



Stopping the Spread: An Aquatic Invasive Response Plan for the Mid-Atlantic

The arrival of the long-feared zebra mussel at the mouth of the Susquehanna River underscores the need for the Mid-Atlantic states to address the environmental and economic threats posed by invasive non-native species. Environmental invaders can cause billions of dollars in infrastructure damage, economic losses due to competition with native plants and animals, and negative impacts on industries like boating and fishing.

Preventing introductions of invasive species is key, but managers should also be prepared to take action when prevention measures fail. To foster an effective response to aquatic invasive species introductions, Maryland Sea Grant worked with its partners to produce *Rapid Response Planning for Aquatic Invasive Species*.

The rapid response plan employs Incident Command System (ICS), a response framework best known for its application to disasters like wildfires and oil spills. ICS provides a common language and a step-by-step approach to organizing response efforts. It helps individuals from various agencies and jurisdictions work together as a well-coordinated unit. Use of ICS for invasive species incidents — a relatively new endeavor — is backed by the congressionally mandated Aquatic Nuisance Species Taskforce.

The Rapid Response Plan is available in two formats: (1) *A Template* and (2) *A Maryland Example*.

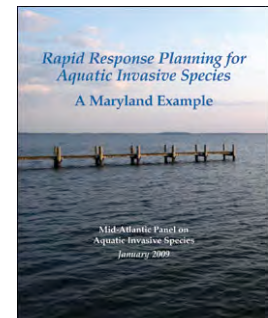
The template is available as a Microsoft Word document to encourage states in the Mid-Atlantic and beyond to adapt the plan to their specific needs while maintaining the value of a common framework across the region.

Maryland was the first state to complete the template and its resulting plan is available for use as an example.

Anyone may download both the template and Maryland example at www.mdsgr.umd.edu/rapidresponse. The state of Delaware has also used the template and is currently finalizing its plan.

Major components of the plan include:

- Overview of Rapid Response Effort Flowchart. This flowchart provides a step-by-step view of the entire Rapid Response effort.
- Operational Planning “P.” Developed by the United States Coast Guard, the Planning “P” is a visual representation of the Incident Command System planning process. The Rapid Response Procedure is based upon the steps outlined in the Planning “P.”
- Decision Tree for When to Take Action on Aquatic Invasive Species. Deciding whether to act on an invasive species incident is a crucial component of any Rapid Response Plan. This tree breaks the decision down into three steps.
- Aquatic Invasive Species Sighting Report Form. Gathering critical information on an invasive species sighting is the first step to an effective response. This form streamlines the information-gathering process.
- Incident Command System (ICS) Job Descriptions. ICS position titles enable responders to speak a common language to avoid the confusion that may come when different agencies, with differences in terminology, all respond to the same aquatic invasive species incident. These descriptions help to ensure that those charged with responding to an incident clearly understand their responsibilities.



Maryland Sea Grant, with funding from NOAA’s National Sea Grant Office, developed the plan with the Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species and with support from the Chesapeake Bay Field Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chesapeake Bay Program.