

The logo features a stylized green leaf with three lobes on the left, and a green circular arc on the right that partially encircles the leaf. The word "Ontario" is written in a serif font, with the "O" overlapping the circular arc. Below "Ontario" is the text "Invasive Plant Council" in a larger serif font.

Ontario
Invasive Plant Council

Strategic Plan 2011-2015

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Update March 20th, 2009

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Rewritten Spring 2011

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***This draft incorporates the decisions of
the OIPC Board and Committee Chairs.***

Ontario Invasive Plant Council Strategic Plan

PART ONE

Who We Are

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) is a multi-sector, non-profit group committed to the collaboration of organizations and citizens in order to more effectively respond to the threat of invasive plants (aquatic and terrestrial) in Ontario. Members are individual citizens and representatives from conservation authorities, academic institutions, aboriginal organizations, stewardship networks, private consultants, industry and environmental non-government organizations as well as municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Board membership reflects that diversity. Council members are knowledgeable about invasive plants or their management and the collective experience of the OIPC member organizations represents many years of management and control of invasive plants.

Why We Are Leading

Invasive plants have the potential to harm humans and ecosystems. These plants are a threat to Canada's ecology and economy. Invasive plants are second only to habitat destruction as contributing factors to biodiversity loss. They negatively affect numerous profitable sectors in Canada's economy including: agriculture, animal production, real estate, recreation, construction, forestry, logging, hunting and fishing etc., and the economic cost is exponential. For example the cost to Canada's agricultural sector alone is estimated at approximately \$2.2 Billion annually. Ontario has over 1,000 non-native vascular plants – significantly more than any other province. The economic loss and environmental impact caused by invasive species in the United States is more than \$100 Billion annually. There is no documentation for Ontario, but it is conceivable that the impact on our economy could be in the range of \$1 Billion annually. There are no estimates of the cost of the impact on our biodiversity as a whole, although there is growing awareness and research that identifies the impact on some species at risk. Garlic mustard for example produces allelochemicals that harm the growth of native plants (i.e. ginseng, trillium, white wood aster, wood poppy). (Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan 2011)

We use the following definitions for Alien and Invasive Species:

Alien Species - Plant, animals and micro-organisms that have been accidentally or deliberately introduced into areas beyond their native range. Synonyms may include introduced, non-native and exotic.

Invasive species - Alien species whose introduction or spread negatively impact native biodiversity, the economy and/or society, including human health.

We appreciate that there are native species (i.e. Manitoba maple) that have expanded their range due to landscape alterations and climate change, but they are generally not within the OIPC capacity for consideration.

The *Ontario Invasive Species Action Plan* (due to be released in the Spring of 2011) is closely aligned with the national plan (*An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada*). The January 2011 DRAFT version of the provincial plan indicates its objectives are: a) prevent new invaders from arriving and surviving in Ontario, b) to slow and where possible reverse the spread of existing invasive species, and c) to reduce the harmful impacts of existing invasive species. It lists 4 goals: prevention, early detection, rapid response (to new invaders) and effective management.

The OIPC Strategic Plan is closely aligned with both the provincial and federal plans, making it easy to see how we intend to contribute to the common interests. However, the OIPC will not lose sight of the fact that it is an independent organization, led by non-government sectors.

The OIPC will:

- 1. Ensure that OIPC is a sustainable organization with the capacity to lead**
- 2. Prevent new invading plants from arriving and surviving in Ontario**
- 3. Maximize the probability of detection**
- 4. Slow or reverse the spread of existing invasive plants, and**
- 5. Reduce the harmful impacts of existing invasive plants.**

These are ambitious, long term goals. Each year the OIPC will focus on achievable objectives that contribute to these goals. In these early years of the organization, our strength is proving to be our ability to share knowledge, facilitate collaborative action and provide advice to government that represents the needs of organizations and property owners. Part Two of this Plan indicates our activity areas over the next five years and our focus, with greatest detail in the shorter term of the coming year or two.

The effort to control invasive species has been slowly building in recent years. In addition to the OIPC there are more experienced longer term programs such as the OFAH/MNR partnership and other promising initiatives, such as the Invasive Species Centre and the Invasive Species Research Institute. These latter two initiatives, at the time of writing this version of the OIPC Strategic Plan, are in the early stages of determining their roles and developing their capabilities. We expect to collaborate with these organizations and others with which we share common interests. As these other organizations build their capacity and refine their focus, we will be continuing to refine our focus and expand our efforts in the areas that we are strongest. The combined effort of all organizations that are engaged in control of invasive species will continue to fall short of the scale of the problem presented by new invasive species and expansion of existing invasives – there is more than enough work for us all and we must all focus on what we do best.

Vision and commitment of the OIPC members:

The OIPC envisions Ontario's environment (biodiversity), economy and society protected from the adverse impact of invasive plants. Members of the OIPC work to achieve the prevention (of introduction and establishment), early detection, and managed responses, as well as research, education and awareness related to invasive plants. It is our belief that the goals can only be effectively achieved through collaboration by the broad sector of society that is represented within the OIPC.

Council Mandate:

OIPC members will work together (and within their organizations and communities) to share the knowledge and expertise that enables effective responses to controlling invasive plants. Members that work on the OIPC Board and its Committees will identify issues and contribute to solutions, giving direction and support that enables our collective progress. Details are provided in the OIPC Terms of Reference.

People who are new to the OIPC ask if it has an “operational” role, that is, does it take on actual production work on its projects. The answer is yes and no. The OIPC currently has a staff of one, the Coordinator. The balance of active “workers” (currently between 50 and 75 people) on the Board and its Committees, are either volunteers, assigned or allowed by their supporting organizations to help with OIPC work. One of the reasons that organizations have representatives working with the OIPC is that the work produces outcomes that benefit their organization – usually resulting in outcomes that are greater than what they could have achieved for the same investment on their own. We have had great success in the production of fact sheets (i.e. contributing to the Most Unwanted series) and media campaigns (i.e. the May Day media coverage and poster). Building on that our Horticultural Outreach Committee is leading the Grow Me Instead campaign which highlighted the start of 2011 with production of a booklet with an initial print run of 5,000 and went to second printing a month later.

Production of materials is a very operational process. In contrast, the OIPC role in responding to the needs of the public, journalists and conservation organizations by supplying background facts about important invasive plants (i.e. Giant Hogweed, Kudzu). A portion of the “outcomes” were print materials and media coverage, but more important outcomes relate to management action taken in the countryside by large numbers of people...some of whom may be OIPC members, but most are not. A significant amount of time is invested by our members to share a spectrum of information about locations, plant ecology and control methods, government and property owner concerns, legislation and policies and then packaging that to promote responsible action across a range of society. That is also quite “operational” but does not require OIPC to own herbicide sprayers, shovels or trucks.

Our “committees” might more appropriately be called “work groups”. They are action oriented. Some are more “operational” than others, producing publications or media campaigns, while others (i.e. the Policy Committee or the Research and Control Committee) may focus on input that influences the work of others.

Guiding Principles and Values

The Council will:

- Be collaborative and democratic;
- Proactively promote and facilitate partnerships;
- Have a membership that is open and inclusive;
- Respect the values and perspectives of all stakeholders;
- Be transparent and accountable;
- Be independent and non-partisan;
- Operate as a non-profit organization;
- Seek and accept funding from multiple sources;

Synergy in Plans

The *Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan* is primarily a plan for the government, with components that indicate its preferred relationship with non-government partners such as the OIPC which is identified as a Key Partner. The plan is well designed and comprehensive. There are important implications for OIPC. The provincial plan addresses all of the “Challenges” that the OIPC identified as priorities in our 2009-10 Strategic Plan. Most importantly, their plan commits them to addressing some challenges with which we have not yet been able to deal, such as developing a Risk Assessment mechanism and an Early Detection and Rapid Response mechanism.

The framework of the OIPC Strategic Plan 2011-15 (see **Figure 2**, below) uses the same general design as *Ontario’s Invasive Species Strategic Plan*, January 2011 draft (see **Figure 1**) in order to facilitate clear recognition of the topics in which OIPC will take action on as part of the collaborative provincial effort. This approach emphasizes the commensal relationship we have – we will strengthen the capacity of member organizations to support the engagement of the community (e.g. implementation of best management practices, monitoring/reporting/analysis, early detection and response) and to advise government about citizens’ needs in policy and program development.

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Figure 1: The [Government of Ontario's Plan](#) (from May 2011 EBR posting)

Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan

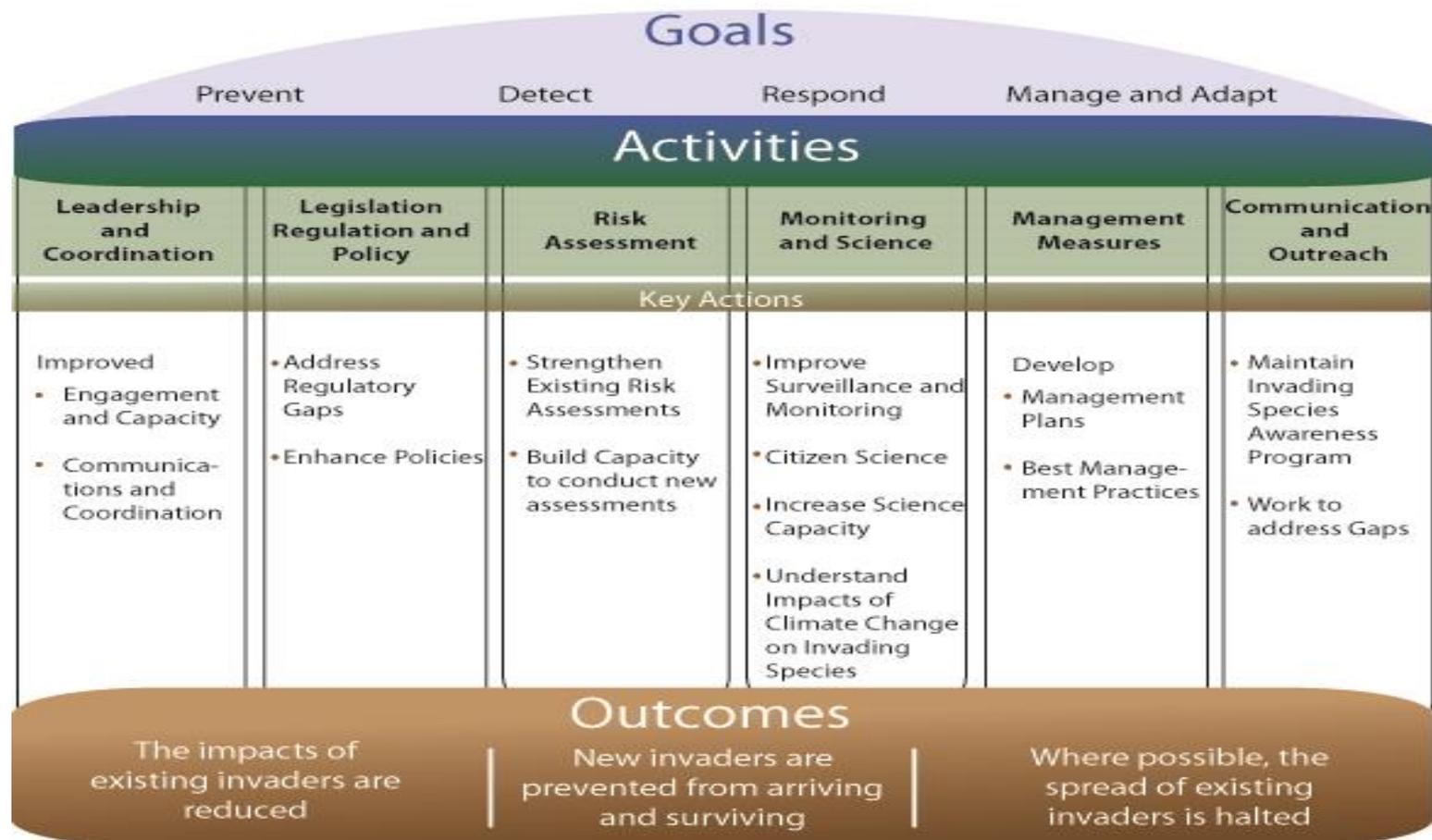
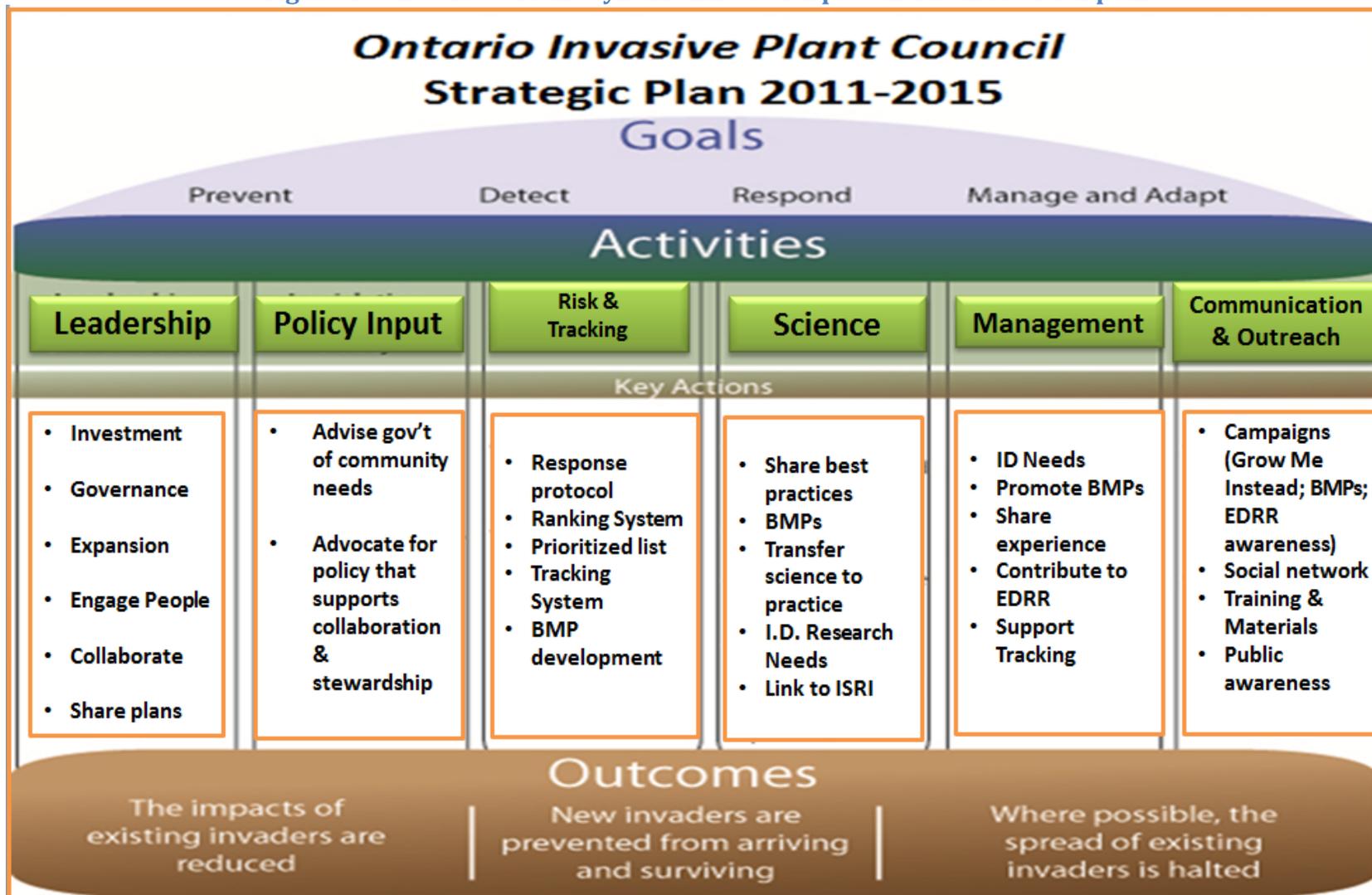


Figure 2 – the OIPC’s Plan - synchronized with provincial and federal plans



OIPC Strategic Actions

Part Two: Detail of Key Actions

Part One identified the basic strategic direction for the OIPC. It referenced four goals: **Prevent, Detect, Respond, and Manage & Adapt**

We have five areas of Activities that roughly correspond to the roles of the Board and its committees:

Lead, Policy, Risk & Tracking, Management, and Communication & Outreach.

Conditions and Trends We Will Respond to and Shape

The OIPC has identified the following to be driving forces (which may be positive or negative) in the coming years:

- Improved federal and provincial strategic direction statements and policy development, hampered by inadequate investment in implementation.
 - *Ontario's Invasive Species Strategic Plan* provides a framework for collaboration and opportunities for OIPC to develop its capacity
 - Provincial and federal pressure to consolidate non-government collaboration by moving toward evolving an Invasive Species Council that deals with the full range of species, not just plants. Alternatively, having several Councils that deal with species groups, yet have some form of higher level collaboration on overlapping interests.
- Lack of broad scale public appreciation for the impacts of invasive species, although there is a healthy growth of appreciation among individuals and sectors that have been impacted (i.e. agriculture, forestry, property owners with trees).
 - Improved statements regarding the socio-economic and ecological impacts of invasive species, supported by a growing but still inadequate amount of research and documentation.
- Encouraging developments that support monitoring, information sharing and collaboration (i.e. the Invasive Species Tracking System), but obstacles remain for providing leadership in continued development and use of such tools.
- There is general agreement on the need for regional scale early detection, eradication and management of priority invasive plants, but leadership has been lacking. Some excellent initial responses have been implemented (i.e. purple loosestrife, water soldier), but stronger collaborative leadership and investment is still needed to ramp up Early Detection and Rapid Response to an effective scale.

Key Actions

1. Lead

Ensure that OIPC is a strong, financially stable organization that will persist in the future and demonstrate leadership. Develop OIPC into a strong network connecting land managers, researchers, educators, industry, and others on the issue of invasive plants.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- Grants, contract, sponsorships and memberships have adequately supported our work
- Non-grant revenues sources have been developed (but still need expansion)
- A coordinator has been fully and continuously employed since 2009
- A stronger business structure was developed as we established a Board, a Terms of Reference and a Strategic Plan.
- Full transparency is provided through posting of committee and Board meeting notes on our website.
- Website (fully in place January 2010) got 500 to 1000 visitors/month
 - “Contact Us” option enables quick connect with our Coordinator (5 to 20 contacts/month)
- Updates (10-12/year) are mailed to distribution list of about 600 (including members)
- Strong presence at provincial & regional events and in the media
- Reference to OIPC when invasives receive media attention strongly increases contacts with us and visits to our website.
- Organizations come to OIPC to seek support and partnership

These actions will primarily be ***the responsibility of the OIPC Board, the OIPC Coordinator*** and in some specific actions the Finance Committee. The other Committees will often have a support role.

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Seek grants and contracts in the scope of this Strategy	Finance Committee – seeks to be pro-active, scheduling applications and contract bids; maintaining a file of potential projects with assistance from committees and Board. Provide focus on top priority Objectives (i.e. EDRR; species list; ITS)	Funding Committee established in 2011; prepared about 6 applications and several partnership proposals.	ongoing

Develop additional revenue streams (workshop fees, contracts, etc.)	Reduce dependence on grants. Place value on services and goods that we, as a collaborative, have expertise in. The first target is cost for the group of services we provide.	Several workshops and publications produced; displays and presentations at many events.	Credibility & quality established.
Seek new opportunities with key sectors	Strengthen OIPC with partnerships and contracted services to other organizations and sectors (i.e. Master Gardeners).	Successful start to work with horticultural and landscaping industry. Exploring provision of training workshop to Master Gardeners.	ongoing
Employ coordinator, and if possible an intern	We have a wealth of expertise and willing contributors who have limited time. Our overall capacity is limited by the workload on our Coordinator and volunteer Chair.	Coordinator position sustained. Application for intern pending.	ongoing
Explore feasibility of incorporation	We need to fully understand the implications and process of becoming incorporated.	Initial investigation has been done. Stalled due to capacity conflicts.	On hold
Consider expansion or collaboration to include animal invasives	Federal and provincial governments would prefer to deal with only one Council in the province. Synergy in efforts would be more effective. Options include several "councils" with representatives from each to form a coordinating body.	Well developed network dealing with plants and fish, good network to deal with "agricultural" invasives but not much else.	Capacity to consider or explore is limited
Engage people using our website, events, committees and social networking tools	While the Communications Committee leads our outreach and broad communications, the Board has a specific interest in using social networking as a means to absorb and share information (also to support each of the Committees/Action areas).	Successful start using Contact Us on website; survey at events, etc. Have not effectively used social networking tools yet.	ongoing
Increase member benefits and memberships	Strengthen the engagement of the members; create value; develop dialogue	Initiated – vote on Board members at large; review governance.	2011-12
Sustain active working relationship with other invasive plant	Active member of national IS working group and mid-west IS group. Aim to strengthen in coming years.	Sharing is most active around meeting times with some sustained e-mail during rest of	

organizations		year; useful info shared.	
Maintain a list of species for which materials or actions are underway or will be started in the coming year.	This list is produced by the Committees and Board. Post on the website. Multiple values: integration of our committee efforts; awareness for members; enable non-OIPC individuals to see what we (our partners & others) are working on.	Not started	Not started

2. Policy

Encourage and assist the development of effective legislation, policies and programs that will support the prevention (of introduction and establishment) of invasive plant species. Support implementation to the extent that our capacity allows.

This action is led by our **Policy Committee**.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- Provided input to federal and provincial policies and strategic plans;
- Input to provincial pesticide legislation and regulations and implementation.

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Promote legislative and policy tools (and adjustments to existing tools) that will prohibit the sale of invasive plants.	Government legislation, policies and programs are the responsibility of government, but it can be positively influenced with tactful input from OIPC.	Excellent success re: Cosmetic Pesticide Ban, provincial policy (Invasive Species, Biodiversity); BMPs	ongoing

3. Risk & Tracking

Encourage and assist the development of effective prevention of arrival or survival, assessment of risk, development of a dynamic species list to guide priority actions, and tracking of the geographic location and control progress for invasive plant species across Ontario. Promote active early detection and rapid response (EDRR) programs for invasive plants across Ontario.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- Drafted a list of invasive plants, explored the challenges of prioritizing them and submitted applications for funding to prepare a scientifically based dynamic list
- Developed list of non-invasive plants as alternatives for invasives for landscape use.
- Developed Grow Me Instead” booklet (March 2011)
- Contributed to writing of:
 - Best Management Practices (i.e. Giant Hogweed – to be published by MNR);
 - factsheets (i.e. Kudzu)
 - booklets (Landowners Guide to Controlling Invasive Woodland Plants) and
 - brochures (i.e. A Quick Reference Guide to Invasive Plant Species)
- Provided monthly (or more frequent) information about what’s new to thousands of people via our e-mailed Updates and the website

These actions will be led by our ***Research and Control Committee***. Consider requesting that the existing committee focus on academic research and science and establishing a new committee to focus on the Management and Control issues. They can recommend the appropriate split of tasks based upon the Actions listed in the Risk & Tracking and the Science section.

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Collaborate to develop an effective response protocol for Ontario.	Government has a lead role in EDRR but OIPC and its community based members are in a better position to orchestrate a spectrum of control responses and continued monitoring.	EDRR is identified in draft Ontario government strategy.	Waiting for government lead and investment.
Develop a ranking system for identifying priority species as candidates for	Select, adapt and promote tools for assessing invasiveness and for risk assessment to produce a ranking system for EDRR and management.	Project outlined; proposal submitted in partnership with ISRI	Waiting for investment

rapid response and priority longer term management.			
Create and maintain a prioritized list of known and potential invasive plants in Ontario.	Until this is developed, support a collaboratively created list. Ultimately a scientifically defensible list is needed (due to financial and legal impacts). It must be dynamic and content responsibility assigned.	Informal list is being edited –led by SERA (Stephen Smith). Proposals have been submitted by ISRI and Biodiversity Centre, both with OIPC as potential partners.	In progress & pending financing.
Collaborate to improve and promote a tool to track the location of invasive plants.	The Invasive Tracking System (ITS) has been in development under the leadership of the OFAH/MNR Aquatic Invasive program for several years. It has great potential to enable development of a province wide data base and map of invasives. It may be an integral tool in EDRR and continued monitoring of control progress. Develop an effective method for sharing distribution data on priority species; enable sharing among provinces and states (This may or may not be the ITS)	ITS has been promoted at each of our AGMs and is now being piloted.	2011
Facilitate development, distribute and encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs)	Land managers of all kinds are anxious to obtain the best quality advice to guide their removal or control efforts. The information must be scaled to their needs (a fact sheet for gardeners vs. a compendium for County Weed Inspectors or stewardship coordinators).	Some underway or completed (Phragmites, Hog Weed, Kudzu).	Expand if possible, link to EDRR & priorities list

4. Science

Identify invasive plant research needs and communicate them to researchers. Make results of scientific research on invasive plants readily available to anyone across Ontario. Promote consistency in collection of data for invasive plant inventory and monitoring and tracking of invasive plant activities, and encourage data sharing among agencies and organizations.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- *Worked with the Aquatic Invasive Species program to support removal of recent serious invaders (i.e. water soldier)*
- *Contributed to federal and provincial preparations for EDRR*
- *Promoted public awareness and organized actions related to high risk species (i.e. Kudzu and Giant Hogweed)*
- *The Research and Control Committee has developed a draft list of research needs*
- *Identified the primary need for a scientifically based risk assessment protocol associated with a dynamic list of invasive species.*
- *Partnered in the delivery of workshops related to control of priority species*
- *Delivered over 100 presentations and media interviews to share current information.*
- *The Invasive Tracking System (ITS) Technical Committee was mostly comprised of OIPC members. A key focus was to develop consensus on the basic data that was needed and the best mapping representation. The ITS is intended to be accessible to all agencies and organizations that are involved in invasive species control.*

Currently this action is the responsibility of our **Research and Control Committee**, but see note in the introduction of the Risk & Tracking section (above).

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Collaborate to promote a tool to share experience and evolve best practices in control methods.	Some control methods are documented, some chemicals are likely effective. Much experience (good & bad) is unrecorded. A networking tool that is accessible to all practitioners is needed to support sharing of experience and seeking of advice and contacts.	ITS prototype professional networking tool for us to investigate.	Pursue in 2011-12
Assist with the development of Best Management Practices and Rapid Response methods	Collaborate to acquire the best available knowledge to support management action in the short term (EDRR) and longer term (Best Management Practices).	OIPC has contributed to several BMPS.	
Maintain a list of research needs.	Annually update a research needs list, and share with the Invasive Species Research Centre for subsequent sharing with the interested research sector.	A list has been drafted.	
Assist in the transfer of science into practice.	Make research results available via our website and incorporate substantiated research into our products.	Several excellent examples of success.	ongoing
Maintain a list of communication needs.	Determine what information in what form is required by managers. Identify how that information can potentially be collected, analyzed and shared with managers. Work with other committees to respond.	Needs may or may not be incorporated into current list of project proposals.	2011-onward
Have a close working relationship with the Invasive Species Research Institute.	Have members of the Board and Committees that have a direct connect with ISRI.	Board member and the RCC Chair are connected.	

5. Management

Provide support for land managers to facilitate appropriate control and management of invasive plant species across Ontario.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- *An existing group of partners joined with the OIPC to form the Horticultural Outreach Committee, which worked with the horticultural industry, focused in the Greater Toronto Area initially, to develop a priority list of invasive plants and appropriate alternative species (not necessarily native species). Their first major product was the Grow Me Instead booklet.*
- **Contributed to writing of:**
 - **Best Management Practices (i.e. Giant Hogweed – to be published by MNR);**
 - **factsheets (i.e. Kudzu)**
 - **booklets (Landowners Guide to Controlling Invasive Woodland Plants) and**
 - **brochures (i.e. A Quick Reference Guide to Invasive Plant Species)**
- **Provided monthly (or more frequent) information about what’s new to thousands of people via our e-mailed Updates and the website**

These actions are currently the responsibility of our **Research and Control Committee.**

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Identify priority needs of land managers.	Seek advice from members and others about which species land managers need support for and what kind of support (i.e. technical advice, licenced expertise, funding)	Ad hoc approach to date.	
Facilitate development, distribution and encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs)	Produce BMPs and fact sheets/advisories in forms that are useful to the audiences.	Some BMPs in development. Some fact sheets (Most Not Wanted) produced.	

Collaborate to promote a tool to share experience and evolve best practices in control methods.	Some control methods are documented, some chemicals are likely effective. Much experience (good & bad) is unrecorded. A networking tool that is accessible to all practitioners is needed to support sharing of experience and seeking of advice and contacts. (See Science actions)	ITS has a professional networking tool that is available for us to review.	2011-12
Contribute to provincial EDRR protocol development	Provide input to the those who are developing the protocol in order to ensure that field level needs are accommodated.	Provincial level discussions are underway.	No tangible product yet
Assist in EDRR implementation	Work as a lead or a partner to implement rapid response plans for priority species	Provincial level discussions are underway.	No tangible product yet
Prepare regions for anticipated arrivals of IS	Provide regions with information about high risk species	Informal networking. Can be more planned when a list is developed	2011
Enable stewards to contribute to monitoring.	Support partners/members in the development and <u>use</u> of tools (i.e. the Invasive Tracking System) that enable early detection & reporting.	OFAH/MNR hotline is the primary mechanism; their staff are piloting the ITS and ITS is only on trial use by others.	2012

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6. Communication/Outreach

Identify needs of target audiences, create and share appropriate educational materials and programs.

What has already been achieved in past plans:

- *OIPC has either lead or contributed to a significant number of publications that are of value to the general public, or to specific audiences such as woodlot owners, outdoor recreationists or gardeners. See examples listed under the previous Activities.*
- *Website was developed and has attracted a significant sector of users.*

The Communication Committee and its associated Horticultural Outreach Committee have responsibility for these Actions.

Action	Description	Progress	Status
Develop a "Grow Me Instead" campaign targeting landscape industry and gardeners	Work with the horticultural industry to reduce/prevent the sale of invasive horticultural plants throughout Ontario. The campaign informs gardeners, landscapers and growers about invasive horticultural plants and readily available alternatives.	Successful program and material piloted in the GTA, and prepared to expand pending funding.	Awaiting funding decisions
Promote BMPs	Facilitate and promote adoption of Best Practices by pathway industries. BMPs developed by other Committees and partners.	Waiting for approval of existing drafts.	pending
Use our website as a primary communication channel.	Place all useful material on the OIPC website, including reference to what we are working on currently in the coming year.	Website has been in place since January 2010 and is a popular source of info.	Currently a capacity challenge to keep current.
Maintain a list of potential projects that respond to documented needs.	Continue to clarify the needs of audiences and prepare to produce and deliver (as a lead or partner) the appropriate information.	Have a 5-year rolling plan, in need of review for this year.	pending
Use more social networking tools as appropriate.	Develop our skills and abilities using the social networking tools to obtain and provide information. Note ITS potential.	To date have focused on website and e-mail.	2011-12