

TRIP REPORT
WESTERN REGIONAL PANEL OF THE
NATIONAL AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES TASK FORCE
La Jolla, California
September 9-11, 2003
Marilyn Leland

PWSRCAC holds a voting seat on the Western Regional Panel of the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. The Panel is made up of representatives of state, local and British Columbia governments as well as natives and various interest and industry groups throughout the West Coast. Our agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service includes funding for our attendance at these sorts of meetings.

Subjects of interest to PWSRCAC that were covered at the meeting included the reauthorization of the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA), reports from the National Task Force and the National Invasive Species Council, reports of work being done on ballast water issues throughout the West, status of mitten crab and green crab management plans and state and other member updates.

At the end of the meeting, there was a discussion about a location and date for next year's annual meeting. I suggested Alaska and another member suggested North Dakota. A vote was taken and Alaska was the choice. However, having the meeting in Alaska will be subject to cost and opportunities for field trips. After I returned from the trip, I contacted Gary Sonnevil, Denny Lassuy and Bob Piorkowski to alert them to the possibility of the Alaska meeting and to ask for their guidance on field trips. Unfortunately, the cost of holding a meeting in Valdez and doing the field trip there is likely to be prohibitive for many of the Panel members, so we would probably have to hold the meeting in Anchorage and do field trips within driving distance of Anchorage.

Allegra Cangelosi of the Northeast-Midwest Institute reported via teleconference on the status of NAISA in Congress. She said that under the provisions of the draft bill by January 1, 2006, new ships would have to have treatment technology installed and the standard for treatment would be "better than exchange". No later than 2011, final standards must be implemented, which may include hull fouling. Best available technology economically achievable will be the floor. The floor can be revised, but that would not mean that a ship that has invested in installing a treatment technology would have to change. They would have at least 10 years before they would have to upgrade.

Allegra said that in order for the bill to pass through Congress this year, it will need a lot more support than it is presently receiving. Prior to this meeting, we had drafted a letter to Senator Murkowski that had been approved by the XCOM. We were holding the letter until after the meeting so that I could talk to other people on the West Coast who are dealing with ballast water issues. When I returned from the trip, we revised our letter to Senator Murkowski with respect to the lack of a ballast water exchange requirement for Alaskan tankers. We also sent a similar letter to Senator Stevens and Rep. Young.

At these meetings, I regularly hear concern from other West Coast people about the fact that Alaska does not have any laws governing ballast water treatment for non-indigenous species. California, Washington and Oregon all have strong laws in place. We may want to consider approaching some of our representatives in the Alaska legislature to see if they would be willing to introduce a bill.

I learned from one of the California representatives at the meeting that California no longer exempts TAPS trade tankers from the requirements of their law. Of course, California is not receiving ballast water from these tankers, but hull fouling would be an issue for them.

I also learned that the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission is working on a reporting system and database. They are interested in the database we have been creating and want to include Alaska in the reporting system.

For our field trip, we visited a small boat harbor on Coronado. John Chapman, who is one of the scientists who worked on the early Smithsonian studies in Alaska, led the group and showed examples of NIS attached to the hulls of boats in the harbor. It appeared that most of the species being found on the bottom of the boats were NIS.

We also visited the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, which is right on the border of Mexico. One of the researchers there showed us the work they are doing on NIS, primarily with invasive plants.