CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
AND THE NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

CALIFORNIA INVASIVE SPECIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DRAFT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

LISTENING SESSION WITH COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE,
E-MAIL, AND WEBCAST/TELEPHONIC AUDIENCE

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011 - 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
COASTAL HEARING ROOM, SECOND FLOOR
1001 I STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

REPORTED BY: HOWARD A. TORCH, CSR NO. 11248
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA; THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011

AT 5:30 P.M.

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TELEPHONE OPERATOR:  Now I would like to introduce Mr. Doug Johnson.

You may begin, sir.

MR. JOHNSON:  Great. Thank you.

And thank you, everybody in the room and everybody tuning in, for being patient while the technology got hooked up.

Yes, my name is Doug Johnson. I chair the Invasive Species Advisory Committee --

Sorry. Shall I start over with the mic on?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:  There you go.

MR. JOHNSON:  It might be good.

Good evening. My name is Doug Johnson. I chair the California Invasive Species Advisory Committee, and I want to welcome you to tonight's public listening session for the second draft of the document stopping the spread, of strategic framework, for protecting California from invasive species.

I'm here with several other members of the committee. I want to introduce myself a little bit more and then ask each of them to introduce themselves, as
well.

I'm the executive director of the California Invasive Plant Council, a nonprofit environmental organization in Berkeley, and our work focuses on wildland weeds and keeping them from impacting the ecology of California through science, education, and policy.

We have around 1,000 members statewide. They're primarily natural resource managers who work in parks and preserves.

MS. CONSER: Thanks, Doug. My name is Christiana Conser, and I work for the San Francisco nonprofit organization Sustainable Conservation, and our Plant Right Campaign works with the nursery industry in California to prevent the sale of invasive plants, known invasive plants, and also new-plant introductions.

MR. GODFREY: Thank you. My name is Larry Godfrey from the Entomology Department at UC Davis, and since many of the invasive species are insects, it's probably obvious, my interest in invasive species. I conduct research and extension and management programs on invasive species.

MS. FOX: I'm Andrea Fox with the California Farm Bureau. I'm also vice chair of the California Invasive Species Advisory Committee. I'm a policy
advisor for the Farm Bureau. I became involved in the invasive species, because for farmers and ranchers, insect pests and other invasive species are an everyday reality, and something that we must deal with.

MS. PETERSON: My name is Betsy Peterson. I'm director of technical services for the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers, and also the California Seed Association. And I've served on the CalHIP Steering Committee, now the Plant Right Campaign, since its inception about six years ago.

My involvement in the invasive species is -- is invasive pests of all kinds impact our agricultural associations that we represent on a daily basis, and we're always looking for new ways to mitigate and to protect the farmer and ultimately the consumer in California.

MR. GUISE: Hello. I'm Vince Guise. I'm the agricultural commissioner of Contra Costa County, and I'm involved, of course, in trying to keep invasives out of the State, for over 37 years now, and also to try to protect our agriculture, the citizens of the State, and the environment from invasive species.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you all. I think this may have gotten lost when I started without the microphone on, but I do want to thank everybody for being patient
with our late start as we got the technology going.

Also, I want to say before I -- give a little bit of background on the organization that we represent, the Advisory Committee, and the strategic framework, that the information presented tonight is all available online. Many folks may already have used this to find out about tonight's meeting, but www.iscc -- for Invasive Species Council of California -- .ca.gov.

So first I want to give a little background on the Invasive Species Council of California as well as the advisory committee that we serve on.

The Invasive Species Council of California was formed by six State departments in 2009 to coordinate and strengthen the State's response to invasive species.

The ISCC comprises the secretaries of those six agencies. It is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Food and Agriculture, vice chaired by the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. And then other agencies on the committee are the California Environmental Protection Agency; the Business Transportation and Housing Agency, where Caltrans is; the Emergency Management Agency; and the Health & Human Services Agency.

The Invasive Species Council formed an advisory committee, the California Invasive Species Advisory
Committee, or CISAC, which we serve on, along with other stakeholder representatives.

There are 24 stakeholder representative positions on the advisory committee, and we represent a number of constituencies. As you'll see tonight, we have representatives from environmental organizations as well as representatives from agricultural organizations -- we have academia, we have federal and local agencies, and lots of broad representation.

But being that this issue touches on virtually every Californian, one of the primary goals of the advisory committee is to enhance to the degree of public engagement and to get all the viewpoints and all the expertise in the states to bring to bear on these problems, so tonight's listening session can definitely contribute to that, so we're pleased that you're here.

Now, as one of the primary tasks of the advisory committee, we have been charged with developing a strategic planning document to help California agencies strengthen response to invasive species, and this framework document that we're looking for public input on tonight and until June 17th is our effort to address that, that task.

Now, fortunately, we have a lot to build on. I brought tonight some of the resources we used. This is
the National Invasive Species Management Plan, passed in 2001 and revisited in 2008 with their major revision.

Other states, some 20 have plans like this. We picked, in particular, Minnesota's plan, the Arizona Invasive Species Council's plan, and the Washington State Invasive Species Council's plan as good models for both content and structure of a plan.

And in addition, we already have some plans existing in California that we built on. This is the 2005 California Noxious and Invasive Weed Action Plan and the 2008 California Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan.

So what we developed is meant to be a fairly high-level umbrella plan that encompasses these kinds of plans that have a lot of detail in them about what can be done for certain types of invasive species.

Now, the strategic framework presents some 40 recommendations in various -- various categories for ways a state can strengthen their response to invasive species, and this is what we're looking for your input on tonight.

I'll just mention that there are -- some of the high-priority ones that are called out in the executive summary to focus on prevention. We agree on the Committee that that is the highest-priority place to
focus or efforts to make sure that invasive species are kept from being intruded into the state in the first place, because that eliminates the need for expensive programs to address them.

So those two items include actually identifying pathways that are continually evolving with all the transport and transit and travel.

Currently, there are a number of pathways for invasive species to come in, and we don't feel like all of them have really been identified in detail, and then secondly, to have an active interagency working group to enhance coordination on those particular -- addressing those particular pathways.

Second, once -- once a species comes in, it's much easier and more cost effective to address it quickly before it can spread -- commonly called "early detection and rapid response." This is something we want to emphasize, as well.

There are a lot of programs already existing in agencies, and we want to make sure that those are as prepared as possible, so we're recommending a rapid-response working group so that responses can be thought out ahead of time and discussed and shared with the public to get input.

We also think that it is important to develop
and deliver a consistent message about invasive species focused on stewardship. We're all here because we feel like this issue is an important stewardship issue for California, stewarding our natural heritage, the environment, agriculture, and our public health. It depends on both of those. And then finally, securing long-term funding to support these kinds of programs.

Obviously in this day and age, budgets are tight and there are a lot of competing needs, so this issue, I think, needs to be looked at seriously, to look for long-term costs and the benefit of investing now to keep things from spreading and having more impact.

We're all aware of invasive species as a problem that continues to spread. It's worse than an oil spill, in that once you've spilled it, it continues to grow, as opposed to just have a finite amount of impact. So it's important to have steady funding to avoid backsliding and allowing invasive species to spread further.

So those are some of the priority actions. There are lot of others in here, and you may have read through and found some that particularly appeal or don't appeal to you.

This is the second draft of this plan. We put out an earlier draft last year and went through a round
of public comments and had made revisions based on those comments. There is a document online located next to the framework document that lists the revisions that were made to the strategic framework based on public comments previously.

So this is a listening session. We want to listen to you. Before going to that, I want to just remind everybody of the breadth of issues that we're looking at here.

We're looking at invasive plants, invasive vertebrates, invertebrates, and invasive diseases. We're looking at organisms that are on land, organisms that are on water. Some are more severe than others. We know a lot more about some than we do about others, so there is always an uncertainty factor.

The goal here with this document is to provide a blueprint so that all stakeholders and agencies can move forward together in an effort to be as productive as possible in addressing invasive species in California.

And the goal of tonight's session is to make sure that we engage the public in commenting on the plan and pointing out ways that you think it could be strengthened.

So with that, if nobody has anything to add,
I'd like to open this up for public comment, and I think it would be very useful to know, if you're able to tell us, how many folks we have queued up.

I think our initial thought was to have comments be timed for three minutes and to hold it to that to make sure everybody gets a chance to be heard from, and if there's time left at the end and folks want to comment further, we can do that.

OPERATOR: There's no one online. Just one gentleman here.

MR. JOHNSON: Let's start with comments from the room. Anybody want to make a comment about the document?

Okay. We'll wait for our online folks to join in.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have nobody. Do you want to give them the call-in number?

MR. JOHNSON: Are they seeing that, or are they seeing us?

OPERATOR: You might want to repeat the call-in number.

MR. JOHNSON: To ask a question, I'm going to repeat the call-in number. 877-960-9070, and the passwords is CISAC, C-I-S-A-C.

(One-minute pause in proceedings at 6:04 p.m.)
MR. GUISE: I just wondered if this, the introduction and at least the part up to now where before I started talking, is going to be online for people to view later, if they want to, or is it only written and e-mail comments that will be reviewed or available to them to see later on, because I think you did an excellent job on the introduction.

And I think the draft, the new draft, was very responsive to previous listening sessions, so I think it's all positive. You know, what you said was great.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. That's a good question. I don't know if the video will be up on YouTube or something. We'll have to ask.

MR. LUGO: Doug, it's going to be available for both audio and video.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You can download it afterwards.

MR. JOHNSON: It sounds like the answer is "yes."

If you're on the conference call and want to ask a question, make sure --

Is it "Star 1"?

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Yes. To ask a question over the phone, please press "Star 1."

MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.
Please go ahead.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Our question comes from Peter.

Your line is open, sir.

PETER: Hello, everyone. My name is Peter. I appreciate the work that you're doing. I'm familiar with many of the folks on the panel. I appreciate the efforts that you're doing.

I don't have a question, per se, but I do want to communicate on the comments here that we -- I think what you've done, the framework, is quite good. I think you've helped think through some of the coordination issues.

I look forward to the cooperation that hopefully will be implemented with this plan. I'm particularly interested in having the State make sure that they fund programs for the local counties so that they can do their weed control and other pest control, and I think there's great opportunity for the industries to work together with nonprofits and, of course, our resource agencies.

So great work, keep it up, and thanks again.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you for your comment, Peter.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: At this time, there are no
questions over the phone.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. We'll hold on.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We do have a comment in the room.

Is there a microphone?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There is.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yes.

MR. KAWAMURA: Hello. My name is A.G. Kawamura. I'm currently a farmer down in Southern California where I grow produce and distribute it both locally and internationally and nationally, and I wanted to make a comment that the CISAC's work and the Invasive Species Council, as well, is incredibly critical at this time for many reasons.

I know last year in Cancun during the conference on climate change there were some experts that came from around the country, as well as myself, and had a chance to have a side-meeting, if you will, about invasive species, trying to make sure that the topic of invasive species as it's affected by climate change was entered into the record of events down there during the climate conference.

We noted in many ways that some of the these different, important aspects about things, matters that would greatly affect food and life systems in this
world, are not being discussed widely during these kinds of dialogues that address climate change, that address resource depletion, that address hunger and different kinds of challenges for feeding a population of nine billion people on the planet.

And so I think one of the things we wanted to do in that last instance, and hopefully this next year in Durban, at the next climate conference, and then several other conferences that address both life and food systems on the planet as we head into 2050 -- I'd like to ask this council and the advisory group to be especially focused on converging their activities with other invasive species councils around the country, converge their resources and activities with national groups that address invasive species and international groups, and see if we can't put together a platform.

If you can put together a platform, that helps educate and create awareness about what an enormous threat the challenges that come from invasive species of all taxonomies is to the progress and sustainability of life and food systems on the planet.

Without that, I think we unfortunately lose sight of really hard lessons that we've learned from the past, and more importantly, we start to see the potential for tremendous disruption of those same
systems because of a laziness of phytosanitary attention, phytosanitary care, quarantine, and infectious services that protect from the introduction of various pets and diseases.

And we start to realize that that infrastructure that has protected us for so well and so long, as it starts to deteriorate, it creates more vulnerabilities than ever, especially in a world that's more complicated than ever with a lot of challenges.

So I'd like to say thanks to this council and this advisory committee especially for the great work you've done. I'd like to insist, encourage, push, or whatever kind of support you need.

I think the ag industry in general is very supportive when they're reminded how important these things are and at a time when I think many changes face all kinds of endeavors from government because of budgets, strains and stresses, critical infrastructure, which is this component of exclusion, detection, and diagnostics, are all part of the important infrastructure that really needs to be in place. And I applaud your efforts to help make that happen.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

Anybody online?

So it sounds like we have nobody online, so now
is your chance. Operators are standing by, 
877-960-9070, and the passcode is C-I-S-A-C, and then 
"Star 1" to queue up for a question or comment.

Once again, if you're joining us late online, 
you can call in to provide a question or comment. I've 
almost got this memorized now. 877-960-9070, and the 
passcode is C-I-S-A-C, press "Star 1" to queue for a 
question or comment. Thank you.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Excuse me. We do have a 
question from John Hall.

Your line is open, sir.

MR. HALL: Hi, folks. This is John Hall, and I 
just wanted to --

Can you guys hear me?

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. HALL: Sorry. I've got the 30-second delay 
on my website. I was hearing that.

Yeah, I just wanted to say that this is great 
work that you guys are doing, and specifically I wanted 
to give my support for the creation of early detection 
that works throughout California focused on all taxonomy species.

MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you for your 
comment, John.

MR. HALL: Thank you. Bye.
TELEPHONE OPERATOR: There are no further questions or comments at this time.

Sir. Your line is open.

MR. HALL: Hi. Calling back. I do have a couple questions now. I had a chance to read the document, and I again appreciate your work.

Two questions: I'm reading that this plan was in part developed to dovetail with the federal government and what other states are doing. I'm interested in learning more about how this might work with the federal government's plan.

Recently I met -- kind of a collaborative weed management group meeting and was hearing from the federal government, of course, that their funds were being cut, and they were actually looking at the nonprofits to try to be doing more, so I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about how these partnerships might work.

And then the other thing I wanted to ask about is that I've recently heard about some of the funding being cut to the county -- to the counties and their weed control and other pest control programs, and am wondering in particular what those state cuts -- what those impacts may be.

I understand they may be closing diagnostic
labs and other resources and cuts to projects and what
those setbacks might mean with respect to your ability
to move this plan forward. Thanks.

MR. JOHNSON: Interesting comments, Peter. I
think, unfortunately, this is meant to be a listening
session, for taking comments, so we're not prepared to
engage in a dialogue, but --

MR. HALL: Okay. Well, I thought there might
be an opportunity to ask a question, so I appreciate
that.

So then I think, from my own experience, my
comments would be that, again, the State being able to
find ways to keep those programs going, because in the
long term, once you walk away from projects where work
has been done, those areas are going to revert back to
what they are trying to be, which might be weedy.

So it's important for the State to continue
funding these efforts, because in the long run, if you
walk away from those projects, you're going to have a
rapid growth of -- and what I'm talking about here is
invasive weeds particularly -- and so what you're going
to do is you're going to lose ground in the long run.

Once those projects have to be dealt with
again, it's going to cost a lot more money, and so I
think trying to find some balance -- obviously
agriculture is important to the State, and so funding for pest control to help keep our agriculture going is very important.

But I'm hoping the State will try to find a balance between not cutting all the weed-control programs, weed-eradication programs, and hopefully we can -- early detection and rapid response.

Anyways, keep up the good work. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for calling back, Peter. This is Doug Johnson. As chair, I'd like to close this public listening session for this evening. Thank you for participating.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Thank you for your participation. You may disconnect.

(The proceedings adjourned at 7:30 p.m.)
CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing comments or questions were taken down and reduced to typewritten form under my direction, and that the foregoing pages represent a true, correct, and complete record of the proceedings.

The above certification is expressly withdrawn and denied upon the disassembly or photocopying of the foregoing transcript unless said disassembly or photocopying is done under the auspices of Malibu Court Reporters and the signature and original seal is attached thereto.

I further certify that I am not a relative or employee or attorney of any party, nor am I in any way interested in the result of said cause.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my name this 24th day of May, 2011.

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Court Reporter in and for the County of Los Angeles, State of California