

Aquatic invasive species rapid response planning partnerships in the Lake Champlain basin: Bridging international, political, social, and economic gaps[#]

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Abstract

The Lake Champlain Basin is threatened by several non-native invasive plant and animal species. The U.S. states of Vermont and New York, and the province of Quebec, Canada share the Lake Champlain watershed. The three jurisdictions work together to protect their water resources and implement Opportunities for Action, a long-term watershed management plan for the Basin. Together they recognise the need to control the introduction, spread, and impact of non-native invasive species in order to preserve the biological and ecological integrity of the Lake Champlain ecosystem independent of political borders. The Lake Champlain Basin Program Aquatic Nuisance Species Subcommittee is developing an invasive species rapid response action plan that addresses invasive species control and spread prevention in the Basin. A rapid response is an effort to contain and control non-native invasive species introductions while they are localised in a short amount of time, such as weeks or months, before they become established and more expensive to manage. Lake managers, policy makers, scientists, academics, and representatives of local watershed organisations from the three jurisdictions have shared information and data to foster the development of a comprehensive plan. Gaps in interstate and inter-jurisdictional laws and policy have been identified by reviewing all necessary permits for aquatic invasive species control methods. Examining the interface of law, policy, and permits aids in identifying regulatory and policy inadequacies, and opportunities for corrective legislation. Partnering among diverse organisations has allowed strategic invasive species rapid response planning that builds on managers' and policy makers' concerns, provides options, fosters inter-jurisdictional cooperation, and considers social, economic, and political impacts of invasive species management. The rapid response planning process identifies lead agencies from each of the three jurisdictions, recommends the formation of one governing body, and includes detailed steps of a rapid response process. The goal of the rapid response plan is to foster dialogue among permit applicants, scientists, and regulatory agencies, to ensure the fastest action possible. The Lake Champlain Basin invasive species rapid response planning process provides an applicable model for the United Nations Educational Scientific Organisation Hydrology for the Environment, Life, and Policy (HELP) basins around the world.

Keywords: aquatic invasive species, aquatic nuisance species, Lake Champlain, lake management, integrated water resource management, rapid response plan