Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area
5-yr Strategic Plan
(December 2022 - December 2027)

APIPMA MISSION STATEMENT
Implement a comprehensive, cooperative approach across boundaries to address the threats of invasive species to the lands and watersheds within the boundaries of APIPMA.

Approach: The most cost-effective way to address invasive species is to prevent them from reaching the cooperative region in the first place. If, despite prevention efforts, invasive species reach the APIPMA, early detection programs can help locate and eradicate those invasive species before they become widely established. Education and awareness extending to the general public will assist efforts to locate and inventory species as part of early detection and otherwise. If invasive species elude early detection and establish and spread in the APIMA or are part of a previous invasion, control and management programs to monitor and minimize their negative impacts to the economy and environment will be necessary, but these efforts can be very costly. The sooner we act the more effective and less costly our efforts will be.

Plan Implementation:

This plan will be considered a working document and will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised annually. Refer to the APIPMA Biennial Workplan for the task implementation timeline.

It is also highly recommended that APIPMAs utilize steering committees, standing sub-committees and ad hoc sub-committees. Steering committees should represent the partners in the APIPMA. Standing sub-committees are formed to address a specific issue and usually continue as long as needed (e.g. animal EDRR subcommittee, mapping/monitoring subcommittee, other). Ad hoc sub-committees are a great tool to get a defined project completed in a defined time. For example, organize an ad hoc sub-committee to rank plants for prioritized control efforts. This group would complete the project, report back to the steering committee, and then disband. This is an efficient and productive technique to divide up the tasks and get engagement from partners that may not have time for a steering or standing sub-committee. It also provides documents and products to all partners with ownership to APIPMA.

Goal 1: Create, strengthen and sustain Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area.

Objective: Form and sustain a strong partnership through APIPMA.

1. ***Develop basic organizational structure for APIPMA and determine geographic boundaries***
   a) Coordinate meetings with enthusiastic regional partners (agency and private) to initiate and participate in APIPMA efforts.
   b) Create steering committee and subcommittees and revise as appropriate to assist with project specific efforts.
   c) Establish geographic boundaries, and solicit feedback from partners on a regular basis.

2. ***Sustain and strengthen APIPMA***
   a) Schedule APIPMA meetings at least twice per year or quarterly as needed.
   b) Annually recruit new members and maintain current membership in the APIPMA.
   c) Biennially (every two years) develop work plan with APIPMA partners. Incorporate funded grant activity into annual work plans when appropriate.
   d) Starting in December 2023, create a short annual report.
   e) Hire two coordinators to best serve the large area encompassing the APIPMA
   f) Support training opportunities for coordinators, and other local volunteers as is feasible

3. ***Submit cooperative funding proposals***.
   a) Identify the lead partner or organization to serve as the recipient and administrator for grants. Confirm lead partner commitment to administration as needed. Grant recipient partner may vary according to grant source and purpose.
   b) Develop a list of funding programs with due dates for control, EDRR, education and other projects.
   c) Annually submit APIPMA grants; consider utilizing less common approaches like landowner incentive programs, staff and volunteer time as in-kind matches, and shared field staff.

4. ***Utilize and Generate legal documents to strengthen APIPMA*.**
   a) Create letter of support template to facilitate partner agency participation and support of APIPMA goals and objectives. Encourage partners to sign and return.
   b) Develop MOU (memorandum of understanding) or other document allowing public agency staff to work on other agency, NGO (non-government organization), private lands, or other partner land; as well as commit staff time to APIPMA.
   c) Create or use existing liability releases for partners to work on private lands.
   d) Develop MOU or other document for private landowners allowing APIPMA to access and implement invasive plant control on private property (utilize Sinnemahoning Invasive Plant Management Area document as template)

Goal 2: Outreach, Training and Strategic Collaboration

Objective: Support education, outreach and training to support prevention, mapping, EDRR and control efforts in the APIPMA boundaries.

1. Implement outreach to establish a regional and statewide profile and for public awareness.
   a) Develop APIPMA website and/or Facebook page. Quarterly, or as needed, maintain and improve APIPMA website.
   b) Submit articles, press releases, and distribute a newsletter describing mission and activities of APIPMA for partner and public awareness.
   c) Create or find existing materials to identify APIPMA priority species, provide biological information, and instructions on treatment and control.

d) Develop or acquire existing educational materials on invasive plants and native, or non-invasive plants, as alternatives to invasives for landscaping, erosion control, or ecological restoration.
e) Annually contact the media through press/photo releases and other media outlets to highlight private lands initiative and available resources.
f) Create educational items strategically marketed towards certain groups - hunters, fishermen, landowners, farmers, school teachers, etc.

2. ***Implement outreach, training and strategic collaboration efforts within APIPMA partners/membership to increase APIPMA community knowledge.***
   a) Implement outreach and training efforts for APIPMA partners and land managers at least twice a year. Improve APIPMA partner knowledge by communicating with experts and utilizing specialists for training opportunities.
   b) Encourage all APIPMA partners and public recreation areas to place awareness posters and/or signage at all public conservation lands and high-use recreational areas.

3. ***Implement outreach and training efforts for the general public and community groups*** **within the** ***APIPMA region.***
   a) Develop a volunteer network for APIPMA to implement mapping, monitoring and Early Detection Rapid Response. Provide training and coordinate work days.
   b) Develop a list of schools, scout groups, community festivals, environmental education centers, public facilities and others who could help with education about identification, prevention, and EDRR and control and distribute educational materials.
   c) Work with Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program and local garden clubs to promote the removal of invasive plants and use of native plants.

4. ***Increase outreach efforts to private industries and atypical public agencies (railroads, utilities, ranges, nurseries, botanical gardens, pet stores, animal rehabilitation centers, landscapers, architects, foresters, county animal control, PennDOT, county municipalities, and other ROW agencies).***
   a) Create a communication network contact list for private industries and atypical public agencies.
   b) Work with retailers to reduce the sales of invasive plants and promote native alternatives (local nurseries, greenhouses, garden centers, and retail stores.
   c) Encourage interpretive signage at visible botanical gardens explaining the threat of invasive plants and alternatives to their use in the landscape.

5. ***Implement outreach and training efforts for private landowners and landowner associations within the APIPMA region.***
   a) Identify APIPMA coordinator(s) develop working relationships with landowners and associations.
   b) Identify specific private landowners for education or demonstration sites.
   c) Develop landowner outreach packets to send to landowners (include species information, training courses, and incentive programs, etc.).
   d) Create or use existing materials to increase knowledge of funding opportunities, current laws and control options; with the goal of enrolling landowners in funding programs.
   e) Consider recognition of landowner(s) demonstrating outstanding efforts in prevention and control of invasive plants.

6. ***Increase outreach and awareness efforts to policy makers and county commissioners.***
   a) Obtain and publicize proclamations regarding National Invasive Species Awareness Week, mapping reports, and other projects.
   b) Share Annual Report and newsletter with elected officials, especially during NISAW (annually in Feb. / March).
   c) Visit with current and newly elected government officials to support funding, EDRR, prevention and other APIPMA goals.

Goal 3: Monitoring and Mapping

Objective: Promote locating and documenting occurrences of invasive plants, especially in areas of high ecological importance; and on private and public lands where documentation has not occurred.

1. ***Coordinate monitoring and mapping of invasive plants in the APIPMA***
   a) Coordinators will utilize iMapinvasives, or OnX Hunt as a central location for recording findings
   b) Provide training for partners to utilize iMapinvasives (http://www.iMapsinvasives.org/) for documenting invasive plants in the APIPMA.
   c) Encourage APIPMA partners to use iMapinvasives for EDRR species and single occurrence entry and to download bulk data from previous mapping activities.
   d) Utilize database and information from land managers and private landowners to create APIPMA prioritized species and maps.
   e) Train volunteers to map and record invasive species on private land or public spaces such as hiking trails, recreational areas, etc.
   f) Facilitate data entry into iMapinvasives for volunteers or partners unable to upload data.
   g) Assist in information gathering to document the impacts of high priority control species.

Goal 4: Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR)

Objective: Develop and implement techniques and practices to promote early detection and rapid response of newly established invasive species within the APIPMA boundaries.

1) ***Prioritize EDRR plant species within and adjacent to the APIPMA geographic area.***
   a) Create a list of possible EDRR species from available information (partners, organizations adjacent to the APIPMA region, iMapinvasives, etc.)
   b) Use the following parameters to prioritize: likelihood of spread into APIPMA area, population in surrounding counties or states, threat to forests, waterways, and sensitive native species.
   c) Reassess EDRR priority list annually

2) ***Monitor and provide communications to identify and provide awareness regarding early detection of new plant invasions within APIPMA lands.***
   a) Review iMapinvasives database or other alert systems for new invasive plants near or within the APIPMA region.
   b) Implement a training effort for priority EDRR and control species.
   c) Ask APIPMA partners to provide notification of EDRR species detected within APIPMA
   d) Send alert emails, notifications, and press releases to partners and the public about emerging threats.
   e) Create a communications network contact list to establish alert systems for surrounding areas and IPMA's outside APIPMA boundaries.

3) Eradicate EDRR species from the APIPMA region
   a) Prioritize control and treatment of known EDRR populations to stop potential further spread.
   b) Assist partners if EDRR population occurs on property they control through a workday or as a demonstration site for control.

Goal 5: Prevention

Objective: Develop and/or implement techniques and practices to prevent establishment and spread of new invasions near the APIPMA boundaries and existing species from spreading into new areas within boundaries.

1. ***Reduce potential pathways of introduction for invasive non-native plant species into the APIPMA.***
   a. Develop and/or find and use existing guidelines for vehicle, boats, equipment, personal protective equipment and personnel disinfection program/protocol(s) to address the unintentional movement of terrestrial and aquatic invasive plants.
   b. APIPMA partners will encourage the purchase of only weed-free mulch, straw, and native seed mixes for site stabilization and restoration.
   c. APIPMA partners will develop and/or use existing preventative guidelines for conducting ground disturbing activities (e.g. timber harvest/transport, construction, road maintenance, off-road vehicle use, or contracted activities on partner lands).
   d. Develop early detection guidelines for partners to insert in contract language for contractors requiring them to alert land managers when they observe unknown or EDRR species.

Goal 6: Control (Prioritized Management)

Objective: Develop and implement techniques and practices to control known infestations of priority invasive species and maintain them at the lowest possible level in the APIPMA boundaries.

1. ***Prioritize known APIPMA invasive plants using a ranking system that considers the impact of imperiled conservation targets and if necessary, other criteria like water quality and economics.***
   a) Gather input from agency, industry, and community partners to prioritize treatment areas
   b) Determine ownerships of priority areas and strategy for treatments in these areas.

2. ***Manage the top 5 priority control plants to reduce infestations to maintenance level control.***
   a) Encourage APIPMA partners to increase treatment efforts on public and private lands, including municipalities, public agency land, and industry land.
   b) Biannually coordinate a cooperative workday focusing on treatment of priority control species.
   c) Seek funding opportunities to support invasive plant treatment on private landowner properties.
   d) Contact private landowners within priority areas to encourage treatment, and if funding is available to provide treatment. Obtain MOU consent form prior to treatment.

3. ***Evaluate results of control efforts***
   a) Annually, determine the number of acres treated across the APIPMA area, % reduction in invasive cover, and re-evaluate priority areas. Include information in the annual report.

*The template for this document was created by staff with The Nature Conservancy, Florida Chapter. This was made possible through funding provided by the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program.