

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Getting to Know the National Invasive Species Council

What is the National Invasive Species Council and why is it important?

The National Invasive Species Council (Council) was established under Presidential Executive Orders (EO) 13112 and 13751. The Council itself is composed of the Secretaries/Administrators of 12 Federal Agencies and the Executives of four White House offices (listed at <https://www.doi.gov/invasivespecies/about-nisc>). Its purpose is to provide the vision and national leadership necessary to coordinate, sustain, and expand federal efforts to safeguard the interests of the United States through the prevention, eradication, and control of invasive species, and through the restoration of ecosystems and other assets impacted by invasive species.

The Council is the only federal entity with the responsibility to coordinate across federal agencies for all invasive species. This provides a “whole-of-government”, “all things-invasive” perspective. The work of the Council is meant to complement, contribute to, and guide other federal actions and interagency activities. This includes engagement with other federal interagency coordinating bodies addressing various aspects of invasive species.

What does the Council do?

In addition to the descriptions outlined in EOs 13112 and 13751, the primary roles and activities of the Council are further detailed in two main documents: the Council’s Terms of Reference (ToR) and an Annual Work Plan (posted at: www.invasivespecies.gov under “NISC Guidance Documents”).

The ToR clarify the function, duties, and decision-space of the Council, its agency representatives, and Council staff in the coordination and implementation of invasive species activities emerging from Council member priorities and other federal actions. The Annual Work Plans direct the work of the Council staff and are implemented in collaboration with relevant personnel from Council member agencies. The Work Plans include both general coordination responsibilities as well as select programmatic activities based on priorities identified by the Council.

Neither the ToR nor the Annual Work Plan are meant to supersede any agency or species-specific plans. Rather, Council activities are meant to coordinate with those activities, amplify benefits, and further guide opportunities for action.

When does the Council meet?

The Council operates through its Principals, senior-level officials designated by Council members. Principals from the co-chair agencies (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, and Department of Commerce) meet quarterly. Council staff communicates any actions or decisions from those meetings to the other Principals shortly after each meeting. Meetings of all the Principals can also be convened as needed.

Senior Advisers are programmatic experts delegated by the Principals to liaise and work with Council staff and other Senior Advisers on the day-to-day implementation of Council priorities. Senior Advisers meet on a monthly basis.

What is the role of the NISC staff in advancing the work of NISC?

The EOs authorize the Secretary of the Interior, with concurrence of the Co-Chairs, to designate an Executive Director to oversee staff to support the duties of the Council. The Executive Director and all other NISC staff are Federal career civil servants. Their duties include facilitating strategic planning across federal agencies on priority invasive species issues that would benefit from interagency or intergovernmental collaboration, national or regional-level programmatic development, and coordination with Principals, Senior Advisers, and federal interagency committees.

Council staff serve in a support and coordination role to the member agencies that comprise the Council. Per the EOs, the Council staff assist in carrying out the work of the Council, including implementation of Annual Work Plans and related directives in conjunction with relevant personnel from the Council member agencies. The support and coordination work of Council staff should complement, augment, and promote the efforts of all Council member agencies.

How is Council staff managed and funded?

Council staff – including the Executive Director – is directly supervised within the Department of the Interior by the Office of Policy, Management, and Budget. Administrative support for the Executive Director and staff positions rests with the Secretary of the Interior. While direct line of authority for Council staff resides within the Department of the Interior, the Co-Chairs, in communication with other Council member representatives, maintain oversight of the activities and functions of the Council staff.

Additional resources from other Council members to support the work of the Council are welcome as available and appropriate. Funding to support Council staff is subject to the President's budget request and Congressional appropriations.

How does the Council engage with stakeholders? What is the status of the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC)?

Engagement with non-federal stakeholders is particularly important to the Council as efforts to address invasive species require a broad range of coordination and cooperation efforts. Invasive species do not respect jurisdictional lines, which thereby requires engagement with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments. Additionally, the private sector, environmental groups, academia, the general public, and other stakeholders have critical expertise, insights, and roles in addressing invasive species.

In 2019, ISAC was placed on administratively inactive status and its charter was not renewed for administrative and financial reasons. In its absence, the Council and its staff are committed to engaging with non-federal entities by participating in conferences, stakeholder meetings, and field activities. The implementation of priority activities contained in the Annual Work Plan includes efforts to engage with relevant constituencies and experts as appropriate. Council staff and member agencies are open to identifying additional opportunities for interaction (e.g., National Invasive Species Awareness Week).

How do I get more information on the Council?

For more information on NISC, visit www.invasivespecies.gov, or contact:

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