

NEBRASKA INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

2022 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Report Recipients: Governor Pete Ricketts and Members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees of the Nebraska Legislature

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Overview

This report was developed per the requirements outlined in Nebraska Statute 37-1406 (2). Legislative Bill 391 was passed by the Nebraska Unicameral on March 30, 2012 and signed into law by Governor Dave Heineman on April 10, 2012.

Nebraska Statute 37-1403 created the Nebraska Invasive Species Council (NISC) and Nebraska Statute 37-1404 charged it with the following objectives:

1. Recommend action to minimize the effects of harmful invasive species on Nebraska's citizens to promote the economic and environmental well-being of the state.
2. Develop and periodically update a statewide adaptive management plan for invasive species as described in Section 15 of this act.
3. Serve as a forum for discussion, identification, and understanding of invasive species issues.
4. Facilitate the communication, cooperation, and coordination of federal, state, local, private, and nongovernmental entities for the prevention, control, and management of invasive species.
5. Assist with public outreach and awareness of invasive species issues.
6. Provide information to the Legislature for decision-making, planning, and coordination of invasive species management and prevention.

This report provides an evaluation of progress made during 2022 by NISC as called for in Nebraska Statute 37-1406 (2). Learn more about NISC on its [webpage](#).

2022 Nebraska Invasive Species Council (NISC) Members

Voting Members	
Name	Agency/Affiliation
Brent Meyer	Nebraska Weed Control Association
Craig Allen	University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)
Dennis Schroder	Public Interest Member (Agricultural Interest)
John Thorburn	Nebraska Association of Resources Districts
Jonathan Nikkila	Public Interest Member
Justin King	Nebraska Public Power District
Kevin Pope	Nebraska Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, UNL
Kim Todd	Public Interest Member
Kimberly Stuhr	Public Interest Member (Agricultural Interest)
Kristopher Stahr	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Mitch Coffin	Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Steven Jara	Nebraska Forest Service of the University of Nebraska
Vacant	Public Interest Member (Agricultural Interest)
Non-Voting Members	
Allison Zach	Nebraska Invasive Species Program, UNL
Brenda Densmore	U.S. Geological Survey
Carmen Thomson	National Park Service, Midwest Region
Chris Helzer	The Nature Conservancy
Chris Vrtiska	Omaha Public Power District
Cindy Stuefer-Powell	USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Gary Stone	University of Nebraska, Extension
Jeff Runge	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Jennifer Weisbrod	Pesticide Safety Education, UNL Extension
Jeremy Gehle	Department of Natural Resources
Julie Van Meter	Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Kelsey Jolley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Non-Voting Council Members	
Name	Agency/Affiliation
Mike Koenig	Omaha Public Power District
Ritch Nelson	USDA Nebraska Natural Resource Conservation Service
TJ Walker	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

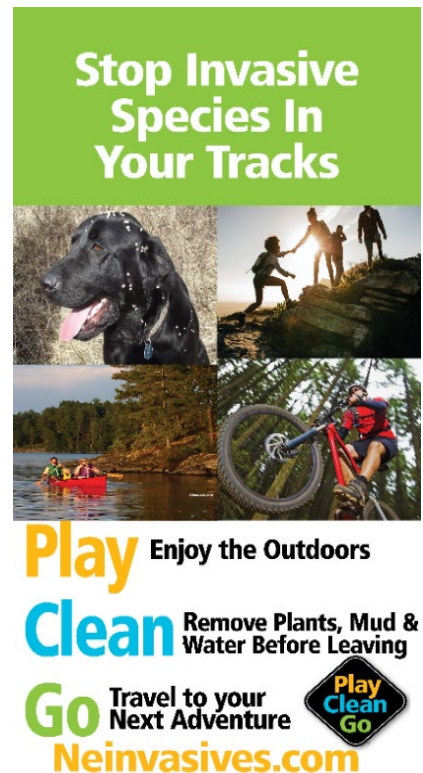
Nebraska Invasive Species Council 2022 Activities

The NISC had all but 1 of its voting positions filled in 2022. NISC also added many new non-voting members. NISC meetings were held virtually and in person in 2022. Meeting agenda and attendance details were placed on NISC’s [webpage](#) before each meeting. NISC continued activities focused on accomplishing the objectives stated in Nebraska Statute 37-1404.

NISC is charged with conducting outreach to increase awareness and prevention of priority invasive species of concern to Nebraska. NISC members created and disseminated invasive species printed outreach materials and other outreach items to resource agencies’ staffs, target audiences, and the public to promote early detection, prevention, and management of invasive species. NISC members developed invasive species ads and outreach materials using the [PlayCleanGo](#) outreach campaign to educate the public how to prevent the spread of invasive species while recreating.

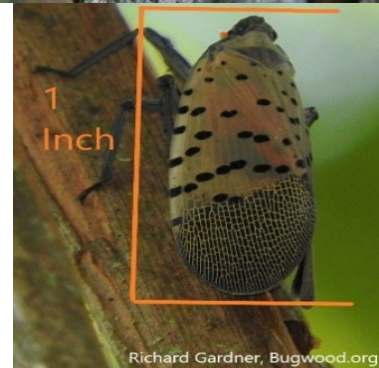
NISC members attended local, regional, and international virtual and in-person conferences and meetings to learn about and present on various invasive species topics. Some NISC members are serving on the 2023 planning committee for the North American Invasive Species Conference, which will be in Lincoln, NE. NISC members briefed the Council with updates from this effort. NISC members also presented to various audiences including Nebraska Lakes Association, Nebraska Weed Control Association, and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC).

NISC members and their agencies and affiliates conducted invasive species surveys throughout the state to assess the range of a variety of invasive species. Additionally, the public can report suspected invasive species at the [NISP website](#). In 2022, 55 suspected invasive species sightings were received via the website and were addressed by NISC members and other experts.



Terrestrial Invasive Species Infestations, Prevention, and Management Efforts

A small population of spotted lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*) was recently found and eradicated in Iowa (see photos to right). SLF can be harmful to grape, apple, hop, peach and other stone fruit production by feeding on sap from stems, leaves, and trunks; (learn more [here](#)). SLF is primarily spread long distances when females lay egg masses on trains, semitrucks, various other vehicles, and products. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) has been conducting visual surveys since 2019 to find SLF on [Tree-of-Heaven](#) (*Ailanthus altissima*), an invasive tree species. Many NISC members, including the Nebraska U.S. Department of Agriculture Nebraska Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Plant Protection and Quarantine Program (NE APHIS-PPQ), have conducted outreach to the public and resource agencies to increase early detection efforts. **SLF is most visible July to October as an adult**, about 1 inch long, gray with black spots, and bright red underwings (see photos to right). **If you suspect finding a SLF in Nebraska, take a photo of the insect, collect, or kill it, and report it [here](#).**



Emerald ash borer (EAB) (*Agilus planipennis*) is a small, invasive insect that damages North American native ash tree species, primarily in its larval stage. Heavy infestations can kill trees (learn more [here](#)). NISP members conducted outreach to the public and resource agencies' staffs on options for ash tree treatment, removal, and replacement (learn more [here](#)). NDA and NE APHIS-PPQ also continued trapping and visual surveys throughout the state in 2022. NE APHIS-PPQ has released EAB biocontrol agents in Nebraska since 2019 (learn more [here](#)).

NE APHIS-PPQ conducts the Japanese Beetle (JB) (*Popillia japonica*) Harmonization Program at the Eppley Airport (learn more [here](#)). Nebraska APHIS-PPQ has released a biocontrol agent at the Eppley Airfield to kill JB since 2016 and infected JB have been found in the area.

The NISP received several new reports of [jumping worms](#) (*Amyntas* spp.) in 2022, and many NISC agencies provided outreach to the public about them. Individuals are encouraged to report suspected sightings [here](#) so their distribution in Nebraska can be determined. Much is unknown about these worms, but research is underway to determine their impacts and management options.



Aquatic Invasive Species Infestations, Prevention, and Management Efforts

There are several [aquatic invasive species](#) (AIS) that threaten Nebraska’s natural resources. Prevention is key to protecting our waterbodies from AIS and many of the NISC member agencies conducted outreach and field work to increase AIS awareness and for early detection of new infestations. 2021 marked the first full year NGPC had a fully staffed AIS Program to increase the capacity for AIS efforts in Nebraska. In 2022 the NGPC AIS Program employed one full-time program manager and 6 temporary technicians. As the lead agency for AIS, NGPC urges the public to report AIS sightings to Kristopher Stahr, AIS Program Manager at (402) 471-7602 or ngpc.AIS@nebraska.gov.



Watercraft inspections have been conducted annually in Nebraska since 2010 to prevent the spread of AIS, primarily Zebra Mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Authorized inspections may be conducted by conservation officers and other AIS Level 1 trained personnel that have the ability to prevent an infested watercraft from entering a waterbody. A total of 6,627 watercraft inspections were completed in 2022, the highest yearly number on record and continuing an increasing trend of inspections on an annual basis. Annual watercraft inspections have found high compliance with Clean, Drain, and Dry procedures which is at the center of AIS Prevention. In addition, the NGPC AIS Program developed new graphics to undergo a “re-branding” of AIS outreach efforts in Nebraska. The new graphics will be displayed on outreach items, NGPC vehicles, and signage across the State.

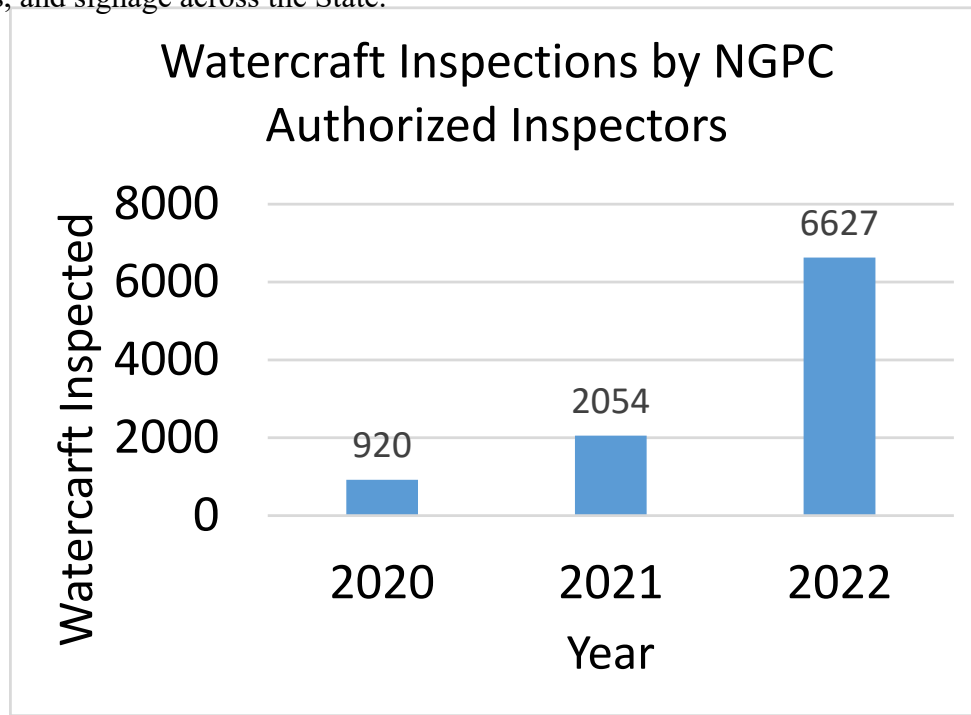


Figure- Watercraft inspected per year by authorized watercraft inspectors from 2020 to 2022.

NGPC (and the Nebraska Invasive Species Program previous) AIS technicians have entered watercraft inspection and decontamination findings into the Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID) data sharing system since 2019. The system is used by watercraft inspectors and state and federal agencies and organizations internationally to conduct risk assessments and increase AIS prevention (learn more [here](#)).

Zebra Mussel sampling was conducted by the NGPC, Nebraska and Omaha Public Power Districts, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at more than 40 waterbodies in 2022. Zebra Mussels were not detected in any new waterbodies; Nebraska currently has 3 infested waterbodies, fewer than surrounding states. With the detection of Zebra Mussels in several new waterbodies in South Dakota, the risk for Zebra Mussel spread to Nebraska is growing. Increased cooperation with surrounding state fish management agencies will be key moving forward. Quagga Mussels (*D. bugensis*) have not been detected in Nebraska to date. Finally, NGPC, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit have teamed up on multiple projects to better understand invasive carp populations. The work has specifically targeted invasive Silver and Bighead Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys* spp.) to describe population dynamics and document the extent of their current range (learn more [here](#)).

Invasive Plant Infestations, Prevention, and Management Efforts

NGPC began conducting the first known systematic aquatic vegetation surveys on Nebraska waterbodies by any State entity in 2021. Thirty-nine waterbodies were sampled for aquatic vegetation in 2021 and 41 waterbodies were sampled in 2022. Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), an invasive plant that forms dense mats, was confirmed in 15 new waterbodies in 2021 and 9 new waterbodies in 2022. Highly concerning is the Eurasian Watermilfoil hybrid (*M. spicatum* × *M. sibiricum*), which can be more aggressive and herbicide resistant making it much more difficult to control. The NGPC AIS Program is partnering with Montana State University to conduct genetic analyses to confirm Hybrid Eurasian Watermilfoil infestations and inform future management efforts. To date Hybrid Eurasian Watermilfoil has been detected at Ironhorse Park Lake and East Hershey Lake, both near North Platte. Brittle Naiad (*Najas minor*) was first detected in Nebraska in 2021 in Kramper Lake. In 2022 additional surveys have also confirmed Brittle Naiad in Lewis and Clark Lake. NGPC is working to develop vegetation management plans for infested waterbodies. However, additional funding for herbicide treatments is highly needed to adequately implement a statewide vegetation control program. Contact ngpc.AIS@nebraska.gov with questions.

In 2022, NISC had many meeting presentations and conversations regarding invasive plant species, their control, and research efforts to manage them. NISC plant experts met in winter 2022 to make updates to the Weed Watch List and it can be found [here](#). It is used by county weed authorities throughout the state to monitor the range of various invasive or problematic plant species. NISC members created and distributed invasive plant outreach materials to the public and resource agencies' staffs to increase early detection of new infestations. Copies of a [woody species management guide](#) authored by University of Nebraska-Lincoln researchers Dirac Twidwell and Dillon Fogarty were disseminated to educate land managers and property owners on management techniques for problematic and invasive plant species.

Nebraska Invasive Species Council Legislative Recommendations

NISC recommends continuation of the council with no modifications. This recommendation is due to the success of NISC in coordinating invasive species management, research, and prevention efforts and providing training and outreach materials to resource staff and the public. These efforts help in early detection and rapid response to contain new invasive species infestations. NISC will continue to engage new members and partners. Furthermore, NISC will continue to keep the Governor and appropriate legislative committee(s) apprised of any invasive species issues that arise and warrant attention. Please contact [Allison Zach](#), NISC Coordinator, with any questions or concerns regarding invasive species.