

Invasive Species Policy

Policy No: 26-03

Policy Title: Invasive Species

*This policy replaces Policy No. 11-01 “Aquatic Invader Species (non-fish)”

Policy Statement: Steps must be taken to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species that threaten freshwater biodiversity and freshwater ecosystem health.

Principles Applied:

- Invasive species are non-native species that occur outside their natural range and that have significant negative impacts on the environment, economy, society, and/or human health.
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are invasive species that live in water. They can include, but are not limited to, fish, aquatic plants, algae, invertebrates (including mussels and snails), and micro-organisms.
- Not all non-native species are considered invasive.
- Invasive species are one of the largest threats to native biodiversity.
- Besides competing with, hybridizing with, and/or otherwise negatively impacting native species, invasive species can also alter habitats and ecosystem processes, to the detriment of native species.
- Invasive species management generally includes four major components: prevention, early detection, rapid response, and control and management.
- Invasive species management methods can include but are not limited to mechanical removal, physical barriers, chemical treatments, biological control, and habitat rehabilitation.

Policy Rationale and Considerations:

Several invasive species, including AIS, are already established in Canada, others pose a risk of introduction or establishment, and some species may be native in some parts of Canada but invasive in other parts (e.g. Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout). Invasive species could be introduced intentionally (example: fish stocking, release of unwanted pets, horticultural plantings) or unintentionally (example: plant or animal “hitch-hikers” attached to a boat, tool or other equipment and moved from invaded to uninvaded areas).

Invasive species typically lack natural predators or competitors in their new environment, allowing them to colonize or spread with little challenge. As a result, invasive species are often prolific, and their populations can grow rapidly. Eradication or suppression are not always possible or viable once an invasive species becomes established. Therefore, prevention is widely considered to be the most important strategy in managing invasive species, with education being an important component of prevention.

Objectives of Policy Statement:

Freshwater Conservation Canada recognizes that invasive species, including terrestrial, aquatic, and amphibious species, pose a serious threat to ecosystem health and biodiversity. Prevention is the most effective and cost-efficient management strategy and is best achieved through biosecurity, decontamination, inspection protocols, public education and awareness, and effective legislation and regulation. Where prevention fails, early detection (supported by monitoring and surveillance programs) and rapid response should be prioritized. Where invasive species become established, long-term management should be informed by science, prioritize ecological outcomes, include clear objectives, and minimize harm to native species. Freshwater Conservation Canada supports precautionary, collaborative, and science-based approaches to preventing, detecting, controlling, and mitigating the impacts of invasive species.

Implications to Organization:

Freshwater Conservation Canada acknowledges that the science and practice of invasive species management continue to develop and evolve. Staff and chapters will stay up to date on the science and best practices of invasive species management to guide decision making, provide thoughtful advice, and deliver effective programming. Chapters are urged to help by making their members and their local communities aware of invasive species.

Delivery:

Freshwater Conservation Canada will participate in invasive species education, detection, reporting, monitoring, research, and management as it relates to the organisation's conservation, protection, and rehabilitation programs. Invasive species management may be one of several components of a rehabilitation program or project.

Freshwater Conservation Canada will take steps to prevent the spread of invasive species by following applicable decontamination protocols and best management practices for tools, gear and equipment, and the “clean, drain, dry” principle where existing protocols do not exist.

Freshwater Conservation Canada will also develop and share content aimed at raising awareness of invasive species. This could include print material, signage, and digital resources for members and the public, and may be targeted to specific user groups or audiences. Communications will include information on invasive species threats, identification, reporting, prevention and management and links to additional resources.

Supporting Information:

The prevention and management of invasive species is not the sole responsibility of any one order of government, organisation, corporation, or individual, but rather requires broad participation. Municipal, provincial, and federal government agencies and departments regulate various aspects of the prevention and management of invasive species, including the import, sale, transport, prevention, control and treatment of invasive species and their potential vectors. Provincial, regional, and federal invasive species NGOs provide updated information on identification, prevention, and management of invasive species.

Freshwater Conservation Canada encourages all Canadians to use publicly accessible biological inventory and reporting applications to help document new and ongoing invasions, and to contribute to open sources of data to inform management. Free applications like iNaturalist can assist with identification, and several jurisdictions use EDDMaps to document and report invasive species in Canada.

Effective Date: September 15, 2026

Last Board Approval Date: September 15, 2026