

**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019**

SUBJECT Invasive Species Program Update

ISSUE

To update the Committee on the invasive species program and seek a letter advocating the Province to update the Regional Weeds List under the [BC Weed Control Act](#).

BACKGROUND

In October 2017, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board supported regional coordination of invasive species management (communication, education and cooperation) through the Climate Action Service and established a part-time (0.5 FTE) coordinator funded through existing Regional Parks, Environmental Protection and Integrated Water Services budgets for 2018 and 2019. The CRD received funding from the Province (\$32,000) to support educational and outreach efforts.

The invasive species program 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. A working group (Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership), made up of local government and First Nations staff, provides support and advice to the program.

The program focuses on collaboration, capacity building and staff training, education and outreach, Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR), disposal, inventory and mapping, and restoration and research. A summary of the program accomplishments for 2018 can be found in Appendix A.

The Community Charter defines invasive species management as an area of concurrent jurisdiction between local governments and the Province. Invasive species in the province are regulated through [Spheres of Concurrent Jurisdiction – Environment and Wildlife Regulation](#) (SCJ-EWR), the [BC Weed Control Act](#) (WCA) and the [BC Weed Control Regulation](#) (WCR), which require landowners to control the listed noxious and invasive weeds. Part 1 of Schedule A of the WCR designates noxious weeds for all regions of the province, while Part 2 designates noxious weeds within the boundaries of regional districts. The capital region is not listed in Part 2, although many of the listed species occur here.

ALTERNATIVES

That the Parks and Environmental Services Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

Alternative 1

That the CRD Board Chair write a letter to the Province of BC (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development) requesting an update to the Weed Control Regulation, Schedule A: Regional Weeds List, to include regionally-specific species of concern.

Alternative 2

That the report be referred back to staff for further review.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A key focus of the regional invasive species program is to educate the public and decision makers about the risks imposed by invasive species and the practices required to reduce their spread. Staff developed Alert Sheets for priority SCJ-EWR R species such as Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, and Blessed Milk Thistle (Appendix B). In May 2019, as part of Invasive Species month outreach, a Regional Invasive Species Forum will be held for local government staff and elected officials to learn about new invasive species to the region and ones to watch, and to foster conversations on common regional invasive species issues such as disposal (Appendix C).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) is a proactive, province-wide approach to managing new invasive species that prevent the establishment and subsequent impacts through targeted risk assessment, verification, containment and eradication. 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 Status List for Priority Invasive Species in the Capital Region, which classifies invasive plants for our region into four categories: prevent, eradicate, contain and control (Appendix D). This capital region specific list highlights the priority species for prevention and eradication and provides governments and land managers with a tool to efficiently plan invasive species management and control efforts.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Several municipalities in the region have noxious weed bylaws or other bylaws through which they are trying to control invasive plants, many of which refer to the Status List for Priority Invasive Species in the Capital Region and/or mirror the species listed as noxious and invasive weeds in provincial regulations. The list supports a coordinated effort across the region.

Staff provided comments to the Province on the Organic Matter Recycling Regulations update and recommended that invasive plants should not be mixed with the compost stream, as the heat requirements proposed are not high enough to ensure invasive plants are killed. This could result in spreading invasive species through the beneficial reuse of composted materials.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Invasive species disposal is a key issue for invasive species management and a specific session will be held at the upcoming Regional Invasive Species Forum to facilitate discussions to identify and resolve invasive species disposal issues in the capital region.

CRD Bylaw No. 3881, Hartland Landfill Tipping Fee and Regulation Bylaw No. 6, 2013, makes reference to SCJ-EWR and the WCA as guiding documents to identify noxious and invasive weeds that can be disposed of as refuse. Updating the provincial list will automatically update the Hartland bylaw and how these species are handled in region.

The Status List for Priority Invasive Species in the Capital Region contains additional invasive plants that are not designated within either the WCA or the SCJ-EWR. This means those invasive plants could be diverted to yard and garden waste and/or compost rather than treated as refuse.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Invasive species represent a significant environmental and economic risk to local ecosystems. They have the potential to overwhelm healthy watershed and ecosystems, displace native species, negatively impact regional and municipal parks, and disrupt infrastructure and impact service delivery. Climate change will likely accelerate these risks over the coming decades.

CONCLUSION

Invasive species are one of the many stressors that impact our natural environment because of their ability to establish quickly and spread rapidly, often displacing native plants and animals to become the dominant species in the area. Collaboration and communication between all levels of government are essential for effective management of invasive species in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Parks & Environment Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the CRD Board Chair write a letter to the Province of BC (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development) requesting an update to the Weed Control Regulation, Schedule A: Regional Weeds List, to include regionally-specific species of concern.

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Attachments: Appendix A – 2018 Program Accomplishments
Appendix B – Invasive Species Alert Sheets
Appendix C – Regional Invasive Species Forum
Appendix D – Status List for Priority Invasive Species in the Capital Region