

## **Report to Council from Councillor Gord Baird, June 1, 2017**

### **SUBJECT: Regional Invasive Species Coordinator**

#### **ISSUE**

The Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership, (CRISP), is a working group comprised of staff ranging from Parks, Public Works, Planning and Environmental Services departments, of all local governments within the CRD, and has been working since 2010 to create a more unified efficient and coordinated response to invasive species management in the region.

The success of this working group led to the Province offering regional funding to enhance facilitation and coordination. With this the local governments have come to rely on the activities performed by CRISP including:

- Information sharing between local government staff
- Focused species management through the development of a regional specific EDRR program (Early Detection Rapid Response)
- Staff training for plant identification, treatment application, Provincial database site entry
- Invasive species treatment contractor vetting and treatment coordination,
- Disposal systems
- Annual regional reporting required by the Province
- Public outreach and education.

The Provincial funds are used to cover administration expenses including having a part time staff member that is the Regional Invasive Species Coordinator. As CRISP is a working group and not an entity that can receive and administer funds, contracts or payroll, CRISP has had to rely on a model where it partners with outside organizations to perform these duties. This model unfortunately has been inefficient, and has created conditions that cause a lack of security for the CRISP Coordinator position (working for CRISP but as an employee of the partnering organization) and ultimately has resulted in the loss of CRISP Coordinators to more secure employment.

At this juncture, CRISP enters the treatment season with dedicated funds, but no coordinator to implement the program; CRISP requires a new model to function. Local governments do not have the capacity to allow one or more of their staff to perform this duty.

With the recent loss of our Coordinator, we run the risk of forfeiting the funds designated for the region, as well as the momentum in a treatment and reporting process that has become refined. Without a Regional Invasive Species Coordinator member governments will have to take on many of the specialized tasks that have been performed by CRISP, thus impacting local government's at both a capacity and cost.

#### **Implications**

If the region loses the services of a Regional Invasive Species Coordinator, it leaves the region at risk of increased spread of invasives, both through a lack of treatment programs, and a lack of knowledge sharing and coordination with our Provincial Partners. The costs to infrastructure, public health, economic and the environment would increase and thus bear more costs on the individual local governments, than would otherwise be the case with coordinated efforts.

## **Recommendation**

### **Motion:**

Whereas CRISP (Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership) has served the region's local governments' needs to coordinate invasive species planning, monitoring, treatment, provincial mapping and reporting, training, public engagement, contractor management, and disposal;

And Whereas the success has led to consistent provincial funding to aid in the coordination efforts for the region;

And Whereas the existing model to date has required CRISP to partner with outside organizations to administer the funds and created conditions of insecurity and stability of employment for the CRISP Regional Invasive Species Coordinator and hence is causing the situation where the region is faced with losing these grants as well as local government's having to take over activities supplied by CRISP;

Therefore, be it resolved that the District of Highlands request the CRD Board to ask from staff a report on the implications, feasibility and recommendations to house the duties of a Regional Invasive Species Coordinator within the CRD.

## **CRISP Statement: May 2017**

CRISP is a partnership of all the local governments in the Capital Region (Vancouver Island area). Since 2010, CRISP has been providing regional communications, programs and more, to improve and support invasive species management throughout the Vancouver Island area of the CRD. A backgrounder on CRISP and the current situation is attached.

CRISP is currently at a cross-roads requiring assistance to be able to continue the valuable and successful services and programs provided to the region. Without a partnering, host organization, CRISP will no longer be able to:

- receive funding for the region (such as from the provincial government)
- continue the regional EDRR (Early Detection Rapid Response) program to address key species such as Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and European Fire Ants
- employ a coordinator to support regional priority invasive species management
- maintain our website of resource materials and contacts for invasive species reporting by the public
- facilitate training and support for local government staff

The result of the above would be a loss of current regional funding and the capacity of CRISP would be limited to information sharing meetings between members. The ground gained against priority invasive species threats would be lost and negative impacts increased throughout the region.

CRISP local government representatives of the Capital Region (Vancouver Island) request consideration of short and long-term solutions for CRISP:

1. Short-term, immediate support for CRISP administer funds and hire a CRISP Coordinator (staff or contractor), keeping the regional EDRR (Early Detection Rapid Response) program in place for this year, with the assistance of the current CRISP funding.
2. The CRD and municipalities look at a future long-term scenario to enable regional coordination of CRISP, supported by the CRISP membership and Advisory, to ensure continued prevention and reduction of the impacts and spread of priority invasive species in our region. To date, this coordination has successfully contributed to reducing and avoiding impacts including on infrastructure, private and public lands, ecosystems, human health and economic impacts

**CRISP members are anxious to secure an arrangement so that the region will not lose funding and will not lose a season of invasive species management. We would be pleased to meet or send further information, such as available resources, at your request.** (CRISP Advisory c/o carolyn.richman@saanich.ca)

## **Attachment: CRISP Backgrounder & the Current Situation**

CRISP began in 2010 as a partnership of local governments and other agencies working towards improved invasive species management in the region. CRISP's membership currently includes all local governments in the Capital Region (Vancouver Island), with representatives from each including both staff and a few elected officials. CRISP has received funding from the provincial government since 2012 to assist with invasive coordination, which increased in scope last year as well as pooled funding from many of the local government members. This funding has provided a CRISP Coordinator, a treatment program for priority invasive sites in the regional EDRR program (EDRR: Early Detection Rapid Response), the ability to provide public outreach and support and more.

Some of our measurable achievements have been:

- Increased funding and capacity for invasive management in the region
- Coordinated (increased) treatment and management of high priority early detection rapid response species, reducing spread and impacts
- Stronger regional messages and public outreach on invasive species
- Provision of safe disposal options for high risk species and improved standard disposal procedures
- CRISP priority invasive plant status list, improving management and priority setting
- Increased regional collaboration on invasives resulting in increased success in regional management overall
- A few First Nations partnerships on invasive species issues are in early stages
- Support for regional participation in provincial programs such as Plantwise (Horticulture/Gardening)

In addition, less measurable but extremely important is the increase in regional efforts to prevent the introduction of high-risk invasive species.

As CRISP is not an entity (but a local government partnership), CRISP has had to partner with NGOs to manage funds and hire contractors. The leadership and supervision of this has primarily fallen to the CRISP Advisory: currently representatives from the District of Saanich, the City of Colwood (and the District of Highlands). An additional challenge has included retaining qualified coordinators under the NGO partnership model.

CRISP is at a cross-roads as our (excellent) CRISP Coordinator recently left for a more secure employment. At this time CRISP has funding, but must establish a new model with which to retain and administer the funding and hire a Coordinator. The delivery of our 2017 regional EDRR program is at risk unless this can be resolved.

At this juncture, CRISP requires a new model to function under as it is not possible to have one or two local government representatives providing supervision and partnership management on behalf of all the other local governments. CRISP held a recent members meeting to discuss the issue, with a majority of local governments represented at the meeting. All members felt strongly that the services and regional EDRR program provided by CRISP are essential and all requested that a new regional model be developed to enable the coordination to continue.

Examples of current risks that CRISP is reducing/addressing:

- Knotweed spread in the region is still possible to address, whereas other regions that did not act fast enough are dealing with costly impacts such as to watercourses and riparian areas, impacts to infrastructure such as roads and building foundations.
- European Fire Ant spread in our region (from a few outbreaks) threaten land use and land values as well as ecological issues. This invasive ant, which spreads quickly, swarms and stings humans and animals.

**Invasive species** are non-native plant and animal species that can spread and cause impacts including environmental, economic and human impacts such as health and safety. Left unmanaged, invasive species spread and increase in density, requiring more resources to control and causing greater impacts.

**Invasive species management in BC** is led and supported by all levels of government as well as invasive species organizations (regional and provincial). Local government unique roles and responsibilities include public land management, private land regulatory tools, protection of local infrastructure, land use and local economic issues. Local governments also have a high priority in addressing local social and health impacts related to high priority invasive species.

**CRISP:** [crispinvasives.ca](http://crispinvasives.ca)

**BC Invasive Species Strategy:** [bcinvasives.ca/about/invasive-species-strategy-for-bc](http://bcinvasives.ca/about/invasive-species-strategy-for-bc)

#### **CRISP Membership (by agencies)**

City of Colwood  
City of Langford  
City of Victoria  
CRD Regional Parks  
CRD Water  
CRD Environmental Services  
District of Central Saanich  
District of Highlands

District of Metchosin  
District of North Saanich  
District of Oak Bay  
District of Saanich  
District of Sooke  
Township of Esquimalt  
Town of Sidney  
Town of View Royal