

FINAL REPORT
of the Unofficial Working Group
on Terrestrial Invasive Plant Species in New Hampshire

Prepared by:

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Report prepared following three working group meetings held in 2025 and 2026
for consideration during calendar year 2026 and the 2027-2028 biennium

Submitted to:

Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives
President of the New Hampshire Senate
Governor of New Hampshire
Executive Council
Commissioners and Directors of Involved State Departments
Dean, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension
Participating Legislators
Participating Stakeholder Organizations

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I. Executive Summary

Terrestrial invasive plant species pose a direct and growing threat to New Hampshire's agricultural lands, timber resources, municipal properties, transportation corridors, utility rights-of-way, state-owned facilities, conservation lands, and wildlife habitat. These species reduce native plant diversity, complicate forest regeneration, increase roadside and municipal maintenance costs, reduce agricultural productivity, and create long-term treatment burdens for landowners and public agencies. The challenge is not limited to one department, one industry, one municipality, or one ecological setting. It is a statewide problem that touches private landowners, farmers, foresters, towns, conservation commissions, land conservancies, utilities, nurseries, transportation officials, state facilities managers, and the general public.

In response to these concerns, Rep. James A. Spillane, Chairman of the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee, convened an unofficial multi-agency, cross-sector working group on terrestrial invasive plant species. The group was intentionally informal. It was not established as a statutory task force, did not create a mandatory reporting structure, and did not seek to impose new duties or new immediate budgetary demands. Its purpose was to bring the right people into the same room, determine what is already known, identify what is not working, and develop practical recommendations that can begin in 2026 while preserving larger statutory and budget questions for the 2027-2028 biennium.

Three working group meetings were conducted. The first meeting, held October 14, 2025, focused on the scope of the problem, existing mapping resources, the need for public education, and the importance of coordinating state agencies, municipalities, agricultural interests, timberland owners, and legislators. The second meeting, held October 21, 2025, included a University of New Hampshire presentation on terrestrial invasive plant distribution, spread, and projected impacts. The third meeting was held in June, 2026, and reviewed a proposed 2026 path forward document. The group refined it based on discussion among the attending legislators, agencies, and stakeholder organizations.

The working group identified education and outreach as the highest-value, lowest-cost area for immediate progress. Participants found that educational materials exist in multiple places and formats, including materials held by state agencies, transportation officials, agricultural experts, and other organizations, but these materials are fragmented, inconsistent, and incomplete from the perspective of a municipality, citizen, or landowner trying to understand what to do. The final recommendation is that the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) should serve as the lead organization for consolidating, organizing, and distributing a practical statewide education package, with participation from the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food (NHDAMF), the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG), municipalities, utilities, the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA), the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC), landowner organizations, nurseries, and retail outlets.

The working group also concluded that communication among agencies is more important than originally understood. A specific example discussed at the third meeting involved disposal of invasive plant material. NHDAMF viewed burning removed invasive plant material as an effective way to prevent spread after removal, but municipal landfill guidance reportedly discouraged invasive materials in burn piles out of concern that the material could spread. Citizens and municipalities were caught between conflicting directions. This example demonstrated that better interdepartmental communication and common educational guidance could produce immediate improvement at little or no cost.

For 2026, the report recommends a practical, low-cost action plan centered on: education and public outreach; promotion of EDDMapS as a reporting and snapshot tool; municipal licensing education; stronger interdepartmental communication; identification and gradual removal of invasive ornamentals from state-owned properties; encouragement of similar municipal review; stakeholder expansion to utilities and additional land managers; and evaluation of a state-negotiated purchasing structure for herbicides and treatment products. These recommendations are designed to avoid new budget demands prior to the next biennium while building a stronger foundation for future action.

For the 2027-2028 biennium, the report recommends consideration of legislation to modernize the statutory State Invasive Species Committee, including legislative membership, broader NH Farm Bureau (NHFB) representation,

and forestry or timberland owner representation. It also recommends administrative review of pesticide and herbicide rules related to restricted invasive species, with legislation in 2027 if rulemaking does not restore the ability of appropriate agencies and licensed applicators to treat restricted as well as prohibited or banned species. Finally, it recommends that the Governor and Executive Council, with appropriate departments, evaluate whether state purchasing power can be leveraged through negotiated supplier contracts for approved municipalities, timberland owners, farms, utilities, and conservation organizations without requiring the State to purchase, store, or distribute chemicals directly.

Summary of Major Recommendations

Recommendation Area	2026 Direction	2027-2028 Consideration
Education and Outreach	UNH Cooperative Extension leads consolidation of consistent materials for agencies, towns, utilities, landowners, retailers, nurseries, and citizens.	Consider future funding only after 2026 needs are defined.
Mapping and Reporting	Promote EDDMapS under the education program as a practical reporting and hotspot snapshot tool.	Evaluate whether improved mapping identifies future technology or funding needs.
Municipal Licensing	NHDAMF Pesticide Division provides clear licensing education; towns encouraged to develop at least one licensed person where practical.	Consider incentives, training support, or statutory changes only if needed.
Communication	Governor and Executive Council encourage agencies to coordinate guidance and work from common materials.	Maintain as ongoing executive and agency practice.
State Properties	Identify and remove invasive ornamentals from state-owned properties in all cases where practical; encourage municipalities to do the same.	Evaluate whether statewide facilities guidance is needed.
Bulk Purchasing	Evaluate a supplier-contract model without state warehousing or sale to individuals.	Potential legislation or contract authority if required.
State Invasive Species Committee	Continue discussion and refine statutory proposal.	Legislation to modernize membership and purpose.
Restricted Species Rules	Administrative review by Pesticide Division and involved agencies.	Legislation in 2027 if rulemaking does not remedy the problem.

II. Purpose, Scope, and Working Group Formation

The unofficial working group was formed because the terrestrial invasive plant issue is not isolated within a single department or industry. It intersects with agriculture, forestry, roadsides, municipal property management, conservation commissions, Conservation Districts, land conservancies, utility corridors, nurseries, retail landscaping practices, state property management, and wildlife habitat. Individual agencies and organizations have existing expertise, but the group found that expertise is often compartmentalized. The result is that citizens and municipalities can receive incomplete or inconsistent guidance depending on where they begin asking questions.

The working group was designed to gather the people and organizations already involved in this issue and to determine what practical steps could be taken without waiting for a future budget cycle. Because the 2027-2028 biennium budget will not be enacted until 2027, the group explicitly avoided recommendations that would demand new expenditures in 2026. The purpose for 2026 is to improve coordination, communication, and public education using existing personnel, existing programs, existing websites, existing mapping tools, and existing stakeholder networks.

The group was also intentionally unofficial. Participants did not recommend creation of a new statutory task force or standing mandated reporting body. The more appropriate approach is voluntary cooperation, with meetings as needed to track progress, resolve problems, and prepare for future legislative or administrative action. This format allows departments and organizations to participate without committing to burdensome reporting requirements or formal bureaucracy.

The working group also recognized that some longer-term issues cannot be solved through voluntary coordination alone. Potential statutory or administrative items include modernization of the State Invasive Species Committee, rule changes concerning restricted invasive plant species, and potential enabling authority for state-negotiated purchasing contracts. These items are more appropriately addressed in the 2027 session or the 2027-2028 biennium after the 2026 low-cost action plan produces better information and clearer priorities.

Working Scope

The scope of the working group was terrestrial invasive plant species. The group did not attempt to address every aquatic invasive species issue, every forest pest, or every invasive animal concern. However, because some agencies and organizations work across these categories, participants recognized that the recommendations for communication, education, and coordination may have broader value beyond terrestrial plants.

The recommendations are framed in two time periods. The first is calendar year 2026, which should be used for low-cost action, public education, mapping promotion, communication, municipal licensing education, and preparation. The second is the 2027-2028 biennium, when legislation, administrative rulemaking, potential funding requests, and purchasing structures can be considered more formally.

Out of Scope for 2026

The working group did not recommend immediate new budget expenditures for 2026. It did not recommend creation of a new statutory task force. It did not recommend mandatory quarterly meetings or mandated reports to the Legislature. It did not recommend that the State warehouse herbicides or sell chemicals directly to the general public. It did not recommend that individuals be added to any discounted herbicide purchase program because of liability and misuse concerns. These limitations were deliberate and should be preserved in any implementation plan.

Instead, the 2026 approach should be practical: use existing agency knowledge, consolidate educational materials, promote existing mapping tools, clarify municipal licensing, improve interdepartmental communication, and evaluate future options.

Education should also include science-based information on prudent herbicide use and the trade-offs involved in controlling invasive plants. Public concern regarding herbicides, particularly glyphosate, can become a barrier without balanced information. UNH Cooperative Extension, supported by NHDAMF and others, should explain appropriate use, non-chemical options, and applicator training.

III. Summary of Attendees, Roles, and Organizations Represented

The working group drew participation from legislators serving on relevant House and Senate committees, state agency personnel, academic researchers, agricultural and timberland organizations, and subject matter experts. The following summary identifies the participants and their roles as reflected in the meeting notes and subsequent corrections.

Attendee	Title / Organization	Working Group Role
Rep. James A. Spillane	State Representative, Rockingham District 2	Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
Rep. Liz Barbour	State Representative, Hillsborough District 35	Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
Rep. William Darby	State Representative, Hillsborough District 11	Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
Rep. Catheryn Harvey	State Representative, Cheshire District 6	Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
Sen. David Watters	New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4	Senate participant in working group discussions
Marc Laurin	New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment	Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
Doug Cygan	New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food	Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
Jasen Stock	New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association	Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
Robert Johnson	New Hampshire Farm Bureau	Agricultural stakeholder representative
Paul Steblein	U.S. Geological Survey, Emeritus	Subject matter expert and federal resource perspective
Ranjit Bawa	University of New Hampshire	Research presenter on distribution, spread, and projected impacts
Dan Bergeron	New Hampshire Fish and Game Department	Departmental representative for wildlife and habitat interests
Michael Layon	Subject Matter Expert, Citizen	Citizen expert participant and contributor to final discussion

Organizations and Interests Represented

The meetings included representation from the New Hampshire House of Representatives, the New Hampshire Senate, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, the University of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association, the New Hampshire Farm Bureau, and subject matter experts with experience in state & federal resource and invasive species issues.

The working group also identified additional organizations that should be involved in implementation even if they were not present at all three meetings. These include the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the New Hampshire Municipal Association, the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, the White Mountain National Forest, ski areas, utilities including Eversource, Unitil, and the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, land trusts, land conservancies, Conservation Districts, nurseries, retail outlets, municipal highway departments, road agents, cemetery departments, conservation commissions, and additional land managers.

IV. Meeting One: October 14, 2025 - Initial Problem Assessment

Attendees

- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Sen. David Watters - New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4; Senate participant in working group discussions
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Robert Johnson - New Hampshire Farm Bureau; Agricultural stakeholder representative

Opening Purpose of the Meeting

The first meeting established the foundation for the working group. Participants discussed the accelerating spread of terrestrial invasive plant species and the lack of a single coordinated statewide strategy for education, reporting, and practical treatment. The purpose was to gather initial perspectives from legislative, agency, agricultural, timberland, and transportation stakeholders and to determine whether a broader plan was warranted.

The meeting began with a shared recognition that terrestrial invasive plants affect multiple sectors simultaneously. An infestation in a transportation corridor may spread to private land. A problem on a timber parcel may impair forest regeneration. Invasive ornamentals planted on public property may normalize continued use by homeowners. A municipality that lacks a licensed applicator may identify a hotspot but lack a practical means to treat it. These examples show why the issue cannot be solved by one department or one stakeholder group acting alone.

Overview of the Problem

Participants identified direct and growing impacts on forestry, agriculture, road systems, municipal lands, and conservation areas. The group recognized that many terrestrial invasive plants are already established in parts of the state and that eradication of every existing occurrence is not realistic. However, containment, early detection, targeted treatment, and public education can still reduce spread and protect higher-value lands and corridors.

The first meeting also identified the importance of public understanding. Many invasive plants go unrecognized as harmful because they were historically planted as desirable ornamental species, and citizens consider them familiar and desirable. Burning Bush is one example discussed later in the process. These species were often sold, planted, and maintained before their invasive impacts were widely understood. Because the public may not immediately recognize these plants as harmful, education must be visually clear, practical, and accessible through channels that citizens already use.

The group noted that transportation corridors can become pathways for spread. Roadside mowing, soil disturbance, drainage work, construction staging, and movement of equipment can all contribute to spread if invasive species are not identified and managed. Similarly, utility corridors and rights-of-way create long linear pathways across multiple municipalities and habitat types. The group therefore recognized the need to involve utilities and other corridor managers in future efforts.

Review of Timberland Owners Study

A University of New Hampshire study commissioned by the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association (NHTOA) was discussed during the first meeting. Participants recognized that timberland owners face serious economic and ecological impacts when invasive plants interfere with forest regeneration. Invasive understory growth can prevent desirable tree seedlings from establishing, increase treatment costs, and reduce future timber value.

The group requested that the author present the findings in full at the next meeting. This decision shaped the second meeting, which included a presentation by Ranjit Bawa of the University of New Hampshire. The request also demonstrated that the working group intended to ground recommendations in research and practical landowner experience, not merely in anecdotal concerns.

Statewide Identification and Mapping Needs

The first meeting included discussion of a long-term vision for a centralized statewide invasive species database. A concept was raised that, ideally, the State could someday support a mobile application allowing citizens to photograph and geolocate invasive plants. Such a tool could increase reporting, improve public engagement, and help agencies and municipalities identify hotspots more efficiently.

However, participants recognized that funding is not currently available for development of a new state-run application or database. The working group therefore treated a state application as a long-term concept rather than a 2026 action item. For 2026, the more practical approach is to improve participation in existing tools and place mapping within a broader education and outreach strategy.

Existing Resource: EDDMapS

NHDAMF identified EDDMapS as an existing regional mapping platform that already includes some New Hampshire invasive species data. The group recognized EDDMapS as a valuable tool, but also noted that usage is inconsistent and that many citizens and municipalities are not familiar with it.

The first meeting consensus was that mapping remains foundational, but that mapping alone is not enough. Citizens must first know how to identify invasive plants, understand why reporting matters, and know what tool to use. Municipal officials must also understand how reporting can support local decision-making and future treatment priorities. For that reason, the final recommendation places EDDMapS under the education and outreach framework rather than creating a separate mapping program.

Access to EDDMapS is here: https://www.eddmaps.org/lists/state.cfm?id=us_nh

UNH Instructions on EDDMapS are here: <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/using-eddmaps-map-invasive-plants>

Education and Public Awareness

Consensus was reached that public education is essential to improving identification, reporting, and treatment. The group identified education as the most realistic immediate action because it can be developed and distributed through existing agencies and stakeholder networks. Education can reach towns through NHMA and NHACC, farmers through agricultural organizations, timberland owners through NHTOA, utility operators through company points of contact, and citizens through municipal newsletters, nurseries, retail outlets, conservation commissions, and agency websites.

The meeting also revealed that educational materials already exist in multiple forms but are dispersed among departments and organizations. This fragmentation creates practical barriers for municipalities and citizens. A town official may not know whether to start with NHDAMF, NHDOT, UNHCE, NHDES, or a conservation organization. A homeowner may need visual identification guidance, a retailer may need an invasive ornamental replacement list, and a road agent may need information on application licensing requirements. A unified framework is therefore necessary.

The education effort should also clarify the appropriate role and authority of municipal Conservation Commissions and Conservation Districts in addressing invasive species. Some local bodies may already understand that invasive

species management falls within their conservation mission, while others may believe it is outside their role. Clear guidance will help local officials and volunteers understand when surveying, reporting, education, coordination, and treatment support are appropriate parts of conservation work.

Findings Resulting from Meeting One

- The terrestrial invasive plant issue affects multiple sectors and requires coordinated response.
- Education and public awareness should be treated as the first and most practical statewide priority.
- Existing mapping tools should be promoted before any new state technology is considered.
- Timberland impacts warrant deeper review through UNH research presentation.
- Municipalities will need clearer guidance to identify, report, and treat local hotspots.
- A future working group effort should include additional land managers and agencies not present at the first meeting.

V. Meeting Two: October 21, 2025 - UNH Study and Sector Impacts

Attendees

- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Sen. David Watters - New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4; Senate participant in working group discussions
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Robert Johnson - New Hampshire Farm Bureau; Agricultural stakeholder representative
- Paul Steblein - U.S. Geological Survey, Emeritus; Subject matter expert and federal resource perspective
- Ranjit Bawa - Assistant Professor, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of New Hampshire College of Life Sciences and Agriculture; research presenter on distribution, spread, and projected impacts

Purpose of Meeting Two

The second meeting was convened to build on the first meeting by reviewing research findings in greater detail and expanding the evidence base for future recommendations. A video display was used to present the University of New Hampshire study discussed during the first meeting. The group also continued discussion of licensing, funding, grants, and stakeholder expansion.

By the second meeting, participants had moved beyond the question of whether terrestrial invasive plants are a problem and toward the question of how New Hampshire can respond practically. The group sought to determine which actions could be pursued immediately, which would require more research, and which could become future legislative or administrative recommendations.

UNH Presentation and Findings

Ranjit Bawa of the University of New Hampshire presented detailed findings on the distribution, spread, and projected impacts of terrestrial invasive plants statewide. The presentation helped connect landowner concerns with broader statewide patterns and reinforced the need for coordinated action. Participants discussed the importance of research that can quantify the size, scope, and economic consequences of invasive species, particularly for woody invasive plants affecting timberland and other working lands.

The UNH presentation provided a research foundation for several subsequent recommendations. First, education should be grounded in accurate identification and treatment guidance. Second, mapping and reporting should support decision-making by identifying hotspots and trends. Third, future legislative or funding requests should be supported by better data, not speculation. Fourth, the working group should continue to involve academic expertise, including UNHCE and additional experts such as Steve Roberge, Extension State Specialist, Forest Resources, UNH Cooperative Extension, and Dave Rousseau, Director, NHDAMF Division of Pesticide Control.

Agricultural Impacts

Agricultural impacts were discussed in terms of increased management costs, reduced productive acreage, and operational burdens on farmers. Invasive plants can encroach on field margins, pasture edges, drainage areas, and unmanaged corners of agricultural land. Farmers may face higher costs for mechanical removal, herbicide treatment, labor, and ongoing monitoring. If invasive plants are allowed to spread unchecked, productive acreage can be reduced and long-term land management becomes more difficult.

Agricultural stakeholders also need reliable information on effective treatment concentrations and methods. The third meeting later clarified that NHDAMF and UNH have jointly developed or studied treatment ratios and recipes that should be included in the education package. This information should be accessible through clear links and practical guidance so farmers can use the lowest effective chemical concentration appropriate for a given species and treatment circumstance.

Timber Industry and Forestry Impacts

The timber industry and forest landowners face a different but equally serious set of challenges. Invasive plants can interfere with forest regeneration by occupying understory space, shading or crowding native seedlings, altering soil and light conditions, and increasing costs before or after timber harvests. Where invasive plants dominate, desirable tree species may fail to regenerate, undermining long-term forest productivity and reducing future timber value.

For timberland owners, treatment decisions often involve large acreage, difficult terrain, and long time horizons. Cost reduction, practical guidance, and access to effective treatment products are therefore significant concerns. These concerns support the later recommendation that forestry and timberland representation be added to the statutory State Invasive Species Committee and that any future bulk purchasing model include approved timberland and forestry stakeholders.

State Highway System Impacts

Transportation corridors were discussed as both impacted areas and vectors for spread. NHDOT must manage roadside vegetation for safety, visibility, drainage, erosion control, and infrastructure preservation. Invasive species can increase maintenance burdens, complicate mowing and roadside operations, and spread along disturbed soils or equipment routes.

Participants recognized that NHDOT already maintains relevant guidance and operational experience, including best management practices for invasive and noxious plant species. However, the educational and operational knowledge held by transportation officials should not remain siloed. It should be incorporated into statewide educational materials so municipalities, utilities, and land managers can benefit from similar guidance.

State highways, municipal roads, and transportation rights-of-way also present a practical opportunity for coordinated action. Municipalities, including Conservation Commissions and road agents, can survey both town and state roads for invasive species and coordinate with NHDOT where joint treatment may control a common infestation more efficiently. NHDOT-owned rail trails and related rights-of-way should also be considered as potential survey and treatment corridors where local partners are already engaged in maintenance or stewardship.

Municipal Impacts

Municipalities face invasive species issues on roadsides, town forests, cemeteries, conservation land, parks, transfer stations, drainage areas, and other public properties. Town highway departments and road agents may be the first to see roadside infestations, while conservation commissions may identify problems on conservation land. Cemetery departments and grounds personnel may encounter invasive ornamentals or spreading plants in maintained landscapes.

The working group identified municipal readiness as a key barrier. Even when a town identifies an invasive hotspot, it may not have a licensed applicator available or may not understand the licensing process. This led to the recommendation that towns be encouraged to maintain at least one licensed employee and/or official volunteer for

pesticide or herbicide application within appropriate departments, where practical. Education should explain costs, training, time requirements, responsibilities, and potential long-term benefits.

For smaller towns with limited paid staff, the working group should also recognize the possibility of an official town volunteer becoming licensed as a non-commercial supervisor pesticide applicator, where lawful and appropriate. Under such a model, the town would need to evaluate insurance, supervision, and responsibility, while the volunteer would complete training and maintain the license. This approach may give small municipalities a practical path to local capacity without requiring a new employee position.

Herbicide Licensing Information

The group identified the need to obtain full details regarding herbicide applicator licensing requirements in New Hampshire. Rachel Maccini, Pesticide Safety Education Program Field Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension, was identified as a contact for licensing information. This item became more significant in the third meeting, where participants emphasized that municipalities need clear, accessible information regarding the licensing process.

Licensing education should not be presented only as a regulatory obligation. It should be framed as a practical capacity-building opportunity for municipalities. A trained municipal employee or official town volunteer can help a town respond to local hotspots in a timely manner, reduce reliance on outside contractors for small treatment needs, and improve local understanding of safe and lawful application practices. Participants also noted that licensed individuals may be able to earn supplemental income after retirement by performing application work as a part-time occupation.

Federal Habitat Cost-Sharing and Grants

The working group discussed whether the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program could support invasive plant control as part of habitat enhancement efforts. Participants also discussed the need to research Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) grants, Forest Service grants, and other federal habitat programs.

The final recommendations do not assume that grant funding will be available for every need. Instead, they recommend that 2026 be used to identify funding sources and determine whether future state matching funds or targeted appropriations might be justified in the 2027-2028 biennium. This preserves fiscal discipline while keeping future opportunities open.

Stakeholder Expansion

The second meeting identified several additional stakeholders that should be brought into future discussions. These included ski areas, the White Mountain National Forest, additional land managers, Steve Roberge, Extension State Specialist, Forest Resources, UNH Cooperative Extension, and Dave Rousseau, Director, NHDAMF Division of Pesticide Control. These stakeholders can provide practical experience with large land areas, recreational landscapes, public education, and treatment practices.

The third meeting later expanded this stakeholder concept further by identifying utilities as important participants. Utilities manage rights-of-way and transmission corridors that cross many towns and habitat types. Their training materials, operational contacts, and treatment practices should be incorporated into the broader education and coordination framework.

State Purchasing Power Investigation

The second meeting identified state purchasing power as a potential area for investigation. Participants discussed whether bulk purchasing of herbicides or treatment products could reduce statewide treatment costs. At that stage, the idea was exploratory. The third meeting refined it into a more specific recommendation: the State should evaluate a negotiated supplier contract model rather than purchasing and storing chemicals directly.

This recommendation became one of the most important long-term opportunities because treatment cost is a major barrier for municipalities, farmers, timberland owners, utilities, and conservation groups. If approved entities can

access lower prices through state-negotiated contracts, the State may be able to increase treatment capacity statewide without major direct spending.

Findings Resulting from Meeting Two

- UNH research supports the conclusion that terrestrial invasive plants have statewide economic and ecological consequences.
- Sector-specific impacts differ, but education, mapping, treatment guidance, and cost reduction benefit all sectors.
- Municipal applicator licensing information is a practical and immediate need.
- Federal habitat cost-sharing and grant opportunities should be evaluated but should not drive the 2026 plan.
- Additional stakeholders, including ski areas, White Mountain National Forest, utilities, and additional experts, should be invited into the process.
- State purchasing power should be investigated as a long-term cost-reduction strategy.

VI. Meeting Three: Final Coordination Meeting - Evaluation of the 2026 Path Forward

Attendees

- Dan Bergeron - Wildlife Division Chief, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department; departmental representative for wildlife and habitat interests
- Michael Layon - Subject Matter Expert, Citizen; Citizen expert participant and contributor to final discussion
- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
- Robert Johnson - New Hampshire Farm Bureau; Agricultural stakeholder representative
- Sen. David Watters - New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4; Senate participant in working group discussions
- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee

Purpose of the Third Meeting

The third meeting was convened to review a proposed 2026 Path Forward and Action Framework drafted by Chairman Spillane based on the first two meetings, and to determine what recommendations should be included in the final report. The draft framework focused on low-hanging fruit, voluntary coordination, education, outreach, mapping promotion, municipal licensing, interdepartmental communication, bulk purchasing evaluation, stakeholder expansion, and preparation for possible 2027-2028 legislative or budget action.

Participants reviewed the proposal with the understanding that no action plan for 2026 should demand new budget expenditures. Because the next biennium budget is not passed until 2027, 2026 recommendations should rely on existing capacity, existing agency expertise, voluntary cooperation, and improved communication. The third meeting therefore refined the plan away from any implication of a new task force, mandated reporting, standing quarterly meetings, or immediate spending request.

Synopsis of the Draft Path Forward Considered by the Group

The draft Path Forward presented to the group established several guiding principles. First, the group should focus on practical, achievable objectives. Second, the plan should prioritize actions requiring minimal or no new expenditures during 2026. Third, it should improve awareness of existing resources and programs before considering new systems. Fourth, coordination should remain voluntary rather than creating new formal structures. Fifth, 2026 should be used to identify whether any issues justify future funding consideration in the 2027-2029 biennium budget process.

The draft framework included proposed sections on education and public awareness, mapping and hotspot identification, municipal readiness and herbicide licensing education, interdepartmental communication and coordination, bulk purchasing and cost reduction evaluation, stakeholder expansion and expert input, and 2027 funding and legislative readiness. The third meeting did not discard these categories; instead, it refined them

substantially, changed lead roles, moved mapping under education, expanded stakeholder lists, and clarified what belonged in 2026 versus what belonged in 2027 or beyond.

Major Changes Made During Meeting Three

The most important change was to strengthen and refocus the education section. The meeting concluded that the lead organization for education should be UNHCE, not NHDAMF alone. This change recognizes UNHCE's statewide educational mission and ability to serve municipalities, landowners, farmers, citizens, and partner organizations. NHDES should be added as a participant, and existing materials from NHDAMF, NHDOT, utilities, municipalities, and other stakeholders should be consolidated into a universal education package.

The second major change was to treat EDDMapS as a subsection of education rather than a separate strategic pillar. Participants recognized that mapping is useful, but not as important as public understanding, training, and communication. EDDMapS should be promoted as an available regional mapping website that can provide a snapshot of invasive hotspots over time. The State should leverage NHMA and NHACC to encourage towns to map locations they identify, and the Governor should direct appropriate agencies to map invasive locations when possible.

The third major change was to strengthen municipal licensing recommendations. The State should leverage NHMA and NHACC to encourage all municipalities to acquire at least one licensed employee and/or official volunteer for pesticide or herbicide application from within town departments or official volunteer roles, including highway departments, road agents, cemetery departments, and conservation commissions. The NHDAMF Pesticide Division should provide clear information on licensing requirements, including costs, time commitments, training, and practical benefits. The report should also note that licensed applicators can earn meaningful income from application work after retirement, potentially up to \$100 per hour as part-time work, according to discussion during the meeting.

The fourth major change was to elevate interdepartmental communication as one of the central findings of the entire process. Communication costs little but can prevent major inconsistencies. The burn-pile example demonstrated that agencies may issue or follow conflicting guidance without realizing it. The Governor and Executive Council should therefore encourage agencies to facilitate cooperation and communication that keeps them on the same page and working toward common goals, with unified educational materials serving as the backbone of that coordination.

The fifth major change was to strengthen the state property recommendation. The State should remove invasive plants from all state-owned properties, when possible, especially invasive ornamentals planted historically before their invasive status was recognized. Burning Bush shrubbery at Granite Place in Concord was discussed as an example. Municipalities should be encouraged to conduct similar reviews of municipal properties and replace invasive ornamentals with appropriate alternatives.

The sixth major change was to expand the bulk purchasing recommendation. Participants viewed this as a very important post-2026 goal. The State should use the purchasing power of New Hampshire to negotiate discounted access to herbicides and treatment products for approved municipalities, farms, timberland owners, utilities, and conservation organizations. Due to liability concerns, the program should not sell to individuals. The preferred model may be a Governor and Executive Council approved contract with a supplier rather than state purchase, storage, and redistribution of chemicals. Approved buyers would purchase directly from the supplier at state-negotiated pricing. This may require legislation in 2027, and the NHDAMF Pesticide Division should be included among lead departments.

State Invasive Species Committee Modernization

The third meeting recommended that the statutory State Invasive Species Committee be modernized. The committee was enacted years ago and should be updated to reflect the stakeholders most engaged in current terrestrial invasive plant management. Participants recommended that legislators be added to the membership, that the Farm Bureau member be made more general rather than limited to a feed crop-specific role, and that forestry or timberland owner representation be added.

This recommendation requires legislation to be filed in 2027. The working group did not recommend attempting to restructure the committee informally in 2026. Instead, 2026 should be used to refine the statutory proposal, consult with affected stakeholders, and determine the most appropriate membership structure.

Pesticide and Herbicide Rule Issue

The third meeting identified a regulatory issue involving the restricted invasive plant list and pesticide or herbicide treatment authority. According to the discussion, the restricted list was removed from relevant pesticide regulations approximately two years ago without notice, leaving only the banned or prohibited list. This created practical problems because agencies and licensed applicators may be limited in their ability to treat restricted species as well as banned species with pesticides or herbicides.

Participants recommended that the NHDAMF Pesticide Division review the rules and restore language allowing treatment of restricted species where appropriate. This may be addressed through administrative rulemaking. If administrative rules are not amended to remedy the problem, legislation may be required in 2027. The issue affects NHDAMF, NHDES, NHDOT, municipalities, and other entities that need to treat invasive plants lawfully and effectively.

Result of Meeting Three

The final outcome of the third meeting was not a decision to create a new bureaucracy or seek immediate funding. Instead, the group refined a practical plan that can begin in 2026 and identified several issues for possible action in 2027. The 2026 priorities are education, outreach, mapping promotion, municipal licensing education, communication, state property review, stakeholder expansion, and evaluation of bulk purchasing options. The 2027 priorities are modernization of the State Invasive Species Committee, restoration of restricted species language if not corrected administratively, possible purchasing authority, and any funding requests justified by 2026 findings.

Participants also recommended that the unofficial working group meet again next biennium as needed to follow up and continue the work. Meetings should remain voluntary and should occur when there is a practical need to track progress, resolve coordination issues, or prepare legislative recommendations.

At the same time, participants recognized that at least an annual voluntary coordination meeting may be useful when practical to maintain relationships, share best management practices, and sustain a community of practice among agencies, legislators, educators, scientists, and stakeholder organizations.

VII. Consolidated Findings from All Three Meetings

Finding 1: Education is the first and most practical statewide priority.

Across all three meetings, education emerged as the clearest low-cost action. Invasive species management begins with identification. If citizens, towns, landowners, and agencies cannot identify common terrestrial invasive plants, they cannot report them, treat them, replace them, or avoid spreading them. Education must be vivid, visual, concise, and practical.

Educational materials should not be a thick technical manual that ordinary citizens will not read. They should include photographs, identification traits, treatment cautions, reporting links, contacts, and practical next steps. More detailed technical resources can be linked for licensed applicators, road agents, utilities, and land managers.

Education should also address prudent herbicide use and the risk trade-offs involved in invasive species management. A practical public education package should not assume that every citizen, volunteer, or municipal official is comfortable with herbicide use, nor should it dismiss legitimate questions. Instead, it should provide balanced, science-based guidance explaining safe application, licensing, alternatives, and the ecological risks of leaving invasive infestations untreated.

Finding 2: Existing educational resources are fragmented and inconsistent.

Participants found that materials exist in various forms for various groups and departments, but are incomplete and inconsistent as a statewide system. NHDAMF has invasive plant expertise. NHDOT has transportation and roadside management experience. DES has regulatory and environmental responsibilities. Utilities have corridor management practices. UNH has research and educational capacity. Municipal organizations have distribution networks. These assets should be consolidated rather than duplicated.

The final recommendation is that UNHCE lead the educational consolidation effort, with all participating agencies and organizations contributing their existing materials, best practices, links, and training resources.

Finding 3: Communication among departments is a core operational need.

The burn-pile example revealed how easily inconsistent guidance can undermine invasive species management. If one agency advises that burning removed invasive plant material is the best way to prevent spread, while another government channel causes municipal burn piles to refuse the material, citizens receive conflicting instructions and may stop trying to manage the problem at all.

Communication should not require a new bureaucracy. The Governor and Executive Council can encourage agency heads and commissioners to coordinate existing efforts, assign points of contact, and work from common educational materials.

Finding 4: Mapping is useful, but education must drive participation.

EDDMapS provides a useful regional invasive species mapping website and can help create a snapshot of known locations. However, mapping depends on participation. If citizens and municipalities do not know what to report or where to report it, the mapping system will remain underused.

For this reason, mapping should be promoted as part of the education package. NHMA and NHACC can help encourage towns and conservation commissions to report locations, while the Governor can encourage agencies to map locations when practical.

Finding 5: Municipal readiness requires licensing education.

Municipalities are on the front line of many invasive species issues. Roadsides, cemeteries, town forests, conservation lands, parks, and transfer stations are all locations where invasive plants may be found. Yet many towns may lack a licensed applicator or even understand what licensing entails.

The working group recommends clear licensing education from the NHDAMF Pesticide Division, disseminated through NHMA, NHACC, and local government networks. Municipalities should be encouraged to develop at least one licensed employee and/or official volunteer where practical.

Finding 6: State and municipal properties should lead by example.

Invasive ornamentals remain on public properties because they were planted before their invasive characteristics were understood. Public properties should not continue to normalize or maintain invasive ornamental plantings. The State should identify and remove invasives from state-owned properties when practical, replacing them with appropriate alternatives.

Municipalities should be encouraged to do the same. The New Hampshire State Forest Nursery and other appropriate native or non-invasive plant resources can help identify replacement plantings.

Finding 7: Cost is a major barrier to treatment.

Even when landowners, towns, or agencies know what needs to be treated, treatment cost can prevent action. Herbicides, equipment, labor, licensed applicators, repeated treatments, and follow-up monitoring all impose costs. Large landowners and municipalities may face significant expense across broad areas.

A state-negotiated supplier contract for approved buyers could substantially reduce costs while avoiding state storage, direct sales to individuals, or chemical warehousing. This should be evaluated as a high-priority long-term strategy.

Finding 8: Statutory and administrative updates may be needed in 2027.

The State Invasive Species Committee should be modernized to reflect current stakeholders, including legislators, broader agricultural representation, and forestry or timberland owner representation. The restricted species rule issue should also be addressed administratively or legislatively.

These items are appropriate for 2027 because they require careful drafting, consultation, and possibly statutory changes.

The working group also found that some form of informal coordination will likely remain useful even if no new statutory task force is created. A voluntary group of senior agency staff, legislators, scientists, educators, municipal representatives, and stakeholder organizations could meet periodically, and potentially annually when practical, to share best management practices, maintain working relationships, and keep New Hampshire moving toward a coordinated invasive species management community of practice.

VIII. Recommended 2026 Action Plan

The following action plan is intended for calendar year 2026. It avoids immediate budget demands, new formal task forces, mandatory quarterly reports, and new bureaucracy. It focuses on low-cost actions, existing institutions, voluntary coordination, and preparation for future legislative or budget decisions if justified.

A. Education and Public Outreach

Lead: UNHCE

Participants: NHDAMF, NHDOT, NHDES, NHFG, NHMA, NHACC, utilities, NHTOA, NHFB, municipalities, nurseries, retail outlets, land trusts, land conservancies, Conservation Districts, conservation commissions, and citizen groups

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Consolidate educational materials currently maintained by agencies and organizations into one coherent statewide education package.
- Create concise, vivid, image-rich materials for citizens, towns, landowners, utilities, farmers, foresters, nurseries, and retail outlets.
- Include guidance clarifying the mission and appropriate role of Conservation Commissions and Conservation Districts in surveying, reporting, education, coordination, and invasive species management support.
- Include links to EDDMapS, NHDAMF invasive plant resources, NHDOT best management practices, UNH research, and treatment guidance.
- Include information on the lowest effective chemical concentrations and treatment ratios developed through NHDAMF and UNH work, with links to appropriate agency materials.
- Include balanced public guidance on prudent herbicide use, non-chemical options where appropriate, licensing safeguards, and the trade-offs between unmanaged invasive species and carefully applied treatment methods.
- Identify utility company points of contact and incorporate utility training materials where appropriate.
- Use NHMA and NHACC to disseminate materials to municipalities and conservation commissions.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor should encourage agencies to cooperate with UNHCE and provide existing materials for consolidation.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should monitor progress and consider future support only after the 2026 education effort identifies specific needs.

B. Mapping and Hotspot Reporting as an Education Subsection

Lead: UNHCE with NHDAMF support

Participants: EDDMapS users, municipalities, NHMA, NHACC, conservation commissions, agencies, landowners, and citizen scientists

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Promote EDDMapS as the existing invasive species mapping website for reporting identified hotspots.
- Encourage towns, road agents, conservation commissions, and state agencies to map locations when practical.
- Explain mapping as a snapshot tool for situational awareness rather than a complete inventory.
- Use education materials to teach what to report, how to report it, and why reporting matters.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor should direct appropriate agencies to map locations when practical and share reporting information through common materials.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should evaluate after 2026 whether improved reporting identifies additional technology or funding needs.

C. Municipal Licensing Readiness

Lead: NHDAMF Pesticide Division

Participants: NHMA, NHACC, town highway departments, road agents, cemetery departments, conservation commissions, and municipal administrators

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Develop a plain-language licensing guide explaining cost, training, testing, time requirements, renewal, and permitted activities.
- Encourage each municipality to evaluate whether at least one town employee or official volunteer should become licensed for pesticide or herbicide application.
- Identify which town departments are most likely to benefit: highways, road agents, cemeteries, parks, conservation commissions, or facilities staff.
- Explain the practical benefits of licensing, including faster local response and possible post-retirement income opportunities for trained applicators.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor should encourage NHDAMF to coordinate with municipal organizations on licensing education.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should consider future training support only if towns identify barriers that cannot be addressed through existing resources.

D. Interdepartmental Communication and Coordination

Lead: Governor and Executive Council encouragement; agency commissioners and directors

Participants: NHDAMF, NHDOT, NHDES, NHFG, DNCR, NHDAS, municipalities, and stakeholder groups

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Encourage agencies to designate points of contact for terrestrial invasive plant coordination.
- Use common educational materials to reduce inconsistent guidance.
- Resolve conflicts such as disposal and burn-pile guidance before citizens and towns receive contradictory instructions.
- Meet voluntarily as needed to resolve specific issues rather than on a mandated quarterly schedule.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor and Executive Council should encourage better interdepartmental strategy, communication, and cooperation.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should assist in removing statutory or administrative barriers if agencies identify them.

E. State and Municipal Property Review

Lead: NH Department of Administrative Services (NHDAS) and property-managing state agencies, with education support from UNHCE and NHDAMF

Participants: State agencies, municipalities, NHMA, NHACC, DNCR, State Forest Nursery, facilities managers, and landscapers

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Identify invasive ornamental plants on all state-owned properties and state-managed rights-of-way.
- Remove invasive plants from state property and state-managed rights-of-way in all cases where practical and replace them with appropriate non-invasive or native alternatives.
- Use Burning Bush at Granite Place in Concord as an illustrative example of historic plantings that should be reviewed.
- Encourage municipalities to conduct similar reviews of municipal properties and municipal rights-of-way.

- Use the New Hampshire State Forest Nursery and other appropriate resources to identify replacement species.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor should encourage agencies to review state-owned properties and prioritize removal during normal maintenance cycles.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should monitor whether additional facilities guidance or future resources are needed.

F. Stakeholder Expansion

Lead: Working group participants and UNHCE

Participants: White Mountain National Forest, ski areas, utilities, additional land managers, Steve Roberge, Extension State Specialist, Forest Resources, UNH Cooperative Extension; Dave Rousseau, Director, NHDAMF Division of Pesticide Control; UNH researchers, conservation districts, land trusts, nurseries, and retail outlets

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Invite additional experts and land managers into the voluntary process as needed.
- Identify utility points of contact and collect utility training materials.
- Engage nurseries and retail outlets so citizens receive replacement plant guidance where they shop.
- Ensure recreation and large-landscape managers have access to the same education and reporting framework.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor may encourage participation where appropriate through agency and stakeholder outreach.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should use stakeholder feedback to refine 2027 proposals.

G. Bulk Purchasing and Cost Reduction Evaluation

Lead: Governor and Executive Council, NHDAS, NHDAMF Pesticide Division, and NHDAMF

Participants: Municipalities, farms, timberland owners, utilities, conservation organizations, approved stakeholder groups, and suppliers

Recommended 2026 actions:

- Evaluate whether the State can negotiate a contract with one or more suppliers for herbicides or treatment products at discounted rates.
- Avoid state warehousing, state ownership, or state redistribution of chemicals if a direct supplier contract can accomplish the goal.
- Limit discounted access to approved municipalities and organizations rather than individuals to reduce liability and misuse concerns.
- Assess whether state-negotiated pricing would substantially improve treatment capacity and eradication efforts.
- Determine whether legislation is required in 2027 to authorize or clarify the structure.

Suggested role for the Governor and Executive Council: The Governor and Executive Council should ask appropriate departments to evaluate feasibility, liability, procurement structure, and approved buyer criteria.

Legislative consideration: The Legislature should be prepared to consider enabling legislation if needed in 2027.

IX. Recommendations for the 2027-2028 Biennium

A. Modernize the State Invasive Species Committee

The statutory State Invasive Species Committee should be reviewed and modernized through legislation in 2027. The existing committee was enacted years ago and does not fully reflect the current mix of stakeholders involved in terrestrial invasive plant management. The working group recommends adding legislators to the membership, broadening the Farm Bureau seat so it is not limited to a feed crop-specific role, and adding representation from forestry or timberland owners.

Legislative membership would improve communication between the committee and the General Court and help identify statutory issues before they become obstacles. Broader agricultural representation would better reflect the range of farms affected by invasive species. Forestry and timberland owner representation is necessary because woody invasive plants can directly impair forest regeneration and timber productivity.

B. Restore Restricted Species Treatment Language

The working group recommends that the NHDAMF Pesticide Division review the rules governing pesticide and herbicide treatment of terrestrial invasive plants, particularly the treatment of restricted species. Participants reported that the restricted list was removed from relevant pesticide regulations approximately two years ago without notice, leaving only the banned or prohibited list. This change created practical problems for NHDAMF, NHDES, NHDOT, municipalities, and licensed applicators seeking to treat restricted invasive species.

The preferred remedy is administrative rulemaking restoring appropriate restricted species language so that restricted species can be treated lawfully and effectively where treatment is appropriate. If administrative action is not taken or proves insufficient, legislation should be prepared for 2027.

C. Evaluate Bulk Purchasing Authority

The State should evaluate whether existing procurement authority is sufficient to establish a negotiated supplier contract for approved purchasers. The preferred model would not require the State to own or warehouse chemicals. Instead, the Governor and Executive Council could approve a contract or procurement structure allowing approved municipalities and organizations to buy directly from suppliers at negotiated pricing.

This approach could produce substantial statewide benefit with limited state cost. Lower treatment costs would help municipalities, timberland owners, farmers, utilities, and conservation organizations treat more acres, address hotspots earlier, and pursue eradication or containment more aggressively. If statutory authority is needed, legislation should be drafted for the 2027 session.

D. Consider Future Funding Requests Only After 2026 Evaluation

The working group does not recommend immediate 2026 funding requests. Instead, 2026 should be used to identify specific needs that cannot be met through existing resources, voluntary cooperation, education, or agency coordination. If the 2026 plan identifies targeted gaps, those needs can be evaluated for the 2027-2028 biennium budget process.

Possible future funding areas may include education production, training support, mapping technology, municipal licensing assistance, grant matching funds, or limited pilot programs. However, no such request should be advanced without clear justification developed through the 2026 implementation process.

E. Continue the Unofficial Working Group as Needed

The unofficial working group should meet again during the next biennium as needed to track progress, resolve coordination issues, and prepare any legislative recommendations. Meetings should remain voluntary. The group should not be converted into a mandated reporting body unless a future Legislature determines that a formal structure is necessary. At minimum, consideration should be given to an annual voluntary coordination meeting when practical, while preserving the as-needed and non-mandated structure of the working group.

The flexible meeting structure is one of the strengths of the current effort. It allows stakeholders to gather when there is a practical issue to solve without imposing recurring obligations on agencies or organizations.

X. Implementation Approach and Suggested Distribution

Implementation Approach

Implementation should begin with the education and communication recommendations because they are the most practical and least dependent on funding. UNHCE should be asked to coordinate with NHDAMF, NHDOT, NHDES, NHFG, NHMA, NHACC, utility points of contact, and stakeholder organizations to inventory existing materials. Once existing materials are collected, the group should identify gaps and produce a concise public-facing package.

At the same time, the Governor and Executive Council should encourage involved departments to improve coordination and identify points of contact. Agencies should review whether their guidance conflicts with other agencies, particularly on disposal, treatment, mapping, and municipal communication. The burn-pile issue should be treated as the first example to resolve, because it demonstrates the operational consequences of inconsistent guidance.

Municipal licensing education should proceed through NHDAMF Pesticide Division, NHMA, and NHACC. Towns should not be mandated to license employees or official volunteers, but they should be encouraged to understand the option. Many municipalities may find that a licensed highway department employee, road agent, cemetery employee, conservation commission-linked person, or official town volunteer provides an efficient local response option.

For bulk purchasing, the Governor and Executive Council, NH Department of Administrative Services (NHDAS), and NHDAMF should evaluate procurement options, legal restrictions, liability concerns, approved purchaser lists, and supplier interest. The goal in 2026 is evaluation and preparation, not immediate implementation unless existing authority and resources make it practical.

Suggested Report Distribution

- Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives
- President of the New Hampshire Senate
- Governor of New Hampshire
- Executive Council Members
- Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
- Director or appropriate division leadership, NHDAMF Pesticide Division
- Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
- Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Transportation
- Executive Director, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
- Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services
- Commissioner, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources / Division of Forests and Lands
- Dean or Director, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNHCE)
- New Hampshire Municipal Association
- New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions
- New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts / County Conservation Districts
- New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association
- New Hampshire Farm Bureau
- Utilities including Eversource, Unitil, and New Hampshire Electric Cooperative
- White Mountain National Forest and other large land managers as appropriate
- Participating legislators and meeting participants

XI. Conclusion

The unofficial working group on terrestrial invasive plant species established that New Hampshire has both a serious problem and a practical opportunity. The problem is the continued spread of terrestrial invasive plants across farms, forests, roadsides, municipal properties, state lands, utility corridors, and wildlife habitat. The opportunity is that many meaningful improvements can begin without waiting for a major budget request or a new statutory structure.

The first two meetings identified the scope of the problem, the importance of UNH research, the impacts on agriculture and timberland, the role of transportation corridors, and the need for education, mapping, licensing, grants, stakeholder expansion, and purchasing review. The third meeting refined these ideas into a realistic 2026 path forward and separated immediate low-cost actions from longer-term legislative or administrative recommendations.

The strongest immediate recommendation is to create a unified education and outreach framework led by the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, supported by state agencies, municipal organizations, utilities, Conservation Districts, landowner groups, nurseries, retail outlets, and conservation organizations. This framework should become the common language through which agencies, municipalities, and citizens identify invasive plants, report hotspots, understand treatment options, and access appropriate resources.

The second major recommendation is that the Governor and Executive Council encourage stronger interdepartmental communication. Communication failures are not theoretical. The burn-pile example shows that inconsistent guidance can frustrate citizens and municipalities even when everyone involved is attempting to do the right thing. Better coordination can produce immediate benefits at little or no cost.

The third major recommendation is that New Hampshire begin preparing for longer-term structural improvements in 2027. The State Invasive Species Committee should be modernized. Restricted species treatment language should be restored administratively or legislatively. A state-negotiated purchasing structure should be evaluated. Any future funding request should be based on specific needs identified through 2026 implementation.

The working group recommends continued voluntary cooperation, meetings as needed, and practical progress first. By focusing on education, communication, municipal readiness, including employees and official volunteers, state property review, stakeholder coordination, and cost reduction, New Hampshire can make meaningful progress in controlling terrestrial invasive plant species while respecting budget timing, agency capacity, and the realities of local implementation.

Appendix A: Full Attendee Register

Meeting One - October 14, 2025

- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Sen. David Watters - New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4; Senate participant in working group discussions
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Robert Johnson - New Hampshire Farm Bureau; Agricultural stakeholder representative

Meeting Two - October 21, 2025

- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Sen. David Watters - New Hampshire Senate, Senate District 4; Senate participant in working group discussions
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Robert Johnson - New Hampshire Farm Bureau; Agricultural stakeholder representative
- Paul Steblein - U.S. Geological Survey, Emeritus; Subject matter expert and federal resource perspective
- Ranjit Bawa - Assistant Professor, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of New Hampshire College of Life Sciences and Agriculture; research presenter on distribution, spread, and projected impacts

Meeting Three - Final Coordination Meeting

- Dan Bergeron - Wildlife Division Chief, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department; departmental representative for wildlife and habitat interests
- Michael Layon - Subject Matter Expert, Citizen; Citizen expert participant and contributor to final discussion

- Rep. James A. Spillane - State Representative, Rockingham District 2; Chairman, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee; Organizer and Chairman of the Unofficial Working Group
- Rep. William Darby - State Representative, Hillsborough District 11; Member, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
- Doug Cygan - New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food; Invasive Species Coordinator and subject matter lead for terrestrial invasive plants
- Marc Laurin - New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment; Transportation corridor, roadside management, environmental coordination
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- Rep. Liz Barbour - State Representative, Hillsborough District 35; Vice Chair, House Environment and Agriculture Committee
- Jasen Stock - New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association; Timberland and forestry stakeholder representative
- Rep. Catheryn Harvey - State Representative, Cheshire District 6; Ranking Minority Member, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee

Appendix B: Proposed Department and Stakeholder Responsibilities

Entity	Suggested Responsibility
UNH Cooperative Extension	Lead education consolidation, develop statewide materials, coordinate training and outreach resources, and include balanced public education on prudent herbicide use, risk trade-offs, and non-chemical options where appropriate.
NHDAMF	Provide invasive plant expertise, treatment guidance, plant lists, and coordination through relevant divisions.
NHDAMF Pesticide Division	Provide licensing education, review restricted species rules, participate in bulk purchasing evaluation.
NHDOT	Contribute roadside management practices and mapping of transportation corridor, rail trail, and right-of-way infestations where practical.
NHDES	Participate in education, disposal guidance coordination, environmental considerations, and grant review.
New Hampshire Fish and Game Department	Provide wildlife habitat perspective and coordinate where terrestrial invasive plants affect habitat.
Department of Administrative Services	Assist with state property review and evaluate procurement or supplier contract mechanisms.
DNCR / Division of Forests and Lands / State Forest Nursery	Support forestry and replacement planting guidance, including appropriate alternatives to invasive ornamentals.
NHMA	Disseminate educational materials and licensing information to municipalities.
NHACC	Disseminate educational materials and mapping guidance to conservation commissions, including clarification of their appropriate role in invasive species survey, reporting, and coordination; coordinate with Conservation Districts where regional outreach is useful.
NHTOA	Provide timberland owner perspective and assist forestry stakeholder outreach.
NH Farm Bureau	Provide agricultural stakeholder perspective and assist farm outreach.
Utilities	Identify points of contact, provide corridor management materials, and participate in education and treatment coordination.

Municipalities	Identify hotspots, consider licensing local personnel or official volunteers, review municipal properties and rights-of-way, and use education materials.
Governor and Executive Council	Encourage interdepartmental communication, evaluate bulk purchasing contract approach, and consider 2027 funding requests if justified.

Appendix C: Suggested Resources and Reference Points

- EDDMapS invasive species mapping website for hotspot reporting and regional data awareness.
- NHDAMF invasive plant resources, prohibited and restricted list information, and treatment guidance.
- NHDAMF Pesticide Division licensing information, including costs, training, testing, and renewal requirements.
- UNHCE educational resources and subject matter experts.
- UNHCE and NHDAMF resources explaining prudent herbicide use, licensing safeguards, non-chemical alternatives, and risk trade-offs in invasive species control.
- NHDOT best management practices for invasive and noxious plant species along transportation corridors.
- NHDES guidance related to disposal, environmental protection, and grant opportunities.
- NHMA and NHACC municipal outreach channels.
- New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts and county Conservation District outreach channels.
- New Hampshire State Forest Nursery replacement plant and seedling resources.
- Federal and regional programs including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service habitat cost-sharing and Forest Service grant opportunities.