



Partnership Operating Principles
for the
Adirondack Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
managed by
The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program
September 2022

I. ABOUT THE ADIRONDACK PRISM

More than 30 partner organizations and 100 volunteers share their ideas, time, and resources to advance the mission of the Adirondack Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), one of eight partnerships across New York. The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) provides staff and program support to the Adirondack PRISM.

APIPP was founded in 1998 by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), NYS Department of Transportation, and NYS Adirondack Park Agency. APIPP is hosted by the Adirondack Chapter of TNC and receives funding from the Environmental Protection Fund administered by NYSDEC.

II. OUR SHARED PURPOSE

These Partnership Operating Principles define how Adirondack PRISM partners and APIPP volunteers and staff engage in the work to achieve the shared vision, mission, and goals of the Adirondack PRISM.

A. Vision

The Adirondack PRISM envisions a healthy Adirondack region where the impacts of invasive species do not significantly degrade the landscape and partners and the public are actively engaged in minimizing the economic and ecologic threats these non-native species pose to our human and natural communities. As a result, native species thrive, community investment in managing invasive species is cost effective, and ecosystems are more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

B. Mission

To work in partnership to minimize the impact of invasive species on the Adirondack region's communities, lands and waters.

C. Goals

The 2023-2027 Adirondack PRISM strategic plan includes four goals which serve as a framework for PRISM partners' collective action. PRISM partners generally support all the goals; however, partners may not actively contribute to each goal.

Goal 1:

Protect Adirondack PRISM lands from the most significant ecologic and economic impacts of terrestrial invasive plants and animals, including forest pests and pathogens

Goal 2:

Protect Adirondack PRISM waters from the most significant ecologic and economic impacts of aquatic invasive plants and animals

Goal 3:

Build knowledgeable and engaged communities that are empowered to act on invasive species issues

Goal 4:

Engage in research and innovation to improve the monitoring and management of invasive species

III. NYS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The NYSDEC Invasive Species Coordination Section coordinates NYS's PRISM network. NYSDEC administers the distribution of Environmental Protection Fund moneys to TNC for the Adirondack PRISM via a multi-year contract. The obligations of NYSDEC and TNC are further detailed in the contract, the terms of which supersede these Operating Principles.

In addition, NYSDEC interacts with the Adirondack PRISM in myriad ways, such as by providing technical expertise on the management of invasive species, coordinating with APIPP on the "Campground Steward" program, working with APIPP on Forest Preserve management, and certifying APIPP's pesticide applicators. In these and other ways, APIPP shares many programmatic goals with NYSDEC and works collaboratively with the agency to help implement the "New York State Invasive Species Comprehensive Management Plan."

IV. HOST ORGANIZATION

APIPP is hosted by TNC. APIPP staff are hired by and are employees of TNC and are responsible for the everyday activities of the PRISM. APIPP staff host and chair Adirondack PRISM partner meetings, develop meeting agendas, and prepare and distribute minutes of meetings.

TNC has responsibility for personnel and financial management and for oversight of the contract with NYSDEC and, in consultation with NYSDEC, has the authority to make decisions about how Adirondack PRISM contract funds are spent in accordance with the terms of the contract.

TNC also has responsibility for soliciting, managing, and implementing grants, contracts, subcontracts, programs, and agreements entered into on behalf of APIPP. In addition, APIPP staff lead the development and implementation of the Adirondack PRISM strategic plan.

V. ADIRONDACK PRISM PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

A. Adirondack PRISM Partners

1. Adirondack PRISM Partners Defined

Partners are public agencies or private organizations actively working to achieve outcomes on the ground to minimize the impact of invasive species on the Adirondack region's communities, lands, and waters.

2. Adirondack PRISM Partner Agreements

Partners agree to advance the Adirondack PRISM mission in ways that are compatible with their own missions and directives. Partners also agree to respond to APIPP inquires and requests for information. Partners who actively participate in the Adirondack PRISM in one or more of the following ways are officially recognized as an Adirondack PRISM Partner on APIPP's website and in its Annual Report.

- Attend at least one Partner Meeting a year.
- Contribute data to the Adirondack PRISM dashboard.
- Participate in an Adirondack PRISM working group.
- Partner with APIPP staff on an invasive species project.

3. Adirondack PRISM Partner Benefits

The individual contribution of each partner is magnified by its engagement in the Adirondack PRISM. In addition, partners receive many benefits by joining in the collective efforts of the Adirondack PRISM, including the following.

- **Connection:** Adirondack PRISM partner meetings and events provide an opportunity to engage with other organizations and individuals committed to minimizing the impact of invasive species. These meetings and events allow for sharing ideas and knowledge about natural resource management practices, exploring ways to collaborate and make the most effective use of resources, and identifying innovations.
- **Expertise:** Adirondack PRISM partners are at the forefront of regional invasive species research and development of best management practices. Partners can access and contribute to the region's collective knowledge of regional invasive species management issues. In addition, APIPP maintains an extensive collection of technical resources on its website, which is accessible to partners, and APIPP staff are available to make presentations at or help with events held by partners.
- **Recognition:** Partners are recognized by APIPP in its Annual Report and in other ways. This recognition can help partners demonstrate how their individual contributions add to the collective accomplishments of the Adirondack PRISM.

B. APIPP Volunteers

1. APIPP Volunteers Defined

Volunteers provide valuable services to many Adirondack PRISM partners. The contributions of volunteers engaged with partner organizations are essential, and are reflected in the annual accomplishments of each partner. Partner organizations may have documents that further define roles, agreements, and benefits for their volunteers.

For the purposes of these Operating Principles and for APIPP's implementation of the priority strategies outlined in the Adirondack PRISM strategic plan, APIPP volunteers are defined as individuals donating their time or expertise to the Adirondack PRISM as part of a formal volunteer program hosted by APIPP and TNC.

2. APIPP Volunteer Agreements

- APIPP volunteers agree to perform the specific services outlined in their volunteer role and to serve as representatives of TNC when performing these duties.
- APIPP volunteers must sign any required liability or risk waivers.
- APIPP volunteers are asked to annually submit a record of their activities and the number of hours of service provided to TNC.

3. APIPP Volunteer Benefits

The individual contribution of each volunteer is magnified by their engagement in the Adirondack PRISM. In addition, APIPP volunteers receive many benefits by joining in the collective efforts of the Adirondack PRISM, including the following.

- **Satisfaction:** Volunteers make a difference by helping to protect the places they care about from the threats from invasive species and are able to connect with other people concerned about the same issues.
- **Knowledge:** Volunteers are provided with technical training and skill-development opportunities to enhance their ability to identify, survey, manage, and report invasive species.
- **Recognition:** APIPP thanks individual volunteers in a variety of ways, and the collective contribution of volunteers is widely shared in APIPP's Annual Report, media stories, and other documents.

VI. PARTNER MEETINGS

There shall be a minimum of two Partner Meetings each year. Meetings will be announced via electronic communications at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Minutes of the meetings will be recorded by APIPP and made publicly available after the meeting. There are no quorum requirements for meetings, but participation by a majority of partners is strongly encouraged. Partner meetings are also open to partners' members, volunteers, and the general public.

VII. WORKING GROUPS

Working groups foster collaboration among partners and can be an important way to share information.

A. APIPP Working Groups

APIPP may convene either i) standing working groups or ii) *ad hoc* project groups to guide Adirondack PRISM projects or programs, set priorities, establish benchmarks for success, and implement components of the PRISM strategic plan.

- i. Members of standing working groups convened by APIPP will be selected by APIPP staff based on the skills or experience needed for the effective operation of the group.
- ii. Participation in *ad hoc* project groups convened by APIPP may be by invitation only or may be open to any individual, depending on the nature of the project.

Working groups may select a chair from among the working group membership. If a chair is not selected, APIPP staff will fill that role. APIPP will keep informal notes of working group meetings; formal minutes are not required.

B. Partner Working Groups

Adirondack PRISM partners may also have or establish working groups. APIPP staff may participate in working groups convened by others and, as appropriate, may engage these working groups in guiding Adirondack PRISM projects or programs, reviewing APIPP priorities, establishing benchmarks for success, and implementing components of the Adirondack PRISM strategic plan. Partner organizations may have documents that further define participation in their working groups.

VIII. LOBBYING AND POLICY ACTIVITIES

A. Lobbying

Accomplishing the Adirondack PRISM goals may require lobbying at the state or federal level. Adirondack PRISM partners, including TNC, may engage in lobbying to the fullest extent permissible by law. State contract funds may not be used for certain lobbying purposes and APIPP staff operate under these laws.

B. Policy Activities

Adirondack PRISM partners are encouraged to actively engage in policy efforts that advance the Adirondack PRISM mission. Partners may convene discussions about emerging invasive species issues and local, state, or federal policy solutions; APIPP staff may serve as technical advisors in these discussions as appropriate. APIPP staff may also convene partners to discuss emerging invasive species issues that might result in policy recommendations, as appropriate and in consultation with NYSDEC.

IX. FUNDRAISING

Adirondack PRISM partners are encouraged to raise funds for projects that advance the PRISM mission. APIPP staff may provide letters of support for partners' funding requests, as appropriate and as time permits. PRISM partners are also encouraged to seek to sustain NYS Environmental Protection Fund support for the PRISM as appropriate.

TNC may seek public and private funds to support the work of the Adirondack PRISM, in accordance with TNC's standard operating procedures, and may request letters of support from partners. TNC retains the right to decline gifts that do not comply with its operating procedures and/or that do not align with its programmatic priorities.