

Indiana Invasive Species Council – Q4 Meeting Draft Minutes

Date: Wednesday 12 November 2025; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm Eastern Time

Location: The Nature Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy; 620 E Ohio St, Indianapolis, IN 46202

1. Call to Order (K. Werling)

2. Roll Call (K. Werling)

- Kelli Werling (IISC Chair), Director of Swine Health Programs, representing Indiana State Board of Animal Health, kwerling@boah.in.gov
- Alicia Kelley, IN CAPS State Survey Coordinator, representing Dean of Agriculture, Purdue University (Secretariat), ajkelley@purdue.edu
- Megan Abraham, Director, Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology, representing Department of Natural Resources, mabraham@dnr.in.gov
- Aubree Szczepanski, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, IN DNR, representing IN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, aszczepanski@dnr.in.gov
- Heather Reynolds, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Biology, Indiana University, representing research, hlreynol@iu.edu
- Matt Kraushar, Roadside Maintenance Specialist, representing Indiana Department of Transportation, mkraushar@indot.in.gov
- Kate Sanders, Resource Specialist, representing Indiana State Department of Agriculture, kasanders1@isda.in.gov
- Joe Schmees, IN Freshwater Strategy Manager, The Nature Conservancy, representing land trusts, joseph.schmees@tnc.org

Non-Council Members Present:

- Eric Fischer, Aquatic Invasive Species Supervisor, Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Ray Chattin, Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, SICIM Board member
- David Bausman, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Deputy Director, General Council
- Phil Marshall, Forest Health Specialist, Division of Forestry
- Jennifer Thum, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Deputy Director, Director
- Katie O Reilly, Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist, IL-IN Sea Grant
- Dawn Slack, III Project Manager/Coordinator

3. Adoption of Agenda (K. Werling)

- Motion: Matt
- Second: Joe
- Vote: Unanimous

4. Review and approval of minutes from prior meeting (K. Werling)

- Motion: Matt – approve with corrections
- Second: Aubree
- Vote: Unanimous

5. Old Business

- **Outstanding Action Items from prior meeting(s)**
 - Alicia to discuss with Bransen about adding DNR Weekly Updates to the IISC website.
 - There isn't a way to generate the DNR Weekly Updates onto the website automatically.
 - Alicia will look into adding a link to website to DNR weekly update.
 - Alicia and Dawn to revise the IPAC description on the website (rollover item).
- Kelli will follow up with members on information needed for the biennial report.
- **Indiana Invasive Species Conference – Sept 4-5 2025 (A. Kelley)**
 - Survey response was limited (~14 responses) due to late coordination, but results were largely favorable and shared for the biennial report.
 - Some feedback noted the conference leaned heavily toward research/Purdue perspectives; future conferences should balance research and grassroots/CISMA audiences.
 - Networking is valued but may need clearer structure or facilitation (e.g., dedicated poster sessions, moderators, or icebreakers).
 - Council expressed desire to improve student poster session attendance and offered suggestions to increase registration:
 - Consider spring or late Sept/Oct
 - Encourage students to present planned or early-stage research.
 - Explore incentives (awards, funding support).
 - Conference will move to a biennial schedule; next anticipated in 2027.
 - Planning committee debrief to be scheduled (target: Q1).
 - Action item: Alicia to Schedule a planning/debrief meeting for interested committee members.
- **Terrestrial Plant Rule Additions/Status Update (M. Abraham)**
 - Met with legislative coordinator Whitney Wampler to review progress on rule package updates.
 - Rule package is on track for submission to the Office of Management and Budget in December or early January, initiating the formal rule adoption process.
 - Updates include revisions to the terrestrial plant rule, terminology changes, labeling law updates, and removal of outdated rules.
 - Newly designated highly invasive plants will be added to the list of plants prohibited for sale under the terrestrial plant rule.
 - Callery pear, Norway maple, and burning bush will have an extended phase-in period (approximately four years) to reduce economic impact.

6. New Business

- **Ray Chattin – SICIM**
 - Ray raised concerns about impending NRCS funding cuts in 2027 and described the severe impact this would have on SICIM, CISMAs, and the Indiana Invasives Initiative.
 - He proposed a statutory restructuring of the Indiana Invasive Species Council (IISC) to provide funding, staffing, and a formal mechanism to sustain and enhance invasive species work statewide.
 - The proposal envisioned the IISC as a conduit for funding, with accountability measures and potential grant-making authority.
 - Several members expressed support for exploring the idea, while emphasizing the need for a detailed proposal, clear statutory language, and broader input before committing.
 - Agency representatives raised concerns about limited state resources, lack of guaranteed funding, potential strain on agencies, and the risk of shifting responsibilities without clear authority or support. Additional questions were raised about how the proposal would align with the IISC's current advisory role, quarterly meeting structure, and representation across all invasive taxa (terrestrial, aquatic, entomological, animal health).

- Members emphasized that any effort should take a holistic approach to invasive species management statewide, rather than focusing narrowly on one entity or pathway.
- Motion to begin discussions with Ray to explore statutory changes from a holistic perspective and develop a proposal - Alicia
- The council clarified that this would be an exploratory effort only, with no decisions made without full council review.
 - Yays: 3
 - Abstains: 4
 - Motion failed.
- **Chair vacancies – Phyllis Boyd, Indy Parks & Recreation**
 - The group discussed how to replace Phyllis in her council role following her job change.
 - The open position represents Parks and Recreation interests under statutory language.
 - The Governor’s Office handles appointments for this role.
 - Historically, the council or chair contacted the Governor’s Office to initiate replacement.
 - Filling the position may take significant time, depending on administration priorities.
 - Discussion included whether to first contact Indianapolis Parks to gauge interest in recommending a candidate.
 - The group agreed to identify the appropriate contact in the Governor’s Office.
 - Next steps include initiating a formal inquiry to ask how the administration would like to proceed and whether recommendations are welcome.
 - Kelli will start a conversation with legislative affairs to contact Governor’s office.
- **Biennial Report**
 - The Council reviewed progress on the biennial report.
 - Edits submitted by members have already been incorporated.
 - Remaining edits will be compiled and circulated via email, rather than reviewing during the meeting.
 - Discussion included adding content about student poster presentations, which were introduced at the annual conference.
 - Kelli will circulate biennial report before end of the year and submit before end of the year.
 - Alicia add language about student posters if it’s not currently in there.
- **Future of IISC discussion**
 - Discussion focused on recent inquiries about the future and relevance of the Indiana Invasive Species Council (IISC).
 - Don Lamb, from ISDA, reached out to gather feedback on the council and other boards under his oversight, assessing their ongoing need and relevancy.
 - Kelli and others connected with Don via phone and email; he provided positive feedback on the council.
 - Matt noted the inquiry was part of a broader review of all councils and boards, not specific to IISC.
 - There was mention of prior consideration about potentially merging IISC with the Pesticide Review Board.
 - Megan confirmed the Pesticide Review Board has drafted its materials; the groups will maintain separate boundaries except for overlapping insect-related work.
 - The council agreed to consider issuing its own communication or response in the near future.
- **Next Meeting dates:**
 - Proposed:
 - Q1 – February 4, 2026 @ 10 am
 - Q2 – May 6, 2026 @ 10 am
 - Q3 – August 5, 2026 @ 10 am
 - Q4 – November 4, 2026 @ 10 am

7. Guest Presentation: 12:00 – 12:45 pm

- Mediterranean Geckos and Wall Lizards - Nate Engbrecht, Herpetologist, Indiana Department of Natural Resources

8. Member Reports/Updates

- **Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology (M. Abraham)**
 - Pesticide Review Board met; a draft one-page legislative overview has been completed.
 - Spotted lanternfly detections increased, with new counties including Marion, Porter, and Jefferson.
 - An established spotted lanternfly population was confirmed near railroad tracks by Sun King Brewery in Marion County.
 - Spread appears strongly associated with railroad corridors.
 - Public reports of spotted lanternfly have increased significantly. A new GIS-supported online reporting tool was implemented to improve communication.
 - Bob Bruner is developing a public-facing one-pager on spotted lanternfly impacts and self-management guidance.
 - A \$300,000 federal grant was awarded for spotted lanternfly management, active from September through the coming year.
 - Natural predators of spotted lanternfly are beginning to emerge in established areas.
 - Research on spotted lanternfly control remains limited; federal focus is shifting from management to research.
 - Kudzu treatments were effective this year; monitoring will continue with support from partners.
 - Rule package development is ongoing and will advance once related processes are completed.
- **Division of Forestry (Phil Marshall)**
 - Beech leaf disease is not present in Indiana; surveys are ongoing.
 - Walnut twig beetle and thousand cankers disease are also not present in the state; associated surveys have been completed.
 - Spongy moth populations are currently low, with a population collapse and only minimal defoliation observed this year.
 - Two mating disruption treatments are proposed for 2026 in Huntington County.
 - Regional moth counts remain low; no major increases reported in neighboring states.
- **The Nature Conservancy/Land Trusts (J. Schmees)**
 - A fall fire season occurred; there was significant snowfall reported in northern regions.
 - Prescribed burns were conducted on organizational properties; TNC assisted partner staff in Illinois.
 - A new state chapter director, Cassie Hauswald, was hired and officially began on October 6.
 - Work on the strategic implementation plan continues, with some delays due to leadership transition.
 - Planning is underway for partner- and public-facing materials related to the strategic plan.
 - Consideration is being given to stewardship metrics, including how to define and measure acres of improved habitat and invasive species management.
- **Purdue University College of Agriculture (A. Kelley)**
 - Bob Bruner is hosting an ongoing webinar series, Emerald Ash Borer University.
 - Upcoming webinars include topics on invasive plant pathogens, elm zigzag sawfly, and realistic expectations for invasive species management.
 - Dr. David Coyle will present on invasive management expectations as part of the webinar series.
 - A Purdue seminar by Dr. David Coyle is scheduled for December 8, titled Celebrating Invasive Species Success Stories in North America.
- **Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division Fish and Wildlife (A. Szczepanski/ E. Fischer)**

- Grant funding processes are stalled; awaiting federal and state action before funds can be released.
- Planning meetings were held for upcoming lake plant management and preparations for next year are underway.
- Due to funding constraints, only five lakes with smaller infestations were treated this year. Treatments focused on lakes where full coverage was feasible.
- Purchasing was paused due to lack of federal assurance; approval was received in late June; work delayed into mid-July.
- Starry stonewort infestations currently affect approximately 6–8 lakes outside the Great Lakes Basin and 33–35 lakes within the basin.
- Final adoption of the invasive carp harvest permit was approved by the Natural Resources Commission in October with no negative public comment. Attorney General and Governor signatures are expected by December 5, enabling late-December fishing activity.
- Kentucky Department of Natural Resources will resume heavy fishing under the permit.
- Federal grant awards for 2026, including funding for starry stonewort management and carp programs, have not yet been issued.
- Outreach activities included invasive species presentations at Clay Middle School.
- Upcoming conferences include the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (Fort Wayne, January 25–28) and the Midwest Aquatic Plant Management Conference (Carmel, February 9–12).
- Spring outreach efforts will include boat sport and travel shows.
- **State Board of Animal Health (K. Werling)**
 - There was an increase in foreign animal disease reports this quarter, mostly involving vesicular lesions that were ultimately identified as mouth injuries.
 - On October 9, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N) was detected in a commercial poultry operation.
 - Since October 9, HPAI is confirmed in 34 poultry premises (33 commercial, 1 backyard) in Elkhart, LaGrange, and Johnson counties.
 - Affected facilities include breeder ducks, meat ducks, egg layers, and one mixed-species backyard flock.
 - Response teams continue HPAI control efforts, with laboratories confirming multiple new detections daily.
 - BOAH implemented dairy surveillance within 3 km of infected poultry sites and tested more than 50 dairies, all of which were negative.
 - Indiana continues participating in the National Milk Testing Strategy, testing 270–330 dairies monthly with no positive results to date.
 - BOAH is managing cattle tuberculosis trace investigations linked to Texas; no active bovine TB cases have been identified in Indiana.
 - Equine arbovirus activity increased this year; 35 West Nile virus cases and one Eastern Equine Encephalitis case were reported.
 - Epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus activity increased this fall, causing significant deer mortality in some regions.
 - New World screwworm remains a growing concern internationally, though no detections have occurred in Indiana or the U.S.
 - BOAH and USDA are actively developing preparedness and response plans for potential screwworm introduction.
 - Federal furloughs have delayed routine USDA functions, including veterinary accreditation processing, but emergency response activities continue.
- **Indiana Department of Transportation (M. Kraushar)**

- Invasive species treatments are ongoing, with basal bark treatments continuing as weather conditions allow.
- Foliar spray season has concluded.
- Total acreage and application numbers from the spray season will be compiled and shared once available.
- Matt also attended the Clay Middle School invasive species presentations.
- **Indiana Department of Agriculture (K. Sanders)**
 - Clean Water Indiana (CWI) grant awards were announced in October.
 - Fourteen grants were funded out of 33 applications submitted.
 - Total funding awarded was approximately \$1.59 million.
 - Five funded projects relate to invasive species or native species initiatives.
 - Three grants provide cost-share funding for on-the-ground invasive species removal.
 - Additional grants support equipment purchases, including drill seeders for pollinator habitat establishment.
 - David Bausman is the new ISDA deputy director.
- **Research (H. Reynolds)**
 - Research and outreach updates were shared from the Ecologic LLC annual conference.
 - Findings from woodland restoration research highlighted the strong influence of white-tailed deer pressure on understory recovery following woody invasive removal.
 - Results indicate that understory recovery is poor without deer control and active understory planting.
 - Community deer hunts in Bloomington and other areas are showing positive vegetation responses, including increased sapling and understory plant growth.
 - Research suggests seeding sedges and native grasses after woody invasive removal may help suppress reinvasion; further study is underway.
 - Lesser celandine continues to spread in floodplains around Bloomington; management efforts are focused on containment by treating upland sources.
 - Ecologic conference attendance included approximately 150 practitioners from Indiana and neighboring states.
 - A potential partnership with Ecologic for a future joint conference was proposed to increase practitioner engagement and outreach.
 - Indiana University Science Fest outreach opportunities were noted, with an offer to distribute invasive species educational materials.
- **Indiana Plant Advisory Committee and SICIM (D. Slack)**
 - IPAC
 - Plant assessments are temporarily paused due to workload and funding fluctuations, with plans to resume in January.
 - III (Indiana Invasives Initiative)
 - The Indiana Invasives Initiative continues to progress, with over 1,600 outreach events and 1,600 landowner surveys completed, covering more than 51,000 acres statewide.
 - There are currently 47 CISMAs representing 57 counties, with work underway in nine additional counties expected to form CISMAs by the end of 2025.
 - Two long-vacant positions (Northwest and Central Indiana) have been filled, increasing staffing capacity and support.
 - At least 10 CISMA strike teams are active, working with local and state parks and contributing more than 100 days of invasive species management annually.
 - A total of 167 weed wrangles are scheduled this year, with the statewide Weed Wrangle held on October 11 and participation from at least 15 counties (final numbers pending).

- CISMAs are actively engaged in training opportunities, including conferences and advanced trainings, with plans to potentially repeat out-of-state training in February 2026.
- Reimbursement grants are being rolled out again, ranging from approximately \$4,000 to \$9,000 per CISMA when government funding resumes.
- More than 65 free invasive species management and plant identification trainings have been completed statewide over the past seven years.
- Plans to improve the SICIM website to better engage CISMAs.
- Update on yellow teasel
 - Small-flowered yellow teasel has recently been detected, making the state only the second in the U.S. with this species present. Efforts are underway to address this discovery, with several CISMAs collaborating with conservation partners in parks in Marion County where the plant was found.
 - Additional attention is being given to several invasive grasses. Fountain grass is a particular concern due to its agricultural impact. It is appearing in pastures and hay fields, offers little nutritional value, and is not palatable to livestock.
 - Fountain grass is currently addressed through the terrestrial plant rule due to its presence in the ornamental trade; however its primary spread appears to be through the hay trade.
 - Matt indicated there is value in considering fountain grass for inclusion under noxious weed laws, which are more directly tied to agricultural impacts, potentially extending to seed and hay-related prohibitions.

9. Review of assigned/previous action items.

- Alicia to add a link on the IISC website to the DNR weekly updates.
- Alicia to fix broken PDF links on website.
- Kelli will start a conversation with legislative affairs to contact the Governor's office about the open seat.
- Alicia and Kelli will add language to the biennial report to highlight the student poster session at the conference.
- Kelli will circulate the biennial report by the end of the year.
- Megan will bring a one-page summary document of the IISC to the next meeting for review.
- Megan will submit a proclamation for National Invasive Species Awareness Week.

10. Adjournment – 1:30 pm

- Motion: Joe
- Second: Matt
- Vote: Unanimous