

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026**

SUBJECT **Regional Invasive Species Program Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To inform the Committee of the accomplishments of the Regional Invasive Species Program and provide the updated 2025 capital region Invasive Species list.

BACKGROUND

Since October 2017, the Capital Regional District (CRD) has supported coordination of regional invasive species management. Originally enabled through the Climate Action Service Establishing Bylaw, the service was expanded in 2025 to cover the entire region when the CRD Board established the new regional Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Service.

The CRD's Regional Invasive Species Program (RISP) brings together local governments, First Nations and other land managers with an interest in, or management responsibilities for, invasive species within the capital region, to pursue a coordinated and collaborative approach to invasive species management and education. The program focuses on collaboration, capacity building, staff training, education, outreach, Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR), disposal, inventory, mapping, restoration and research. The main focus of the program is plant species, but there are several animal species (e.g., European green crab, American Bullfrog) that are also impacting regional ecosystems. CRD staff work closely with the Ministry of Forests Invasive Plant Program and the Invasive Species Council of BC.

Coordinated and chaired by CRD staff, the Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) is made up of local government and First Nations staff, and other land managers, provides support and advice to the program. Attached Appendix A provides a summary of program accomplishments from 2020-2025.

The Capital Region Invasive Plant list (Appendix B) identifies species of concern in the region and is an essential tool of the local EDRR program; a proactive, province-wide approach to managing new invasive species that strives to prevent the establishment and subsequent impacts through targeted risk assessment, verification, containment, and eradication. This regional list helps land managers prioritize management of existing invasive plants and supports awareness of new invasive plants that may show up in the region. This list was updated in 2025 in collaboration with CRISP members, provincial staff and invasive plant experts and includes a total of 152 species with 58 new invasive plants added since the 2019 update.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental, Climate and Social Implications

The program has achieved many successes from 2020-2025 through collaboration, capacity building and staff training, education and outreach, EDRR, disposal, inventory and mapping, and restoration and research. In 2025, as part of a regional EDRR program, staff, in collaboration with

the inter-municipal working group and provincial and local invasive plant experts, updated the Capital Region Invasive Species list, which classifies invasive plants for our region into four categories: prevent, eradicate, contain, and strategic control (Appendix B). With adjusted climate projections, an increasing number of species are deemed possible invasives in the capital region. The team used the precautionary approach to include species that are found in neighbouring jurisdictions and are those that are noted on provincial listings that have climate suitability in our region.

Financial Implications

The invasive species program receives its mandate through Bylaw No. 4575 Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Coordination established in 2025. The service has a budget (CRD Reference # 1.315) in 2026 of \$229,780 and is supported by a 0.5 full-time equivalent position that reports through the Environmental Protection Division of the Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Services Department.

Intergovernmental Implications

The current provincial invasive species regulatory framework is outdated and does not provide the information, guidance, and tools necessary for land managers, including local and regional governments, to effectively manage local impacts and concerns. For example, many known invasive plants are still available for sale online or at nurseries throughout the region and across BC; putting more onus and economic pressure on local governments to manage invasive plants in their jurisdiction without the ability to eliminate or ban an obvious source of introduced species.

Program staff engage often with landowners, industry and land managers about invasive species and are frequently asked about legislation that could help to regulate these plants. The network of jurisdictions responsible for managing invasive species is confusing and often multiple agencies and governments are involved in controlling invasive plants on adjoining land parcels. Furthermore, there are numerous outdated pieces of legislation, regulation and policy that govern invasive plant management in BC. The lack of a consolidated and comprehensive invasive species legislation, coupled with limited funds and staff capacity, remains an ongoing challenge for land managers.

The Invasive Species Strategy for BC, a strategic framework for improved invasive species management developed by the Invasive Species Council of BC, identifies “a single piece of co-developed invasive species legislation for British Columbia” as a key goal to achieve effective invasive species management.

Stakeholders in the various collaboration groups support an update to the existing framework and staff will bring a report to the April 2026 Environmental Services Committee meeting which will ask the CRD Board to write an advocacy letter in support of legislative changes.

Economic Implications

Invasive species represent a significant environmental and economic risk to local ecosystems. They have the potential to overwhelm healthy watersheds and ecosystems, displace native species, negatively impact regional and municipal parks, disrupt infrastructure, and impact service delivery. Climate change will likely accelerate these risks over the coming decades. The Invasive Species Council of BC is currently undertaking an economic impact study, which will attempt to quantify the financial implications of the invasive species to the provincial economy.

CONCLUSION

Invasive species are one of the top stressors that impact the natural environment and biodiversity due to their ability to establish quickly and spread rapidly, often displacing native plants and animals to become the dominant species in the area. Over the past five years, the Regional Invasive Species Program has demonstrated success through collaboration, capacity building and staff training, education and outreach, Early Detection Rapid Response, disposal, inventory and mapping, and restoration and research. However, local government efforts at controlling invasive species spread are hampered when many invasive plants remain available for sale, and with outdated and antiquated provincial legislation and regulation. Advocating to the Province to replace the outdated Weed Control Act with a comprehensive Invasive Species Act for BC, which includes preventing their sale, trade, barter, gifting and transport, is necessary. A staff report recommending advocacy to the Province in support of updated invasive species legislation is planned for the April 2026 Environmental Services Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: 2020-2025 Program Accomplishments

Appendix B: High Priority Invasive Plants in the Capital Region

Presentation: Update on the Regional Invasive Species Program