

INVASIVE PLANT STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN - UPDATE

SUMMARY/ISSUE

Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan (IPSMP) implementation update.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

On 2008 October 06, Council approved UE2008-31, Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan, and directed:

- Administration to, in consultation with stakeholders including retailers, review The City of Calgary list of plants and enforcement under the Weeds Bylaw and review the jurisdiction of The City of Calgary around the retail sales of invasive species; and provide a further report to Council through the SPC on Utilities and Environment by 2009 April;
- Administration to immediately begin discussions with Calgary plant retailers in an effort to voluntarily comply to eliminate the sales of invasive plant species; and
- Administration to identify and engage stakeholders to leverage existing volunteers and education programs concerning the management and control of invasive species for the implementation of the Invasive Species Strategic Management Plan and report back to the SPC on Utilities and Environment no later than 2009 April.

On 2009 June 01 Council approved UE2009-13, Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan- Update and directed Administration to bring forward the Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan implementation update to the 2010 April SPC on Utilities and Environment.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the SPC on Utilities and Environment recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct Administration to review the Community Standards Bylaw 5M2004

upon Provincial proclamation of the *Weed Control Act* (Alberta) and its regulations and report back to the SPC on Community and Protective Services with any proposed bylaw amendments if necessary; and

3. Direct Administration to post future annual updates on the Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan on The City of Calgary Parks website.

INVESTIGATION

The UE2008-31 Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan report identified three areas of focus: weed bylaw review, retail engagement, and volunteer leveraging and education.

As of 2010 March 31, the Province had not yet proclaimed the new *Weed Control Act* (Alberta). As such, any potential bylaw implications to the Community Standards Bylaw 5M2004 have not yet been identified. This work will commence once the regulations are public and any proposed bylaw changes will be brought back to committee.

Attachment 1 summarizes a number of the initiatives undertaken in 2009 including work with the Province around the *Weed Control Act* (Alberta) review.

Mitigating the risk of invasive plant species retail sales in the Calgary region is a key preventative measure in invasive plant management. Engagement with the larger retailers commenced in 2009 and will be ongoing. Attachment 2 outlines a summary of the retail strategies initiated including a recommended 'no buy' list that will be posted on The City of Calgary Parks website.

Sectors of the public are keenly interested and aware of the invasive plant issue in the Calgary area. Administration established stakeholder engagement sessions,

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researched barriers to volunteering, and developed the structure for a community stewardship program to leverage existing volunteers and improve education programs. Representatives from local conservation organizations and provincial government bodies were involved with two information sharing sessions and telephone surveys. The result of this work is a Parks Community Stewardship: 2010 Pilot Biodiversity Education Program. Three pilot projects will be executed in 2010 and provide case studies to evaluate the program's effectiveness and framework for the future. Attachment 3 outlines the 2010 program, including pilot sites.

IMPLICATIONS

General

This report has been reviewed for alignment with The City of Calgary's Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Policy Framework.

Social

The Community Stewardship Biodiversity Education Program will promote social community, engagement and action around invasive plant management.

Environmental

Invasive species are widely considered to be the most significant threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. The impact of these species on natural ecosystems may cause irreversible habitat damage.

Urban impacts of invasive plant species may include the degradation of recreational open spaces.

Economic (External)

High quality natural areas are characterized by high biodiversity and contribute to the attraction and image of Calgary as a desirable place to live.

BUSINESS PLAN/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

This report is consistent with the approved business plan and budget within Community Services and Protective Services. It specifically supports Council Priority 1.3 and strategic result 2.3.1 'Promote responsible and sustainable environmental practices and stewardship through environmental education programs and opportunities.'

RISKS

The *Weed Control Act* (Alberta) mandates control of noxious weeds by The City within its jurisdiction. Non-compliance represents a significant risk to The City. In addition, failure to manage this problem may result in significantly higher costs for restoration at a later date and/or irreversible environmental damage.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan (IPSMP) 2009 Initiatives
2. Retail Strategies Around Invasive Plant Species
3. Parks Community Stewardship – 2010 Pilot Biodiversity Education Plan

Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan (IPSMP) 2009 Initiatives

In 2009, Administration supported the Provinces' review of the *Weed Control Act* (Alberta) through the following work:

- 133 plant species with invasive characteristics in the Calgary region were identified and risk ranked;
- Nature Calgary, corporate staff and adjacent municipalities were consulted and an expanded list of 190 regional plant species was created; and
- Parks participated in Alberta Agriculture's plant species review committee to ensure that species identified by regional stakeholders were evaluated for possible inclusion in new *Weed Control Act* (Alberta) regulations.

In implementation of the Invasive Plant Strategic Management Plan, the following 2009 initiatives were undertaken:

- An applied research trial examining caragana control measures was commenced in partnership with the University of Calgary and the Weaselhead Preservation Society;
- An early detection / rapid response system was piloted in partnership with Nature Calgary;
- Riparian management projects in partnership with Water Resources, Calgary Herald, MD of Rockyview and the Province of Alberta were leveraged with funding and volunteers;
- Best practice materials for public awareness, education, procedures and protocols were researched to support 2010 projects;
- Invasive plant species spatial data collection was expanded to 700 hectares; and
- A herbarium reference collection for invasive plant species was initiated with support from the University of Calgary.

Retail Strategies Around Invasive Plant Species

In 2009, the following strategies have been employed to reduce the possibility of the introduction of invasive plant species through retail sales in the city of Calgary:

- An initial meeting was held in May with Landscape & Nursery Trades Association (LANTA) representatives to gauge industry awareness and perspective around this issue.
- A retail stakeholders meeting was held in June with retailers and federal (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) and provincial (Alberta Agriculture) stakeholders. This meeting identified interest in cooperative action and the critical need to establish a “no buy” list prior to the August and September buyers shows.
- A “no buy” sales list was developed with species specific rationales and input from regional governments. Follow up with major retailers indicated across the board support and acceptance of the need for action.
- LANTA was contacted and recommended their members support the “no buy” list.
- A January follow up meeting was held with retailers and government representatives to discuss cooperative go forward items. There is universal agreement that this cooperative approach will continue in 2010.
- The recommended ‘no buy’ list will be posted on The City of Calgary Parks website for information to Calgarians and updated as required in discussion with the stakeholders.

Parks Community Stewardship: 2010 Pilot Biodiversity Education Program

The Biodiversity Education Program Objectives:

- Facilitate education and public engagement to address management concerns on the impact of invasive plants on public lands.
- Identify volunteer opportunities that contribute to the overall invasive species management plan by removal of invasive species, promotion of sustainable landscaping techniques, and reduction of herbicide use in groomed park spaces.

2010 Pilot Program Outline:

Parks will launch three pilot sites based on parameters such as an engaged community leader, an active volunteer core and a green space with species of concern. Target species will be selected for each pilot site. The species chosen provide the most effective removal by volunteers and are all on the current noxious weed list for Alberta.

Parks will engage community stewardship leaders to assist in leading the community steward volunteers. They will be responsible for training the volunteers, organizing the volunteer events, tracking the invasive species and reporting on the volunteer contribution. Stewards will be trained on the specific natural habitat in which they are working, they will hand pull target species and they will use GPS units and grid maps to target, report and study prohibited noxious and noxious plants for evaluation. Parks has developed several resource materials, including a training manual that will assist the community stewardship leaders to train their volunteers.

2010 Pilot Sites:

Site 1 - Nose Hill Park & Whispering Woods

Target Species: Hounds Tongue, Common Burdock, Canada Thistle, Diffused Knapweed*, Spotted Knapweed*, Nodding/Musk Thistle*

Site 2 - McHugh Bluffs

Target Species: Common Burdock, Goatsbeard, Canada Thistle, Bluebur, Yellow Clematis, Leafy Spurge*

Site 3 - Weaselhead Park, Glenmore Reservoir shoreline, Sandy Beach

Target Species: Spotted Knapweed*, Leafy Spurge*, Yellow Clematis, Tall Buttercup, Ox-eye Daisy, Scentless Chamomile, Wild Buckwheat, Black Henbane, Caragana (study site)

** Denotes a prohibited noxious weed, thus removal is required if sited.*

2010 Program Timelines:

January/February: Partner engagement, project planning, and information collection

February/March: Educational and resource material development, educational material review with content experts and community stewardship leaders

April/May: Training session for community stewardship leaders, planning of volunteer biodiversity stewardship events

June-August: Volunteer biodiversity stewardship events, Parks operational support

August/September: Program evaluation and reporting

October/November: Program adjustments and roll out to additional sites