EMPOWERING ACTION: THE 2ND NEW BRUNSWICK INVASIVE SPECIES SUMMIT

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

A SUMMARY OF THE 2ND INVASIVE SPECIES SUMMIT
HELD ON NOV 1 AND NOV 2, 2023
CENTENNIAL ROTARY LODGE, MONCTON, NB

NB ISC
NEW BRUNSWICK INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

On November 1st and 2nd, the New Brunswick Invasive Species Council (NBISC) held our second Invasive Species Summit; this year focused on Empowering Action. We had over 60 participants over the course of the 2-day event, with participants from government, non-profit organizations, academia, industry, and the public coming from across the province, neighboring provinces and the United States together to discuss the latest in Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in New Brunswick.

SESSION 1 (NOV 1)

WE GOT CAUGHT UP: IAS UPDATES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Kristin Elton, Program Director of the NBISC shared updates about various invasive species concerns in New Brunswick. Species of elevated concern this year included Zebra mussels, recently discovered in the Wolastoq (St. John River) watershed, and Phragmites (Common Reed).

SESSION 2 (NOV 1)

MEET & GREET WORLD CAFÉ

We welcomed 10 species and subject experts and on-the-ground practitioners to come share their expertise with us in a "World Café" style forum. Participants were able to move about the space to listen to speakers and join in conversation based on their interest and relevance to their own work. This sparked a lot of lively discussion and allowed for deeper and more detailed discussion than a presentation style format.

Discussions focused on:
·Zebra/Quagga Mussels
·Tunicates, European Green Crab & other marine species
·Invasive Jumping Worms
·Eurasian Water Milfoil and Large Mouth Bass
·Freshwater Animals
·Terrestrial Plants
·Forest Pests

SESSION 3 (NOV 1)

BUILDING NB'S CAPACITY FOR IAS MANAGEMENT

The management of IAS falls under the scope of many diverse groups, and sometimes it can be confusing discerning responsibilities (what work falls to who), ongoing efforts, and what challenges are holding back progress. For this panel we gathered experts from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO-MPO), Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Natural Resources and Energy Development (DNRED) and the Kennebecasis River Watershed Committee to be part of a moderated discussion, representing some of the most key stakeholders in IAS in NB. A recap of key points follows.

Which invasives do you consider most important in NB?

The main species discussed were Zebra Mussels, Emerald Ash Borer, and Eurasian Water Milfoil, with Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and other new and emerging threats also mentioned as the major IAS concerns for NB. However, all panelists emphasized that there is no "one worst species", and that we must be vigilant on many fronts.

Who do you/your organization work with most on IAS?

The panelists noted their organizations worked most closely with NBISC, CFIA, DFO-MPO, and DNRED, at a provincial scale, and with non-profit organizations, community groups, and municipalities for local issues. Other departments of government were also seen as important as well as working groups from other jurisdictions dealing with the same IAS issues. Panelists also emphasized the importance of building strong partnerships to strengthen projects aimed at managing invasive species.

What challenges would you like partners/public to know about?

Discussion centered on a lack of policy tools or government, and a lack of authority or mandate on certain issues. The public often presumes an organization has the authority to deal with an issue, when IAS is not always explicitly in their mandate, or a major part of their work. Similarly, people assume non-profit organizations are government and can deal with IAS, but they are limited by lack of funds and stretched to capacity. There is a general issue of apathy toward IAS in NB, which can feed into the lack of policy or government direction, due to a lack of public pressure.

SESSION 3 (NOV 1) *...continued*

BUILDING NB'S CAPACITY FOR IAS MANAGEMENT

What is the biggest barrier in NB to IAS control?
All panelists agreed that public apathy and resistance to behavioural change are the major barriers to progressing invasive species management in New Brunswick. Without more public interest we will continue to see apathy from government on this issue, which means the policy and funding necessary for IAS control is not available. With stronger public concern we hope to see people pressuring their officials for real change.

What is our biggest challenge to establishing processes in New Brunswick for A) effective and early detection of IAS, and B) successful rapid response actions?
Most panelists agreed that there needs to be more accountability to figure out roles and responsibilities of organizations and governments and an actual plan and strategy for early detection as the current response to new threats is reactionary. Although we have a good system for early detection (iNaturalist), we need to provide more guidance on how to implement these tools and who to contact.

Given the challenges we've discussed, what do you think is a realistic first step/goal towards advancing IAS management in NB that can be achieved over the next year? What is something related to IAS management that exists in other jurisdictions that you would love to see here in New Brunswick?

- Develop IAS 'Watchlist' to predict which species are on the way.
- Provide educators with the tools to teach our youth.
- Develop an IAS Awareness Program or 'STRIKE FORCE' awareness team (empower and train students to head this program and monitor local areas, boat launches, etc.)
- Better response planning for 2024 for species of elevated concern (a response plan for Zebra Mussels has been started).
- Create a template that prioritizes invasive species applicable to a specific watershed.
- Get regulations in place for initiatives such as the installation of boat wash stations where a governmental department is responsible for enforcing their use.
- NBISC to 'stay relevant' and 'don't lose ground"; continue to seek support and funding to keep initiatives going and remain the central hub for invasive species management in New Brunswick.
- NBISC develop tangible goals for their organization

SESSION 4 (NOV 2)

WE TALKED DATA

Understanding where and when a species is spreading is vital to the success of IAS management. To do that we need a lot of data from many sources. NBISC does not have the capacity to gather all the data required so we need support from other organizations. Many of the organizations participating in the Summit currently gather IAS or other relevant data or could incorporate gathering that data into their existing work. During this session, Kristin Elton stressed the importance of gathering and sharing that data and provided an overview of how to download iMapInvasives and taught participants how to share their data with the NBISC.

The NBISC encourages everyone to submit their IAS data through the iMapInvasives platform. We ended the session by going outside for some hands-on experience, where we laid out a course of different “patch types” and “species” for participants to practice with. The chance to use it in a real-world setting allowed people to ask many more questions, and get much better acquainted with the software, all while having some fun.

SESSION 4 (NOV 2)

FIELD TRIP!

To wrap up the Summit we all piled up on a charter bus for an invasive species tour of greater Moncton. First, we stopped in Riverview at our Phragmites Removal test site, where Clarissa Hoffman, Project Coordinator (NBISC) discussed the effects of Phragmites on the wetland, showed the test removal site, and discussed our methodologies.

Next, we travelled to Moncton to observe some more patches of Phragmites and discussed how it spreads. We also stopped by a patch of Japanese Knotweed, to discuss its effects and learn its identifying features. We then headed to our Japanese Knotweed removal site, where we discussed our methodology, the challenges of removing the knotweed, and the group brainstormed possibilities for improvement.

Last we visited a stand of Ash trees infected by Emerald Ash Borer, where participants learned how to spot a sick Ash tree, what identifying features to look for, and what work is currently being done to slow their spread.

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