



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

November 26, 2008

MCPB 12/11/08
Item #8

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks *Mary Bradford*
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks *M*
Douglas Alexander, Acting Chief, Park Development Division *D Alexander*
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FROM: Rob Gibbs, Natural Resources Manager, Natural Resources Division
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SUBJECT: Non-Native Invasive Species Task Force Recommendations

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This item is coming to the board primarily as a discussion item, no immediate action is required. We are seeking Board concurrence with our strategy to develop agreements, including cost sharing, with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) for removal of non-native invasive species in the areas immediately adjacent to the ICC. Our recommendations are based on the findings of Interagency NNI Task Force Report (attached) as follows:

- Developing an early detection and rapid response program to treat NNIs as they are identified.
- Creating a jointly funded account to treat new NNIs along the ICC corridor.
- Obtaining the commitment of all agencies involved for control and management of NNIs.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Introduction

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA), with support from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are building the Intercounty Connector (ICC) between the I-270 and the I-95/US 1 corridors. Contracts A and C are currently under construction, while Contract B is in the design phase. While the ICC is being designed to minimize environmental impacts, certain impacts are unavoidable. The ICC will bisect forested areas including four major stream valley parks (SVPs) in Montgomery County (Figure 1). This includes clearing and grubbing interior forests within the ICC Right-of-Way (ROW) to allow for construction of the roadway and other supporting facilities. During this process, new forest edges will be created in areas adjacent to mature forested parkland. This newly created edge habitat will be susceptible to invasion of non-native invasive species (NNIs).

In response to these concerns, the Inter-agency NNI Task Force was created in April 2008 to evaluate the benefits of additional management of NNIs along the ICC-parkland interface. Members of the NNI task force were selected to represent a broad range of expertise and interests, and included personnel from local and state agencies as well as respected experts in the field of NNI control. A total of three NNI task force meetings were held in the summer of 2008. It is noted that the task force was created early in the ICC construction process.

This effort presents a unique opportunity to implement preventative measures and develop rapid response protocols to detect and address NNIs before a viable seed bank becomes established and NNIs become a major problem in parkland adjacent to the ICC corridor

B. Summary of NNI Task Force Recommendations

Task force members focused on providing cost-effective and practical measures for controlling NNIs in parkland adjacent to the ICC. In addition, the task force recognized that SHA is responsible for building the ICC while MdTA will be responsible for the long-term management; thus, separate construction phase and operational phase recommendations were made.

Task force members stated that the two most important factors to reducing the long-term threat of NNIs at the ICC-parkland interface are to prevent the establishment of a viable seedbank during the construction phase, and to implement an early detection and rapid response program to treat NNIs as they are identified. The first two years after initial clearing was identified as the critical timeframe for preventing the establishment of a viable seedbank; thus, a significant effort should be made during this time period. Initial clearing has begun on Contracts A and C.

The NNI task force recommendations are presented below.

1) Construction Phase Recommendations

- Determine baseline conditions after LOD is established.
- Review landscaping plans and work with design-builder.
- Enforce good construction practices.
- Develop/implement an early detection/rapid response program both on the ICC ROW and adjacent parkland.
 - Provide training programs for on-site personnel.
 - Implement monitoring and reporting programs.
 - Agree on appropriate treatment measures to be implemented.

2) Operational Phase Recommendations

- Develop partnerships with local and state agencies and organizations.
- Develop training programs for long-term maintenance personnel.
- Develop long-term monitoring and reporting programs.

3) *Recommendations for Controlling NNIs*

Task force members discussed several alternatives for managing and controlling NNIs along the ICC-parkland interface. Members favored an integrated approach consisting of mechanical, biological, and chemical control techniques. The task force stressed the importance of developing partnerships during the construction and operational phases of the ICC. By leveraging these partnerships, it may be possible to reduce the cost of treating NNIs.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force focused its discussions on a general approach that all agreed would be the most effective to reduce NNI impacts. It did not specify which agency should do what. Both SHA and MdTA have expressed a willingness to work with M-NCPPC to reduce NNI impacts but have made no commitments at this point.

Listed below are recommendations from M-NCPPC staff on how the Task Force recommendations might best be implemented including specific agency responsibilities (in parenthesis).

A. Construction Phase Recommendations

- Baseline study – Determine baseline conditions after initial clearing of the LOD (M-NCPPC ICC resources). This includes developing a methodology and providing oversight by the Natural Resource Stewardship staff. (M-NCPPC)
- Review landscaping plans and work with design-builder. (M-NCPPC – note this is already being done)
- Enforce good construction practices. (All - to be done by multiple agency environmental inspections teams)
- Establish a jointly funded NNI management account: This account will be funded annually by the agency in charge of operations (SHA or MdTA), and matching funds by M-NCPPC. The details for establishment of this account will be worked out between the agencies. (M-NCPPC, SHA, and MdTA)
- Jointly develop and implement an early detection/rapid response program for the ICC ROW and adjacent parkland. (All)
 - Provide training programs for on-site personnel. (M-NCPPC)
 - Implement monitoring and reporting programs. This could mimic the program used by MDA to report NNIs on the Maryland noxious weed list. (All)
 - Agree on appropriate treatment measures to be implemented. (All – possibly agreeing on utilizing the same contractor to treat NNIs on SHA and Park land to treat both sides of the property line)
- Work with SHA to determine future access from ICC ROW to adjacent parkland to facilitate NNI treatment once wildlife fencing is installed and MdTA takes over the ROW. This may include gates in wildlife fencing depending on the final LOD and placement of fence.

B. Operational Phase Recommendations

- Develop agreements with MdTA regarding maintenance and management of NNIs. Agreements may include:

- Access through ICC to adjacent parkland.
 - Use of common contractor for treatment on ROW and adjacent parkland where this would be advantageous and reduce costs.
 - Management techniques and herbicide use.
 - Development of training programs for long-term maintenance personnel.
 - Development of long-term monitoring and reporting programs.
 - Establishment of long-term funding.
- Develop partnerships with other local, state, and not-for-profit agencies as referenced in the NNI report. (M-NCPPC and others)

IV. COST ESTIMATES AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Resources required for implementing the NNI management efforts described include: Staffing to conduct regular inspections and treatment including staff, equipment for mowing, cutting and herbicide application. The most likely scenario will be inspections 2-times per year and treatments 1 to 2 times per year. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) does this type of inspection and treatment work for SHA and M-NCPPC and would be a logical choice. The use of contractors for this work may be the most practical approach; however, there would still be staff time required for the oversight and review of contractor work.

The cost of treating NNIs on parkland can vary significantly depending on the level of infestation, the species involved, removal methods selected, ability to access the area, etc. M-NCPPC contracts with MDA herbicide applicators to treat many park areas. MDA also has extensive experience treating noxious weeds along SHA ROWs and therefore has good knowledge of the effort that would be required for this program. MDA’s estimate for this work is \$1,000 per acre. The potential impact is approximately 98 acres of parkland (8 linear miles extending 100 ft into forest edges).

At \$1,000 per acre, the potential cost would be \$98,000 per year. Assuming a program will be put in place to regularly monitor and treat NNIs, this cost should drop after several years once the disturbed area along the LOD has stabilized. With so many variables it is difficult to estimate an annual cost; however, the table below presents a reasonable estimate for control efforts. These costs will be evaluated and adjusted accordingly at the end of the fifth year.

Years after completion	Amount per year	FY
1 to 3	\$98,000	FY 10-13
4 - forward	\$49,000	FY 14-15

V. CONCLUSIONS

The ICC will bisect mature forested areas including four major stream valley parks in Montgomery County, creating favorable conditions for growth and proliferation of NNIs (“edge effect”). If no action is taken, newly established NNIs have the potential to cause significant environmental and financial damage in the parkland adjacent to the ICC. Therefore, M-NCPPC staff recommends entering into agreements with SHA and MdTA to develop a NNI control program that includes both preventative and restorative measures. More specifically, staff recommends:

- Developing an early detection and rapid response program to treat NNIs as they are identified.

- Creating a jointly funded account to treat new NNIs along the ICC corridor.
- Obtaining the commitment of all agencies involved for control and management of NNIs.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: NNI Task Force Report

Figure 1. Locations of High Quality Forest Susceptible to NNI Invasion Due to Newly Created Edge Habitat

