

Invasive Species

What is an invasive species?

An invasive species is an exotic or nonnative species whose introduction and establishment causes, or may cause, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. [Minn. Stat. § 18G.02](#), subd. 15. Invasives can be mammals, fish, insects, plants, viruses, pathogens, or other organisms.

How are invasives classified?

For regulatory purposes, state agencies classify invasives as terrestrial or aquatic. Terrestrial invasive species inhabit land; aquatic plants and animals live in the water. Invasive species are further classified by state agencies depending on various factors such as prevalence in the environment and risk to native species and the state’s economy. For example, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), in consultation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other government, academic, and industry partners, classifies invasive plant pests as regulated or nonregulated. MDA focuses its efforts on the species that pose the largest anticipated threat to the state’s economy and environment.

The DNR classifies nonnative species into four categories for purposes of regulation: (1) prohibited (which cannot be possessed, imported, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or introduced, except under certain exceptions); (2) regulated (which cannot be introduced, except under certain exceptions); (3) unlisted; and (4) unregulated.

What are some examples?

Terrestrial invasive species include garlic mustard, buckthorn, emerald ash borer, and gypsy moths. Aquatic invasive species include zebra mussels, Asian carp, and Eurasian watermilfoil.

Which agencies regulate invasives?

The MDA and the DNR both regulate invasive species and the human activities that may cause their introduction or spread. The following table summarizes the jurisdiction of each agency:

Agency	Jurisdiction	Current Example Species	Authorized Activities
MDA	To prevent or slow the establishment of terrestrial invasives that damage crops, trees, or other plants (Minn. Stat. §18G.01)	Emerald ash borer, soybean rust, gypsy moth, potato cyst nematode	Broad regulatory authority, including the power to treat or order treatment of public or private lands, issue penalties and restrict the intentional or unintentional human movement of invasives and articles that may harbor them
DNR	To prevent and curb the spread of invasive species of	Zebra mussel, Eurasian watermilfoil, Asian	Authority to designate and regulate invasive species and infested waters, including

	aquatic plants and wild animals (Minn. Stat. § 84D.02, subd. 1)	carp	inspections and enforcement of applicable laws including the issuance of penalties
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When does regulatory authority shift from one agency to another?

For invasives that impact crops, trees, or other plants, MDA is responsible for leading initial efforts to exclude or eradicate the species. Once a forest invasive species (e.g., Dutch elm disease or oak wilt) is permanently established in the state, DNR assumes responsibility for leading any ongoing management efforts, particularly on state lands. The agencies determine when conditions warrant a transfer of authority on a species-by-species basis.

What are some examples of the activities the agencies perform?

MDA personnel install and collect invasive species traps; sample fields; inspect imported commodities; treat thousands of forested acres to suppress gypsy moth; investigate reports of invasive species infestation; research and release stingless wasps and other biological agents to control invasive species; inspect nursery plant growers and retailers and firewood retailers; inspect seed for any noxious weed seeds; provide technical assistance to local units of government and others to limit the spread of existing invasive plants; provide information to industry and the general public; inspect imported fruits and vegetables upon request; maintain an Arrest-the-Pest hotline; and implement and enforce quarantines to restrict the movement of invasives and regulated articles such as firewood that may harbor them. MDA also conducts surveys that document the absence of specific pests, which ensures Minnesota plant commodities have access to international markets.

DNR personnel enforce laws and regulations designed to prevent the spread of invasive species; inspect and decontaminate watercrafts entering and leaving public water accesses, primarily at waters that are already designated as infested waters; provide permits, grants, and technical assistance for the management of aquatic plants; manage or control new introductions of invasive species where feasible; work on detecting and monitoring populations of invasive species; and provide educational information to policymakers and the public on invasive species.

Where do funds come from?

The primary source of funding for the DNR’s activities is a \$5 surcharge on the registration of boats and other watercraft (approximately \$1,350,000 annually), a \$2 fee on nonresident fishing licenses (approximately \$400,000 annually), and the state’s general fund. MDA activities are funded primarily by federal grants (variable) and state general fund appropriations (approximately \$967,000 annually). (Appropriations are for the following: gypsy moth, \$320,000; biological control, \$100,000; noxious weeds, \$100,000; invasive detection, survey, and lab, \$447,000.) Nursery and seed inspections are funded entirely by fees assessed on nursery plant growers and retailers and seed labelers.

For more information: For invasive species information and assistance, contact the agencies directly. For legislative matters, contact Colbey Sullivan (agriculture) at 651-296-5047 or Janelle Taylor (natural resources) at 651-296-5039.

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