

Columbia River Basin Interagency Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan Orientation and Exercise

After Action Review

This document represents the After Action Review of the **CRB Interagency Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan** Coordination and Support Staff/MAC Group exercise that was conducted October 15-16, 2008.

The focus of this exercise was on the pathway management components of the Plan – particularly actions needed to prevent secondary spread of an incipient mussel introduction via commercial and recreational vessel traffic. This focus reflects a new strategy developed by the 100th Meridian Initiative Columbia Basin Team that identifies a set of training objectives to be achieved over a five year exercise cycle.

The 2008 exercise was divided into two parts, one for the MAC Group, and the other for the Coordination and Support Staff. Each group received approximately two hours of review on the **CRB Interagency Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan** and associated organizational structures. The Coordination and Support Staff participated in twelve hours of enhanced Table-top Exercise; the MAC Group participated for one hour on the 15th and four hours on the 16th.

This Review consolidates comments and recommendations that were provided by the participants and facilitators, regarding the **CRB Interagency Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan**, the exercise and other associated issues.

Methodology-Participants were asked to identify three things that they thought went well in the exercise, and three things that they thought needed improvement. In addition, in order to illustrate the relationship of the 2008 exercise to the “big picture,” this document briefly describes the 5-year training and exercise strategy. This report divides the comments into four sections and a summary:

- I. Participants’ Comments on the Exercise
- II. Participants’ Suggestions for the Plan
- III. Facilitator Suggestions
- IV. Future Training and Exercise: 5-Year Strategy
- V. Summary

I. Participants' Comments on the Exercise

- The presentations to the MAC Group were well developed and professionally presented.*
- It happened! We have a plan, it worked-we are not in “wait and see” mode.*
- Helped us all become more familiar with Plan and our roles.*
- The scenario was realistic, and gave us real issues to grapple with. It was good to limit the scenario to pathway management.*
- All participants were focused, participated and took the exercise seriously.*
- The exercise revealed gaps in the process. It took a little while to get “revved up and going.”*
- We need routine and on-going training and exercises. We don’t do this often enough.*
- Players did not understand ICS roles, were initially unclear on expectations.*
- Process is resource intensive up front. The Coordination and Support Staff will have a lot fewer people involved.*
- The Coordination and Support Staff should carefully consider the level of technical detail the MAC Group needs to make decisions. Generally, less is better.
- Separate actions being taken from recommendations in presentations.
- We were slow in our reaction time. We need to develop quicker response times for short-term decisions.
- We need to keep narrow focus and take advantage of opportunities to communicate with political leaders.
- Because not all MAC members will have the same degree of knowledge of dreissenids and the threat they present, it would be time well spent to provide a quick overview in the first MAC meeting.
- The exercise gave me practice in multi-agency decision-making, and ideas to take back to my own agency.
- I made contacts that will be useful in the event of a real infestation.
- Great interagency collaboration.

* Suggestions that were made by more than one participant have been consolidated, and marked with an asterisk.

- There was a better understanding of the roles of the MAC Group and the Coordination and Support Staff, as well as an awareness that this was not the “on the ground” ICS.
- It was sometimes unclear as to what information has been given to each Group (MAC vs. Coordination and Support Staff) and within the functions in the Coordination and Support Staff. Sometimes Logistics was not “in the loop.”
- Good facilities, food and organization-thank you!
- It was a huge improvement and advancement from the last exercise.

II. Participants' Suggestions for the Plan

- The Plan itself is short and sweet. Information is easy to access.*
- The organizational structure is flexible-easy to adapt to different locations and mixes of jurisdictions.*
- The Plan is easy to train to.
- Good initial notification structure.*
- The supporting documents (appendices) are well developed, comprehensive and useful. Liked the checklists and flow charts of organization, and prioritization of rapid response objectives.*
- Tab sections for easy access.*
- The MAC Group needs to address the funding issue.*
- Each participating agency needs to develop resource lists so the Coordination and Support Staff knows who has what.*
- Logistics needs more preplanning-where will the Coordination and Support Staff meet, etc. Need to develop reciprocity agreements.*
- The Plan needs to include a discussion on what agencies have specific authorities that might be needed (for example, both the US Coast Guard and County Sheriffs have the authority to stop vessels). Legal issues need to be clarified ahead of time if possible, rather than always depending on the Legal Counsel. Need MOUs to establish authority*
- Separating the Plan from the appendices is a good idea-it makes revising the appendices simpler, since the entire Plan does not have to be revised/signed.
- Expediting process heavily dependent on trained and experienced staff.
- Need clarity on who will lead the MAC Group-it shouldn't always be the USFWS. Related comments-no clear line of authority/responsibility. Who is in charge?
- Some sort of decision-making aid for the MAC Group would be helpful.
- Is the ICS structure right for this? Related comment: it is difficult to use ICS because people don't see zebra mussels as an "emergency" like fires or terrorism.
- Samples of forms, mutual aid agreements, etc.
- More user-friendly format.

- Need to add decontamination protocols to appendices.
- Need to “crosswalk” the Plan against the new National Response Framework for consistency, resource management assumptions and funding mechanisms. A national IMT will not just show up.
- The relationship between the MAC Group and the Coordination and Support Staff is not clear.
- Is the MAC Group the same as Unified Command?

III. Facilitator Suggestions

- Develop a one-page briefing sheet on the role of the MAC Group. Because of the scope of potential participants in the Columbia River Basin Plan, and the lack of certainty about where an infestation might be found, it is not safe to assume that participants in the MAC Group will be familiar with the Plan and their role. The exercise demonstrated that while the organizational structure and the Plan worked well, (even for those who did not participate in last year's training), a briefing form would be useful.
- Pre-identify personnel to fill supervisory positions in the Coordination and Support Staff. Because it is necessary to "manage the process" in order to meet timelines established by the MAC Group, Supervisors must be able to exercise their management responsibilities as well as participate in assessing the technical details.
- Develop post-discovery tools including press release, talking points, protective action statements, boat washing instructions, decontamination procedures, etc.
- Consider an MOA with appropriate agencies and organizations in the Lake Mead or Great Lakes areas.
- Identify legal authorities that are likely to be required (stop commercial shipping, close boat ramps, etc.) identify current holders of those authorities).
- Develop a MAC Group initial briefing form. The briefing form currently in the Plan is designed for on-scene transfer of command and similar tactical briefings, and does not address the policy-level needs of the MAC Group. In addition, its format does not lend itself to teleconferencing (which is the likely method for delivering the initial briefing). Note: There used to be a similar tool developed for wildland fire called the Escaped Fire Situation Analysis (EFSA). This may be a good place to start to develop a format.
- Each participating agency needs to review its internal decision-making process to ensure that the **CRB Rapid Response Plan** will be activated in a timely fashion.
- Consider the use of "virtual" technical specialists as well as "in person" participation in the Coordination and Support Staff. Experts in locations remote from the infestation (such as Lake Mead or the Great Lakes) could be linked via secure website and video-conference to increase timeliness and decrease costs.
- Consider adding a Finance function to the Coordination and Support Staff. At the least, this organization should have the capability to

develop cost estimates, make purchases of materials and services to support the MAC Group and the Coordination and Support Staff, and help develop cost/benefit analyses.

- Consider assigning Compliance Specialists to assist in developing options, rather than keeping them in their own group. Management options need to consider compliance issues as they are being developed, rather than waiting until the options are developed and then discovering that compliance issues preclude their implementation.
- The MAC Group Coordinator/Notification Coordinator is key to organizing both the MAC Group and the Coordination and Support Staff. This position needs to have personnel identified to back up Paul and Stephen.*[Note – right now, the plan only specifies USFWS as the Notification Coordinator; it doesn't call for a MAC Group Coordinator. If the USFWS agrees to provide the Notification Coordinator, it needs to identify lead and backup personnel.]*

IV. Future Training and Exercise

The exercise objectives and proposed slate of training and exercises shown in the table below have been drafted to help the CRB team assess all aspects of its response capability. Dates and venues are flexible.

1.	Enhance capacity to make and implement vessel traffic management decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ closing recreational boat ramps/access/movement▪ commercial traffic▪ locks/navigation management▪ ports▪ regional support for enforcement, etc.	Portland, 2008
2.	Enhance capacity to make and implement eradication decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ go/no go▪ how: weigh short-term/long-term risk management▪ shared resources for monitoring, treatment, permitting, etc.	Idaho/Washington 2009
3.	Prompt states/jurisdictions to pre-plan response prior to exercise	Training TBD
4.	MAC coordination and relationship-building (meet at least once annually)	Annually. Dates TBD.
5.	Generate detailed summary/incident action plan (s) that can be used for “most likely scenarios” section in plan	TBD

<p>6. Test on-the-ground coordination for a scenario involving each of the following focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Idaho high-risk waterbody ▪ Oregon high-risk waterbody ▪ Washington high-risk waterbody ▪ Lake Chelan/Lake Roosevelt NRAs ▪ Local partnership priorities (e.g., Lake Pend Oreille, Henry's Lake) 	<p>Spring 2009 TBD Fall 2009 TBD TBD</p>
<p>7. Field test rapid deployment operations for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ diver-based monitoring ▪ water sample collection ▪ substrate/hard surface survey ▪ communications 	<p>Spring/Fall 2009 (Idaho/Washington)</p>
<p>8. Enhance capacity for JIC operation</p>	<p>TBD</p>
<p>9. Test notification effectiveness</p>	<p>TBD</p>

V. Summary

The MAC Group and Coordination and Support Group exercise built on the lessons learned from last year's training and exercise. It was evident from performance during the exercise as well as from participant comments that the Plan and its organizational structure are in general serving the Columbia River Basin Team well. Most participants focused their concerns on issues related to implementation, not the Plan itself. These concerns include:

- Some confusion remains about the relationships between the MAC Group, the Coordination and Support Staff, and the Incident Management Teams; this should be clarified in next year's training if it concentrates on the IMTs. Many participants pointed out that while it is possible to participate in the organization without training, the process would be much more efficient with pre-identified and trained staff.
- Access to funding and resources remain a major unresolved issue. Timely access to personnel and resources is hindered without a clearly defined funding process, and there are currently few, if any mutual aid agreements that would allow MAC Group agencies to exchange resources and services efficiently. Finally, resource lists need to be developed for goods, services and personnel that would be needed in the event of an infestation.

In general, this exercise affirmed the organizational principles, basic structure, and usefulness of supporting materials included in the ***Columbia River Basin Interagency Invasive Species Response Plan*** and serves as a firm stepping stone as the Columbia River Basin Team continues its efforts to prepare for response to the introduction of invasive species.