

Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species
Standard Operating Procedures

I. Regional Panel

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (Panel) is a panel of individuals representing state and federal agencies, organizations, industries, associations, and private citizens with authorities to and/or interest in addressing non-native and/or invasive species issues. The Panel is established under the authority of the National Invasive Species Act of 1996, which reauthorized the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (NANPCA). The Panel serves as an advisory body and reports to the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) established under the authority of the NANPCA.

II. Membership

All seats on the Panel must be reviewed and approved by the ANSTF.

Standing Members

Standing members of the Panel include state fish and wildlife management agencies from the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida; federal agencies including the US Environmental Protection Agency, the National Park Service, Food and Drug Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Coast Guard, US Geological Survey, US Navy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers; Sea Grant; and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Representatives to the Panel are selected by the above agencies and serve until replaced by the agencies. Upon the resignation of a representative of a Standing Member, the agency of that representative will be asked to provide a replacement.

Non-standing Members

All members other than Standing Members will be selected and approved by the Panel. Representatives from identified organizations will be selected by their respective organizations and will serve until the representative or the organization resigns their seat. Upon resignation of a representative of a Non-standing Member, the Panel will have the opportunity to consider other organizations to hold a seat as a Non-standing Member. Organization(s) selected to hold a Non-standing member seat will be asked to provide a representative. Non-standing Members will be appointed for a period of two (2) years, at which time organizations holding Non-Standing Member seats may be replaced. If no specific action is taken, organizations holding Non-Standing Members seats will continue to serve until asked to resign.

Alternates

Any Standing or Non-standing Member may designate an alternate to serve on the Panel in the place of the named member. Agencies and organizations are discouraged from naming a representative to the Panel who cannot routinely participate in Panel meetings and activities. Alternates may be identified on a case-by-case basis by members who are unable to attend a specific meeting, after which time the alternate designation expires.

III. Meeting Procedures

Regional Panel Meetings

The Panel will meet at least twice in a calendar year. A notification of meetings will be provided to all members and the Executive Secretary of the ANSTF at least four (4) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the meeting. The regional panels of the ANSTF are authorized under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires that all meetings must be published in the *Federal Register* to allow ample time for other agencies/organizations and members of the public to arrange to attend the meetings.

Committee/Work Group Meetings

Committees and Work Groups of the Panel may call meetings to address Committee or Work Group issues or activities, contingent upon availability of funds and staff support. In addition, Committees and Work Groups may use telephone conference calls, set up by Panel staff, to conduct business. Four-week notification of Committee or Work Group meetings is not required; nor is notification in the *Federal Register*.

Quorum

A quorum will be established upon the attendance of a simple majority of members at a meeting of the Panel that has been officially called. The Panel will not conduct official business unless a quorum of members is present.

Voting Procedures

Each member, including Standing and Non-standing Members, will have voting privileges. The Panel will strive to make decisions by consensus; however, there will be times when voting will be necessary. Votes will be decided upon a simple majority of members present at any Panel meeting that has been officially called. As noted above, votes will not be official in the absence of a quorum of members. Any member may request a roll call, voice vote. If there are dissenting votes on an issue, a minority report can be filed and attached to the minutes of the meeting. Voting, if determined to be necessary, can be conducted intersessionally via e-mail.

IV. Officers

Panel Chair

A Chair of the Panel will be elected from among Panel members, including Standing and Non-standing Members. The Chair will be responsible for conducting all meetings of the Panel. The Chair will serve a two-year term, after which time an election will be held by the Panel to select a new Chair.

Panel Vice-chair

A Vice-chair of the Panel will be elected from among the Panel members, including Standing and Non-standing members. The Vice-chair will be responsible for conducting meetings of the Panel in the absence of the Chair. The Vice-chair will serve a two-year term after which he or she may be elevated to the Chair upon formal election by the Panel. At that time, the Panel will elect a new Vice-chair.

V. Committees and Work Groups

Committees

Steering Committee – A Steering Committee will be established, comprised of six (6) members of the Panel. The Chair, Vice-chair, and recent past Chair will be standing members of the Steering Committee. The standing members will confer on the selection of the remaining three Steering Committee seats.

The Steering Committee will address administrative issues, assist in development of meeting logistics and agendas, initiate discussions regarding important issues to be addressed by the Panel, among other interim activities. The Steering Committee will not make decisions independent of the full Panel, either intersessionally or during meetings.

Others - The Panel may establish standing and ad hoc committees to address specific tasks. Membership on all committees will be from among members of the Panel.

Work Groups

The Panel may establish standing and *ad hoc* work groups to address specific tasks. Membership on Work Groups will be from among members of the Panel and other individuals with specific expertise who are willing and able to serve.

Work Groups will be charged with developing recommendations, creating documents, and addressing a wide range of issue-specific activities. All Work Group decisions/products must be presented to the Panel for ratification.

VI. Public Attendance

All meetings of the Panel will be open to the public. Members of the public attending Panel meetings will be given an opportunity to address the Panel regarding issues pertinent to invasive species. Members of the public not able to attend meetings of the Panel are allowed to provide the Panel with testimony in writing prior to any officially called meeting of the Panel. Any such written correspondence will be read into the official record of the meeting. Lengthy documents will be referenced in the record and not read.

VII. Annual Report

The Panel will develop an annual report to be submitted to the ANSTF no later than 90 days after December 31 of each year. The report will provide information regarding the activities, decisions, and recommendations of the Panel that took place during the subject year.

VIII. Amending the Standard Operating Procedures

Any amendments or changes to the Standard Operating Procedures will require a two-thirds majority vote of members present at an officially called Panel meeting.