

Summary of Breakout Session Discussions – Education and Outreach

The summary below categorically reviews the discussion points that were raised frequently during the various sessions. This summary is not intended to be all-inclusive, but to highlight areas of noted emphasis and consensus.

FY09 Implementation Plan and Future Year Funding

Many participants voiced concerns over the current implementation plan and the proposed future funding levels. Overwhelmingly, participants indicated strong support for a robust and aggressive education and outreach program, but few felt that the proposed budget allocations were sufficient to support such an effort. Additionally, many were concerned that there were too many activities proposed/undertaken in FY09. Participants suggested focusing only on one or two primary activities that clearly contribute to the achievement of the larger goals of Section 10201.

Strategies for FY10 and Beyond

Almost unanimously, the participants in the Education and Outreach breakout sessions cited a need for a national communications and education effort on invasive species. Participants agreed that the effort should promote an awareness of invasive species to a variety of audiences (from citizen scientists, to international travelers, to students in grades K through 12 and beyond), facilitate an understanding of why invasive species are an important issue worthy of attention, and motivate people to take action (such as look for/report sightings and/or take specific actions to prevent the introduction or movement of invasive species). Everyone agreed that this should be seen as a long-term effort aimed at changing attitudes and behaviors.

Participants also cited a need for a national steering committee to help shape and guide communications efforts around invasive species. This committee should include a broad membership from a variety of organizations that are currently working on the invasive species issue (federal agencies, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, etc.) as well as professionals in marketing and social science to help design the communications effort and ensure proper targeting of information. This committee should be charged with creating a national communications plan on invasive species and should direct the implementation of the plan through member organizations. The goal will be to achieve consistent messaging on invasive species at all levels and to maximize funding by leveraging and coordinating with existing efforts.