and centralize the location of voluntary industry BMPs to improve access.	Pet's Canada, Pets Advocacy Network	Industry			BMPs are created and shared.
VIP2. Provide a central online location for industry best management practices so that any business, or other entity, can access that information.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Industry representatives			BMPs are available online.
VIP3. Promote an industry pledge (that ultimately leads to certification) to source aquatic animal and plant material responsibly and share pledge with aquatic animal and plant networks. Develop a certification program and maintain a running tally of pledged and certified businesses in North America.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Aquatic plant and animal sellers			Industry pledge is developed and adopted by at least 85% of entities that source materials. At least 80% of businesses are certified.
VIP4. Standardize and promote protocols at grow facilities prior to distribution to review product contents to minimize contaminants.	Aquatic plant and animal grow facilities				Protocols are standardized and implemented.
VIP5. Develop and promote an in-house training program focused on AIS issues and what businesses can do to prevent the transfer of these species and to report them when they are found - and how to deal with them in-house. Encourage surrender or sacrifice of non-native species.	Sea Grant	Industry representatives, Invasive Species Action Network, MI Extension			In-house training programs are adopted and implemented on an ongoing basis.
VIP6. Develop standard guidelines for retail stores on best practices when serving as a rehoming location.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Wisconsin Humane Society, Exotic Pet Amnesty Program			Standard guidelines are developed and implemented.
VIP7. Develop training on relevant regulations for aquatic organisms in trade sellers.	State and provincial agencies, USFWS, USDA-APHIS PPQ	Aquatic plant and animal seller			Training is developed and accessible.
VIP8. Make it a common practice for large retailers to include unwanted/pet return policies with purchase.	Large retailers	Pet's Canada, Pets Advocacy Network			At least 90% of large retailers include return policies.
VIP9. Develop an industry-led (regional) list of species that potentially have high risk for invasiveness and should not be bought or sold in North America.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Industry representatives			Regional lists of species are developed and shared.

Legal Authorities

Goal: An effective regulatory and compliance framework exists to enhance governance in AIS in Commerce.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
LA1. Assess regulatory authority and capacity to conduct efficient and effective inspection and monitoring and articulate strategies to enhance that capacity.	State agencies, USDA-APHIS PPQ, USFWS	Agency law enforcement staff			Authority and capacity is assessed and enhanced.
LA2. Create model legislative provisions and guidance to promote consistency in and standardize plants and animals in trade record requirements among states and provinces. Ensure legal loopholes are closed and regulatory authorities are defined.	National Sea Grant Law Center	States and provinces, USFWS, USDA-APHIS PPQ	April 2024	AIS in Commerce (USFWS-funded project)	Model legislative provisions are developed and implemented; authorities are defined.
LA3. Implement regulatory steps for online retailers (i.e., licensing) to ensure adequate record keeping, including development of a federal framework.	USFWS and USDA-APHIS PPQ, (federal framework), state licensing agencies, other state agencies	Online retailers			Online retailers keep adequate records available for review on a regular basis.
LA4. Mandate training/education for license/permit holders or violators.	State fish and wildlife officials and district attorneys (mandates), Sea Grant (training/education)	License and permit holders, violators of plant and animal trade regulations			License/permit holders or violators are required to participate in training.

Record Requirements

Goal: Accurate information on aquatic organisms in trade species in commerce is routinely collected, shared, and tracked in easily accessible formats.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
RR1. Require the use of standardized labeling (especially on invoices) that identifies risk of establishment, impacts, and management actions. Create QR codes for high-risk species.	ANSTF, National Institute of Standards and Technology	American Pet Products Association, Sellers of aquatic plants and animals			Standardized labeling is mandated and enforced.
RR2. Create standardized retail materials (i.e., bag labels, store signage) for aquatic organisms in trade products (for traceability); create and distribute standardized label templates (criteria to be used to include on labels), including a template for online retailers that have space for SKUs and item numbers as well as business logos and other information deemed important by retailers.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network, U.S. Department of Commerce, Federal Trade Commission, National Institute of Standards and Technology	Entities that sell aquatic plants and animals			Retail materials are standardized and used.
RR3. Capture species-level data electronically for all aquatic organisms in trade imports from invoice documents by developing a new code system that addresses taxonomy while addressing analysis of gaps within declaration process.	USDA-APHIS PPQ, USFWS, contractor, U.S. Department of Commerce	Entities that import aquatic plants and animals into the United States			Species-level data is captured on all import invoices.

Knowledgeable Consumers

Goal: Consumer behavior reflects sound knowledge and awareness of aquatic invasive species in commerce.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
KC1. Implement a communications and outreach plan to enhance appreciation, understanding, awareness, and support for a knowledgeable public, businesses, policy makers, and others relative to AIS in Commerce.	All entities that administer pet campaigns	State and federal agencies, businesses, legislators, and other key target audiences identified in an outreach plan.			An outreach plan is developed and implemented; violations of AIS in commerce are reduced; compliance with AIS in commerce laws and regulations increases.
KC2. Educate buyers to contact supplier/seller immediately if they see something in their purchase/shipment that does not seem to match the order that was placed.	Sellers of aquatic plants and animals, Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Buyers of aquatic plants and animals			There is an increase in buyer contacts to sellers re: potential detections of AIS in shipments.
KC3. Provide Retail Care Guides (for each species sold) that includes information about the size of species at maturity, longevity, and reproductive capabilities, etc.	Sellers of aquatic plants and animals, Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network	Buyers of aquatic plants and animals			At least 75% of all aquatic species sold have retail care guides.

KC4. Identify and promote take-back locations or methods/programs identified for species sold, including amnesty programs. Incentivize take back programs, i.e., partnership promotions and marketing.	Pets Canada, Pet Advocacy Network, Industry representatives	Humane societies, NGOs, FLFWCC Amnesty Program, PA Sea Grant			Increase in entities with take-back programs; increase in incentives for take-back sites.
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Collaborative Interdiction

Goal: Agencies work collaboratively and effectively in partnership to invest in and address the highest priority contributions to AIS in Commerce.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
CI1. Host a summit to convene entities with responsibilities (regulatory, administrative, etc.) for AIS in Commerce to discuss the current state of funding, gaps and overlaps in that funding, and a path forward to provide long-term sustainable funding to reduce AIS in Commerce.	Contractor	State, federal, and provincial fish and wildlife agencies, USDA-APHIS PPQ, and others involved in AIS in Commerce			Summit is convened and strategies are developed to fund key elements of AIS in commerce.
CI2. Strengthen the relationship and understanding among regulatory and law enforcement programs and authorities among the state and provincial agencies.	North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs	State fish and wildlife agencies and their respective enforcement officers, provincial fish and wildlife agencies			State and provincial agencies demonstrate increased collaboration relative to AIS in commerce issues.
CI3. Adopt innovative technology to advance the ability of agencies to intercept AIS in Commerce (e.g., expand use of web crawlers, take steps to modernize customs).	Technology contracts	USFWS, USDA-APHIS PPQ, state fish and wildlife agencies, regional task forces			There is a documented increase in emerging technology to modernize customs and intercept AIS in commerce.

Resources and Capacity

Goal: Sufficient resources and capacity exist at the federal, provincial, and state levels to participate and engage effectively in AIS in Commerce interdiction actions.

Actions	Lead	Participants	Timeline	Budget and Resources	Performance Metric
RC1. Encourage discussions at AFWA convenings to support and creating funding for additional dedicated staff and resources to work on aquatic organisms in trade as well as improve awareness of this issue with executive level staff in fish and wildlife agencies.	AFWA, North American Wildlife Law Enforcement	State and provincial law enforcement officers			AFWA meeting agendas include organisms in trade; fish and wildlife agency executives demonstrate increased awareness and support for the issue.
RC2. Encourage support by District Attorneys for enforcement of AIS in Commerce issues by connecting with Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (in US) to promote the importance of AIS in Commerce issues and foster this liaison approach in Canada. Provide them with presentations to raise awareness.	AFWA, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys				Association of Prosecuting Attorneys are provided training and presentations and demonstrate increased awareness and support for prosecuting violations associated with AIS in commerce.