

## **Development of California's Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan Underway**

The introduction of non-indigenous aquatic invasive species (AIS) into the marine and fresh waters of California threatens the economic, social, public health, and ecological integrity of the state's water resources. Since natural population controls that keep AIS in check in their native habitats are absent in California, these invaders can spread rapidly, destroying native plant and animal communities, reducing recreational opportunities, lowering property values, and severely impacting irrigation, power generation, and other water-dependant industries. Many federal, state and local groups have long been involved in programs for AIS eradication, prevention and control in California. However, a sustained, consistently funded and more coordinated effort of local, state, and federal governments and private sector businesses and organizations is needed to address this serious issue now and in the future. While there are diverse interests involved statewide, there is a high degree of common purpose between the groups who value, enjoy, utilize, manage and protect marine and freshwater habitats threatened by AIS.

Having a comprehensive state plan for managing AIS in California will serve several purposes. The plan will identify AIS of concern and provide a framework for how to address their prevention, eradication and management. It will facilitate the coordination of AIS management, outreach and research activities throughout the state. The plan may also provide funding opportunities from the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

In August of 2002, representatives of 14 agencies came together to participate in a State AIS Planning Workshop. Results of that meeting included a draft set of goals and objectives for an AIS Plan, an assessment of opportunities and impediments to creating a plan, a draft task list, and a summary of current activities for each participating agency with a role in managing AIS in California. In October of 2002, with funds provided by the CA Department of Fish and Game, a part-time plan coordinator was hired to write the California AIS Management Plan. The work was done through a contract with the University of California at Davis in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy.

Incorporating recommendations from stakeholders contributes to a better and more responsive AIS plan for the State of California. In an effort to get input on their concerns and perspectives regarding AIS during the plan's development, meetings were held to get input from groups in the pet, aquarium, and nursery/landscaping trades, live bait and seafood dealers, ports, shippers and marinas, boaters, anglers, irrigation districts, tribes, and other interested parties.

The first stakeholder meeting was held in Sacramento on November 19, 2002. A southern California stakeholder meeting took place in San Diego in March of 2003. Most stakeholder comments pertained to AIS education and outreach, spread prevention, regulation and enforcement, and general suggestions for AIS Management Plan development. Attendees clearly felt that AIS education and outreach should be a top priority. Many stakeholders feel that AIS prevention, both into and out of California, is critical and the most cost-effective strategy. Early detection and rapid response are the keys to success and it was recommended that these types of efforts be given priority funding.

Summaries of both the northern and southern California AIS Management Plan stakeholder meetings are available. Please contact Holly Crosson at (530) 752-3419 or [hacrosson@ucdavis.edu](mailto:hacrosson@ucdavis.edu).