

Capital Region PRISM

A Partnership for Regional Invasive Species
Management

DRAFT Five Year Strategic Plan 2023-2027



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Capital Region PRISM Staff

Kristopher Williams, CR-PRISM coordinator

Sam Schultz, Terrestrial Invasive Species Coordinator

Hannah Coppola, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager

Addison Kubik, Invasive Species Education and Outreach Coordinator

Capital Region PRISM Steering Committee

Thomas Allgaier, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Matthew Brincka, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

Robert Cole, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Neil Gifford, Albany Pine Bush Commission (former member)

Dustin Lewis, Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Loretta McNamee, NYS Department of Transportation

Linda White, National Park Service

Meg Wilkinson, NY Natural Heritage Program, iMapInvasives

PRISM Sponsors

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

CR-PRISM Host

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County

Partners and Stakeholders

Thank you for contributing your valuable time to our partnership. The feedback provided by partners created the foundation for the CR-PRISM's strategic plan. It is the partners that allow the PRISM to grow and flourish while protecting our environment.

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List of Abbreviations

CCE	Cornell Cooperative Extension
CR-PRISM	Capital Region Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
ISCMP	Invasive Species Comprehensive Management Plan
ISPZ	Invasive Species Prevention Zone
PCA	Priority Conservation Area
PRISM	Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
PWB	Priority Waterbody

Glossary

Invasive Species	A species that is nonnative to the ecosystem under consideration, and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. For the purpose of 6 NYCRR Part 575, the harm must significantly outweigh any benefits.
Prohibited Species	Prohibited invasive species cannot be knowingly possessed with the intent to sell, import, purchase, transport or introduce. In addition, no person shall sell, import, purchase, transport, introduce or propagate prohibited invasive species
Regulated Species	Regulated invasive species, on the other hand, are species which cannot be knowingly introduced into a free-living state or introduced by a means that one should have known would lead to such an introduction, although such species shall be legal to possess, sell, buy, propagate, and transport.
Horizon Scanning	A process for identifying and assessing potential risks posed by non-native species that may be introduced and become established.

CAPITAL REGION PRISM STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

VISION

To cultivate a region in which partners work together to address the harmful impacts associated with invasive species to protect its lands and waters, biodiversity, economy, and quality of life.

MISSION

Our mission is to prevent, detect, and respond to harmful invasive species in the PRISM region through collaboration, resource sharing, strategic messaging, and education.

GOALS

Goal 1: Partnership

Coordinate and collaborate with partners to grow and strengthen regional capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to invasive species.

Goal 2: Prevent

Minimize the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species into new areas.

Goal 3: Detect and Monitor

Detect and monitor harmful invasive species approaching and affecting the Capital Region.

Goal 4: Respond

Mitigate ecological and economic impacts of priority invasive species using an integrated pest management approach.

Goal 5: Outreach, Communication and Education

Build engaged communities that understand, support, and invest in the PRISM's work to prevent, detect, and respond to harmful invasive species in the Capital Region.

INTRODUCTION

Harmful invasive species have caused severe environmental and economic impacts throughout the greater Capital Region, including the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys. Invasive species impact our lands and waters, local agriculture, and recreational opportunities. These impacts result in hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue, increased maintenance costs, and reductions in biodiversity.

The size and variability of the region's landscape, the large human population, and multiple pathways of movement pose significant challenges for preventing, detecting, and responding to harmful invasive species. The scale of the invasive species problem calls for a strategic and coordinated approach.

The Capital Region Partnership for Invasive Species Management (CR-PRISM) is a collaborative organization created to address the threat of invasive species. The CR-PRISM operates across eleven counties and is funded by the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The CR-PRISM is hosted by the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County (CCE of Saratoga County) and collaborates with more than three dozen cooperating organizations, partners, and volunteers to reduce the spread and impact of invasive species. Partners include academic institutions, government agencies, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, private preserves and parks, land trusts, conservancies, lake associations, agricultural institutions, local businesses, environmental groups, and community scientists.

"We never will have enough resources to tackle invasive species; prioritizing and partnerships are essential." State Partner

The Capital Region PRISM's 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan update has:

- A new vision statement describing the collective purpose of the CR-PRISM partnership
- Redefined goals and objectives to promote efficient and targeted work actions
- Clear and concise goals with objectives to communicate the work of the partnership
- Direct guidance for implementation and reporting
- Local priorities that are aligned with NYSDEC requirements
- Refined outreach, communication, and education objectives

The plan was developed with significant partner input and guided by the CR-PRISM staff and Steering Committee. For a summary of the strategic planning process, see Appendix A.

The Challenge of Invasive Species

New York State's lands and waters are at risk due to the harmful effects of invasive species, which are any species that are non-native to a local ecosystem whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.¹ Harmful invasive plants, animals, and pathogens threaten the ecological, economic, and public well-being of the state. These species pose a significant threat to the region given the number of pathways for transmission, including highways, canals, public trails, and a multitude of recreational access points. Each year new invasive species are

¹ As defined by 6 NYCRR Part 575.2

discovered in the CR-PRISM that threaten to supplant native species, degrade natural communities, and challenge water quality, forest sustainability, and agricultural production.

New York's Regional Approach to Invasive Species

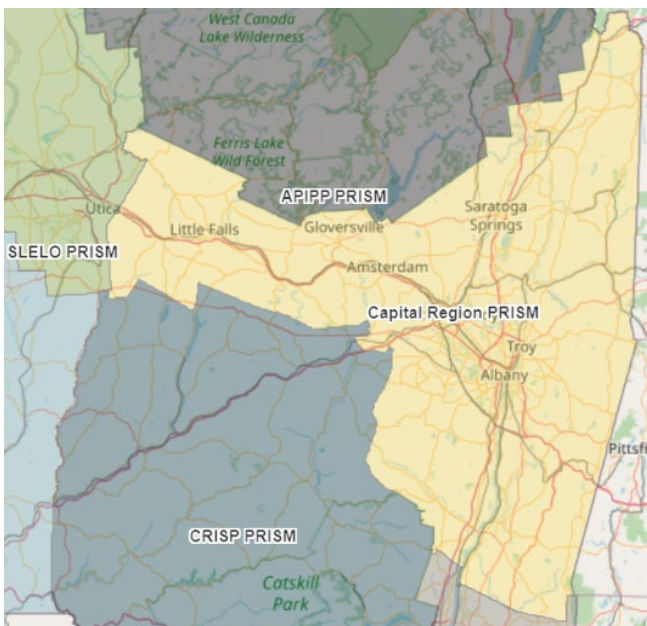
New York State has long taken a multifaceted and integrated approach to addressing the challenges presented by invasive species. This approach is outlined in the NYS Invasive Species Comprehensive Management Plan (ISCMP) of 2018, which has an overarching goal to, “minimize the introduction, establishment, proliferation, and negative impacts caused by invasive species.”

Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) are key to New York's integrated approach to managing invasive species. In 2005, the NYS Invasive Species Task Force sent a report to the Governor and legislature that recommended the state build and fund a network of partnerships to address invasive species. By 2013, the NYSDEC had contracted the administration of eight PRISMs across the state. The primary goal of the PRISM network is to minimize the harm caused by invasive species on New York's environment and economy and the impact on the health and well-being of the state's citizens. The PRISMs are designed to work collaboratively in a partnership with community-based entities to address invasive species through research, planning, coordination, early detection, response, outreach, and training of volunteers.

The Capital Region PRISM

The CCE of Saratoga County has led the CR-PRISM, formerly known as the Capital/Mohawk PRISM, since 2007 as an unfunded entity. Volunteers began to discuss and share the efforts that partner organizations were involved in throughout the eleven-county area regarding invasive species education and outreach, prevention, detection, and response. In 2013, the CCE of Saratoga County became the official host for the CR-PRISM with partial funding from the NYSDEC and then fully funded from 2018 to present.

Capital Region PRISM Geography



The CR-PRISM encompasses counties between the Adirondack and Catskill Parks covering nearly 5,000 square miles in the Greater Capital Region, including the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys. The PRISM includes all of Albany, Columbia, Montgomery, Rensselaer, and Schenectady, and parts of Herkimer, Fulton, Greene, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties.

The CR-PRISM is at the crossroads of several terrestrial and aquatic pathways of spread for invasive species, including major highway corridors, rail networks, large river systems, and three artificial canals. Land transportation corridors include three interstate highways (I-90, I-87, I-88) and numerous state routes, as well as

major rail lines moving people and freight, including the 9th busiest Amtrak station in the US. Along the Hudson River, the Port of Albany, the Port of Troy, and the Port of Catskill are available to ocean-going cargo ships. The Mohawk River represents a major vector for both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species due to a history of development and connectivity to the Great Lakes watershed. The Erie, Champlain, and Feeder canals also cross the region, acting as additional pathways for invasive species by connecting different watershed systems.

Centrally located in the state, the CR-PRISM borders four other PRISMs. Of particular concern is the CR-PRISM's location next to two of New York's natural treasures. The northern counties of the PRISM are shared with the Adirondack PRISM, where Greene County is shared with Catskill Region Invasive Species Program. To the south is the Lower Hudson PRISM and to the west is the Saint Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario PRISM. The CR-PRISM's continued coordination with neighboring PRISM partnerships is essential for slowing the spread of invasive species in the state.

The CR-PRISM is home to more than one million people, 83% of whom live in Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties. The top four agricultural counties in the region are Washington, Columbia, Saratoga, and Montgomery counties.

Natural Resources in the CR-PRISM Region

The CR-PRISM region is rich in natural resources. Approximately 1.5 million acres are forest cover, another 800,000 acres are working farmland, and the remaining 850,000 acres are developed, roadways, or waterbodies. **[NOTE from Kris: These are estimates. A request was made for a more detailed description of land use/land cover in the PRISM region, the NYNHP will provide stats that will be updated when received].** The CR-PRISM is home to five major New York ecoregions which include the Mohawk Valley, Hudson Valley, Rensselaer Plateau, Glaciated Low Allegheny Plateau, and the Taconic Foothills.

The diversity of habitat in these critical ecological regions supports 55 rare, 74 threatened, and 166 endangered plant species, according to the New York Flora Atlas. The CR-PRISM is also home to a number of rare and endangered animal species, such as the Karner blue butterfly and short-eared owl; threatened species, like the Blanding's turtle and northern harrier; and species of special concern including the southern leopard frog and osprey. Protecting existing habitats and providing ecological connectivity is imperative to safeguarding all species in the region.

The CR-PRISM contains approximately 170,000 acres of land that are protected from development. These parcels are owned by New York State, local governments, and private conservation organizations. Most of these are state lands, including 12 New York State Parks and 41 State Forests. New York has 55 different forest types and 94 tree species which are well-represented throughout the CR-PRISM.

CR-PRISM Structure

The CR-PRISM is supported by a full-time Terrestrial Coordinator, Aquatic Program Manager, Education and Outreach Coordinator, and Lead Coordinator. Seasonal staff include watercraft inspection stewards, field technicians, and interns from partner colleges in the region.

The CR-PRISM staff works closely with state and local agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and community scientists throughout the Greater Capital Region to implement the vision, mission, and goals of the strategic plan. Partners participate in the PRISM by attending educational programs or workshops; collaborating on invasive species surveys, removal, or restoration projects; and attending CR-PRISM partner meetings. They are also integral members of PRISM committees and work groups.

The Steering Committee supports the CR-PRISM with strategic advice on conservation-based practices and annual work plans. In addition, members review and select Request for Proposals (RFPs) submitted from the partnership to conduct invasive species efforts that are tied to the CR-PRISM's strategic plan. Selected projects are then forwarded to the NYSDEC for final approval. The Steering Committee assists in other major initiatives as needed. The committee meets several times a year and is made up of a diverse set of natural resource managers, who also serve on PRISM sub-committees.

Partners on the PRISM's Conservation subcommittee participate in annual reviews of the terrestrial invasive species Tier List and seasonal work plan. The committee has vetted and selected Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) and has assisted in designating a local Invasive Species Prevention Zone (ISPZ). Other work includes reviewing survey, treatment, and management plan templates used by staff and partners.

The PRISM's Aquatics subcommittee has participated in annual reviews to the aquatic invasive species Tier List and work plan. Priority aquatic species have been identified for early detection surveys. The Aquatics subcommittee has assisted in reviewing the Priority Waterbodies (PWBs) list to focus aquatic invasive species work in the region.

The Education and Outreach subcommittee compiles and prioritizes existing educational and curriculum materials for use within the PRISM region, and develops new materials as needed. The committee also helps plan and execute the annual New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week.

CR-PRISM Approach

The CR-PRISM utilizes a Framework for Response to help natural resource managers make informed decisions that result in more successful outcomes. The Framework is based on integrated pest management, which is an adaptive ecosystem-based approach, with the goal of maximizing effective response efforts while minimizing negative environmental, economic, and social impacts from invasive species. Using the Framework, the PRISM prioritizes prevention, detection, and control projects using multiple response options to prevent, eradicate, contain, or suppress high-threat populations. The current Framework for Response is available on the [CR-PRISM website](#).

Prioritizing Species using Tiers

The CR-PRISM prioritizes high-threat invasive species with low populations using the Tier Ranking System developed in conjunction with the NY Natural Heritage Program. Tier classifications and threat impact assessments assist in prioritizing the response to new invasive species reports. The current Capital Region Tier List is available on the [CR-PRISM website](#).

- Tier 1 species are not yet present in the region. Survey efforts focus on early detection of these species, especially those that have been confirmed within 20 miles of the PRISM boundary.
- Tier 2 species are present in low abundance and are possible eradication candidates. These are a high-priority target during surveys. PRISM staff and partners can use tools provided by iMapInvasives to determine if eradication of a specific Tier 2 population is feasible.
- High threat Tier 3 and 4 species are identified and evaluated for management if their presence is encroaching on uninvaded and/or ecologically significant habitats. Actions regarding Tier 3 and 4 species are dependent on location and impact on species of special concern. These management actions are often suppression or exclusion efforts.

Priority Locations in the Capital Region

The CR-PRISM focuses on prevention, detection, and response actions within PCAs and PWBs. In 2019, CR-PRISM staff began identifying priority sites for response using scientific models that were reviewed by the PRISM's Conservation and Aquatic Subcommittees. These sites have high ecological significance, are at greater risk of invasion, and/or have cultural and social significance. ISPZs are large areas identified with zero or low levels of invasive species that fall within the PCA and PWB classification. These regions are prioritized for response actions with a greater frequency. As of 2021, there were 26 Priority Conservation Areas and 22 Priority Waterbodies.

"I think the Capital Region PRISM is a really valuable organization, there's nobody doing anything like it. If the PRISM wasn't around, there would be a lot less invasive species management" County Partner

Capital Region PRISM

CORE PLAN: VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

VISION

To cultivate a region in which partners work together to address the harmful impacts associated with invasive species to protect its lands and waters, biodiversity, economy, and quality of life.

MISSION

Our mission is to prevent, detect, and respond to harmful invasive species in the PRISM Region through collaboration, resource sharing, strategic messaging, and education.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, PRIORITY ACTIONS

The CR-PRISM has set five goals to mitigate the harmful effects of invasive species to the public while protecting critical ecological and economic resources of the region. The goals, objectives, and actions of the CR-PRISM five-year strategic plan will be implemented collaboratively among the CR-PRISM staff and partners.

PARTNERSHIP

Goal 1: Coordinate and collaborate with partners to grow and strengthen regional capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to invasive species.

CR-PRISM understands that the nature and complexity of invasive species prevention and management are too great for one single entity to solve. Partners and communities are key to an effective framework of response. Partnerships are the foundation of the CR-PRISM.

"Our ability to address invasive species is magnified because we work with the CR-PRISM, and I think their ability to address invasive species increases when they work with us."

State Partner

"We all work together to keep our eyes and ears open. The PRISM is the glue that holds other agencies together."

Research Partner

Objective 1.1: Invest in the PRISM partnership and other local networks to facilitate the sharing of information, resources, and expertise across the region.

Priority Actions

- *Provide opportunities for sharing information among partners through different communication channels, annual partner meetings, and topical meetings*
- *Strategically recruit new partners to reach new audiences and locations in the PRISM region*
- *Develop a mechanism for partners to report on their invasive species work, such as an annual survey*
- *Use a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to provide financial assistance for partners to implement CR-PRISM goals and objectives*

Objective 1.2: Coordinate and collaborate with statewide and regional partners on invasive species issues that cross PRISM boundaries.

Priority Actions

- *Work collaboratively to respond to statewide and local high threat invasive species issues*
- *Support, share, and provide opportunities for research with partner networks when appropriate*
- *Coordinate with other PRISMs and related agencies such as monthly PRISM calls, quarterly PRISM leader and coordinator meetings, workgroups*
- *Participate in biannual invasive species summit organized by NY's Invasive Species Advisory Council*

Objective 1.3: Manage the partnership, CR-PRISM operations, and complete contract deliverables.

Priority Actions

- *Evaluate, adapt, and revise the CR-PRISM operational guidelines/bylaws, and strategic plan*
- *Update standard operating procedures to maintain institutional memory*
- *Craft an annual work plan in consultation with the Invasive Species Coordination Section and submit all required reports to NYSDEC*
- *Celebrate successes and lessons learned in the annual report*
- *Report all survey and treatment data in the New York State Invasive Species Data Base (iMapInvasives)*
- *Review and update partnership agreement, clarifying roles and responsibilities of PRISM partners, Steering Committee, subcommittees, and working groups*

PREVENT

Goal 2: Minimize the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species into new areas.

Prevention is the leading management strategy and the most cost-effective measure when addressing invasive species. Prevention includes limiting the spread of existing invasive species and new ones approaching the region. CR-PRISM staff and partners implement active prevention measures and conduct prevention outreach to develop public awareness about the harm caused by invasive species and how to control their spread.

"My top concern for invasive species is education and outreach for spread prevention."

Regional Partner

Objective 2.1: Actively reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species through a region-wide Watercraft Inspection Steward Program.

Priority actions:

- *Recruit, train, and deploy watercraft inspection stewards to prevent and detect aquatic invasive species from spreading across the region while promoting behavioral change messaging such as 'Clean, Drain, Dry'*
- *Submit boat steward data via the Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Application and annual report*

Objective 2.2: Implement targeted prevention education for priority pathways of invasive species spread.

Priority actions:

- *Identify invasive species spread pathways and audiences that can be addressed through targeted education efforts and actions, such as guidelines for clean fill and materials*
- *Promote and assist partners with the creation of spread-prevention infrastructure and or materials to address specific pathways of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species spread such as boot brush stations*

Objective 2.3: Collaboratively address invasive species prevention with partners.

Priority actions:

- *Identify and engage local partners with prevention actions as needed relating to species of concern through event horizon scanning and related vectors within the CR-PRISM*
- *Identify and collaboratively work with statewide partners and other PRISMs to identify and/or address vectors beyond the CR-PRISM geography*

Objective 2.4: Anticipate new introductions and reassess current species of concern through event horizon scanning.

Priority actions:

- *Annually update the CR-PRISM's tier list and assist in revision to the statewide tier list*
- *Evaluate sleeper species that are more likely to spread as the climate changes*
- *Inform partners and the public about new and emerging species of concern using available tools*

DETECT AND MONITOR

Goal 3: Detect and monitor harmful invasives species approaching and affecting the PRISM Region.

Detection and monitoring actions are critical to slowing the spread of invasive species and managing impacts. Early detection of new infestations is a cost-effective management strategy when paired with rapid response, providing the best opportunity to address harmful invasive species before they cause considerable damage to the environment.

"If a harmful invasive species is not detected, we can't respond, and if we can't respond quickly, we may lose the opportunity to respond effectively."

State Partner

Objective 3.1 Make effective use of limited resources by monitoring priority species and locations.

Priority Actions

- *Reevaluate natural areas for monitoring by updating and using prioritization models such as CR-PRISM Priority Waterbodies (PWB), Priority Conservation Areas (PCA), and other statewide resources*
- *Monitor priority pathways and highly probable areas for harmful invasive species*
- *Monitor for species by tier classification*
- *Explore and adopt new technologies for early detections over large areas and time such as eDNA, remote sensing and photo documentation, when appropriate*

Objective 3.2: Engage partners and the community in detecting and monitoring high-priority invasive species.

Priority Actions

- *Identify prime audiences with the capacity to monitor high-priority species and locations*
- *Train and support partners, community scientists, and subcontractors to conduct surveys and document findings using CR-PRISM templates*

Objective 3.3: Recruit and train volunteers to collect data on invasive species using iMapInvasives database.

Priority Actions

- *Recruit and train new and existing volunteer networks and volunteers of PRISM partners*
- *Continue, expand, and develop volunteer network programs that use iMapInvasives, such as spotted lanternfly grids and hemlock hunters*
- *Train partners to provide iMapInvasives trainings*

RESPOND

Goal 4: Mitigate ecological and economic impacts of priority invasive species using an integrated pest management approach.

Once a harmful invasive species is detected, CR-PRISM staff and partners determine how to respond. Invasive species response is multi-faceted and requires continued effort. The CR-PRISM staff uses an integrated pest management-based framework to respond to infestations; this is a tool to assess threats, risk, resource value, and removal feasibility to select the best response. Responses might include eradication, containment, suppression, monitoring, or no action. When an infestation is removed, post-treatment monitoring is used to evaluate success and restoration practices used to prevent

"The CR-PRISM helps us decide if a management approach is worth our time." County Partner

"They help us understand what types of invasives we've got, prioritize what to address first, schedule the best time of year to manage them, and use best management practices for dealing with plants after removal." Land Trust Partner

Objective 4.1: Make effective use of limited resources by prioritizing responses to invasive species infestations.

Priority Actions

- *Use the framework of response/Integrated Pest Management approach to identify, delineate, and select management actions for high-priority species including post treatment actions, restoration, and when appropriate, research*
- *Deploy a response team that can quickly and effectively manage high-priority infestations*
- *Monitor known treatment sites to evaluate management effectiveness*
- *Coordinate access to private and public lands and waters for response actions*

Objective 4.2: Consult with partners to share information and resources to effectively respond to priority invasive species.

Priority Actions

- *Assist partners to develop programs for long-term invasive species management using the CR-PRISM's framework of response and iMapInvasives*
- *Engage PRISM partners to build rapid response capacity throughout the PRISM region*
- *Host management workshops*
- *Enhance and share best management practices and guidelines as needed*
- *Facilitate equipment sharing among partners*

Objective 4.3: Restore sites following invasive species management and control efforts as needed.

- *Evaluate and conduct restoration actions in areas vulnerable to climate shifts*
- *Provide guidance for restoration practices as requested*

Objective 4.4: Conduct and support research.

- *Assist statewide partners and supporting agencies with research as requested, as time permits*

OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND EDUCATION

Goal 5: Build engaged communities that understand, support, and invest in the PRISM's work to prevent, detect, and respond to harmful invasive species in the Capital Region.

Education and outreach strategies are needed to reduce the harmful impacts of invasive species in the region. Many people are not aware of the harm caused by invasive species; others may be motivated to work on invasive species but may be overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. CR-PRISM staff seek to empower people through understanding the CR-PRISM approach to invasive species, their role in invasive species prevention, detection, and response, and providing resources for those who want to be more involved.

"I can tell you that the general public isn't aware of invasive species. Citizens and businesses contribute to the problem even though they don't need to." Municipal Partner

"We need universal and consistent messaging across the state."

ounty Partner

Objective 5.1: Use consistent messaging on preventing, monitoring, and responding to invasive species.

Priority Actions

- *Identify priority audiences and assess information needs and communication preferences*
- *Identify and meet PRISM outreach and communication needs consistent with statewide approaches*
- *Highlight successes in invasive species work*
- *Develop empowering messages that incorporate concepts about co-existing with invasive species*
- *Develop and adopt new messaging campaigns as appropriate, especially those that are relevant a wide range of people, such as 'Clean, Drain, Dry,' 'Play, Clean, Go,' and 'Pledge to Protect'*

Objective 5.2: Use effective communication channels and products to share invasive species information with different audiences.

Priority Actions

- *Maintain and enhance a website that serves as a central resource and repository for the Capital Region that complements existing statewide resources like the NY Invasive Species Clearinghouse*
- *Construct and share annual report with partnership and new members*
- *Deliver CR-PRISM quarterly newsletter, factsheets, email blast, social media outlets etc.*
- *Explore new communication channels to reach new audiences as identified*
- *Participate in informal tabling events with broad impacts*

Objective 5.3: Collaborate and promote programs and events that engage specific audiences in the PRISM's work to prevent, detect, and respond to harmful invasive species in the PRISM Region.

Priority Actions

- *Reach out to specific audiences for initial awareness and training, such as Master Gardeners, academic institutions, and local clubs*
- *Align education events with the interests of priority audiences*
- *Create programs for specific audiences such as land trusts, lake associations, and municipalities*
- *Promote Invasive Species Awareness Week and collaborate on events with partners*

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The strategic plan serves as a tool for the CR-PRISM staff and partners to help guide invasive species initiatives. It will be most useful if staff and partners regularly engage with the plan and use it to communicate actions and outcomes. For CR-PRISM staff, this plan will serve as a guide for developing annual work plans and reporting. Partners can utilize the strategic plan to describe how their work on invasive species aligns with the CR-PRISM mission.

Capital Region PRISM Annual Report

The CR-PRISM annual report is organized by goal to summarize the work PRISM staff has executed to achieve its strategic goals and fulfill its contractual obligations with the NYSDEC. Future annual reports will be reframed around the new goals: Partnership, Prevention, Detection, Response, and Outreach. The report will also highlight specific invasive species projects that demonstrate program impact across the goals.

Capital Region PRISM Annual Work Plan

Each year, the CR-PRISM staff works with the Steering Committee and NYSDEC Invasive Species Coordinate Section to identify appropriate actions to implement the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. This annual planning process provides an opportunity to re-evaluate priorities as circumstances evolve and change.

Tracking Progress and Impact

The CR-PRISM staff maintain an internal system to track the objectives and actions completed throughout the year, including feedback from partners. Staff will work with NYSDEC and partners to identify a subset of those results that measure progress toward the goals and the vision and could be highlighted in the annual report to show our collective impact.

Communicating throughout the Year

In addition to assisting CR-PRISM staff in their planning process, the design of the strategic plan provides a framework for consistent reporting and communication with partners. The work of the PRISM and its partners is comprehensive and highly variable, resulting in numerous and complex metrics. The goals and objectives in the plan provide a template to emphasize the major efforts of the PRISM in minimizing the impact of harmful invasive species in the region and showcase their results in a clear and effective manner.

APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A working group comprised of the CR-PRISM staff and Steering Committee created the strategic plan to guide the PRISM’s work for the next five years. Consultant Karen Strong of Strong Outcomes, LLC led the staff and committee through the process shown in Figure C1.



FIGURE C1. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS.

Plan to Plan

The first step was to define the purpose, parameters, and audience of the plan, which informed the plan’s structure and overall content. In May 2022, the CR-PRISM staff and Steering Committee identified the following purposes of the strategic plan:

- Administer the deliverables of the CR-PRISM program and contract
- Help staff prioritize actions and streamline annual work planning process
- Serve as a resource for partners to prioritize their work on invasive species
- Create a document applicable to a wide range of people
- Leverage additional funding
- Help partners communicate the PRISM’s work
- Be flexible and adaptable

Learn and Validate

The next phase of the process focused on stakeholder outreach and documenting the CR-PRISM’s accomplishments from 2018-2022.

Stakeholder Outreach

Because PRISM partners are an integral part of our work, it was imperative to include them in the planning process. Stakeholder outreach was used to obtain feedback on the CR-PRISM’s work, elicit partner motivations for participating in PRISM programs, assess partner needs, and solicit and test ideas. In June and July of 2022, 93 partners provided input into the plan through interviews and surveys. A total of 20 interviews were conducted by the consultant and CR-PRISM staff, and 73 people provided their feedback through the survey.

Strategic Accomplishments

The CR-PRISM’s 2018-2022 strategic plan sets six goals: partnerships, prevention, early detection and monitoring, education and outreach, control, management and restoration, and information management and communication. The report describes progress and major accomplishments for each goal.

Since 2018, the Capital Region PRISM has:

- Increased the number of partners by 19% each year.

- Improved capacity of local partners for invasive species work through technical and financial support.
- Built CR-PRISM capacity through regional collaboration, such as with other PRISMs and participation in regional and statewide task forces.
- Prevented the spread of aquatic invasive species through the Watercraft Inspection Steward Program. Since 2018, 67 stewards have inspected 51,367 watercraft at 39 sites throughout the region, resulting in 1,952 aquatic invasives intercepted. Stewards shared 'Clean, Drain, Dry' messaging with 80,303 recreational boaters.
- Increased early detection capacity, especially for aquatic invasive species.
- Held nearly 300 educational events for 10,168 people, including lectures, in-field demonstrations, and hands on training involving more technical instruction.
- Prioritized invasive species monitoring and management of 30 high-threat species and in 26 priority conservation areas and 22 priority waterbodies.
- Created frameworks to support CR-PRISM and partner responses to new invasive species reports, including tools, templates, and best management practices.
- Created systems for documenting standard operating procedures and maintaining records.

Process the Data

The CR-PRISM received feedback from over 90 partners and stakeholders, which is summarized in a stakeholder report available upon request. A brief overview of the results:

- The CR-PRISM is valued for many reasons, including monitoring, funding, and providing educational materials.
- Technical and financial assistance provided by the CR-PRISM has raised the capacity to address invasive species among partners who manage land and water resources.
- 73% of survey respondents expressed invasive species are a high or essential priority for their organizations.
- Ecological and recreational impacts are primary reasons partners address invasive species
- Survey respondents are more actively involved in spread prevention education, monitoring, and collaboration than response efforts.
- Partners participate in the PRISM through workshops, collaborating on monitoring and/or management projects, and attending partner meetings.
- Current and potential partners said more funding would help increase their capacity for addressing invasive species.
- Current partners reported that networking and highlighting success stories, sharing best management practices and recent research are important along with the need for greater capacity.

Questions that developed from the stakeholder report included:

- What is the unique role of the PRISM because of its geography?
- How to prioritize education and outreach?
- How do we best communicate the complex messages about invasive species while helping people to feel empowered and not hopeless?
- How can the PRISM support more invasive species prevention, monitoring, and management?
- How can the PRISM build and leverage the partnership?

Develop the Plan

The staff, Steering Committee, and selected strategic partners participated in two virtual strategic planning retreats that identified a vision, crafted benchmarks, and generated an outline of the strategic plan's goals and potential actions. The ideas generated in these retreats, along with the partner survey and interview results, were crafted into a vision, mission, goals, objectives, and priority actions. A draft plan was created based on the outline developed with staff and committee input. Following a review from the CR-PRISM staff and Steering Committee, the final plan was presented to the partnership at the winter 2022 CR-PRISM Partner Meeting.