

POLICY ON INVASIVE SPECIES
Revised and adopted by the Board on 02/05/2015

With over 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, large blocks of unfragmented forests, thousands of lakes and ponds, and a wide variety of sensitive habitat types including unique wetlands, alpine tundra, and tracts of old growth woodlands, the natural resources of the Adirondack Park are recognized as a global treasure and one of New York State's greatest conservation legacies. Threats to these resources by all manner of invasive species (IS) have greatly increased within the Adirondack Park since the 2001 passage of the Board's original IS policy and pose serious risks to the ecological integrity of water bodies, wetlands, and terrestrial habitats across the region. The impacts caused by these species range from aesthetic degradation to sweeping changes in ecosystem function and can have far reaching impacts on the economic vitality and recreational opportunities that the communities of the Adirondacks rely on.

The Council has long recognized invasive species as one of the greatest regional threats to water quality, ecosystem health, and the ecological integrity of the Adirondacks. Species that are known to exist within the Park such as Eurasian watermilfoil, Woolly adelgid, Japanese knotweed, Zebra mussels, Spiny waterfleas, and the Eurasian boar are crowding out native species, impacting recreational and agricultural activities and reducing property values. Impacts from these species will continue to increase if current populations are left unchecked and will be compounded if new species, such as Hydrilla, Emerald ash borer, or Asian longhorned beetle gain a foothold in the Park.

Given its remote geographical location, limited transportation corridors, and unique regulatory structure, the Adirondack Park continues to offer a rare opportunity to keep known invasive species threats in check and prevent the spread and introduction of new species from occurring. The Council acknowledges and supports the work of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) as the organization leading regional efforts to protect the lands and waters of the Adirondacks from invasive species. The Adirondack Council will continue to support APIPP in their invasive species management goals and will actively seek appropriate legislation and funding for APIPP and their partners to meet these goals.

The Adirondack Council's revised Invasive Species Policy has four broad goals:

1. Incorporate current scientific data/knowledge and accepted best management practices to guide the Council's policy and conservation agenda.
2. Support efforts that will limit the spread of established populations of invasive species into uninfested lands and waters of the Adirondack Park.
3. Support efforts that will prevent new introductions of IS into lands and waters of the Adirondack Park.
4. Seek to abate negative ecological, socioeconomic, and public health and safety impacts resulting from infestations of IS within the Adirondack Park by broadly supporting educational programs and efforts.

Specifically, the Council will address invasive species as follows:

1. The Adirondack Council recognizes preventing new introductions of invasive species as the highest priority and will strongly support efforts to establish spread-prevention programs, such as the use of boat decontamination stations for aquatic invasives. The costs associated with prevention methods are shown to be far less than the costs needed to eradicate or control species once they get introduced or established.
2. The Adirondack Council strongly supports legislative efforts that will reduce the spread and impact of invasive species, such as the 2014 passage of Bill A9619/S7851 that bans the transport of aquatic invasive species at public, private and commercial boat launches, and will advocate for meaningful enforcement to make these laws effective

3. The Adirondack Council recognizes that early detection/rapid response (EDRR) is critical in controlling the spread of invasives and strongly supports volunteer monitoring programs and the development and funding of regional EDRR teams. The Council supports rapid response planning efforts that are flexible, regional in scope, maximizes available resources, and appropriately reflects the objectives within this policy.
4. The Adirondack Council recognizes that long-term, sustainable funding is critical to the successful control of invasive species and will actively work to secure expanded funding from the Environmental Protection Fund and other sources that will provide adequate, perpetual support to manage invasive species prevention, education, EDRR, and control activities.
5. The Adirondack Council recognizes that invasive species populations need to be controlled and supports using the most effective and ecologically balanced control techniques needed to accomplish the specific goal. The chosen remedy should reflect the following:
 1. Accepted best management practices for the specific population and environment.
 2. A full accounting of the specific factors involved (species, environment, size of infestation, eradication vs control, ecological restrictions, financing, etc.).
 3. Control method should be conducted within a comprehensive invasive species management plan that includes monitoring to document target and non-target effects.
 4. While chemical controls are widely prescribed as an initial management tool, the Council believes these highly toxic controls need to be used judiciously and limited to the greatest extent possible.
 5. The presence of rare, endangered or protected species in a treatment area is of special concern and should be accounted for in any proposed management plan or action. In this case, alternative control methods, including hand and mechanical harvesting and physical barriers should be proven inadequate before biological or chemical controls are employed.
6. The infestation of forest pests on Forest Preserve lands poses unique challenges given the constitutional protections and limitations on timber harvesting. The Council supports balanced solutions that offer the most feasible option of control given the variables involved, and may include limited cutting of diseased trees. Threshold limits need to be determined by staff and technical advisors and approved on a case-by-case basis consistent with case law and attorney general opinions. If the infestation is beyond a reasonable limit of control, Council Board will oppose large scale cutting until it is possible to evaluate alternatives and options and formally approve a course of action specific to the circumstances
7. The Adirondack Council generally supports the use of biological controls for invasive species where these controls have been shown to work and where damage to nontarget species is limited.
8. The Adirondack Council will not support actions which weaken strong environmental and human health protections regarding the use of chemical controls in the Adirondack Park.
9. The Adirondack Council recognizes that climate change poses a significant risk to the overall vulnerability of the region and that these risks may include greater exposure to invasive species that are not currently identified or seen as a threat. Council policies need to be responsive and flexible to the unknown challenges that climate change poses with regard to invasive species.