



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Cumberland Piedmont Network
P.O. Box 8
Mammoth Cave, Kentucky 42259

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 31, 2025

Memorandum

To: Diana Bramble, Superintendent Cowpens National Battlefield, Kings Mountain National Military Park, and Ninety Six National Historic Site, CUPN Board Chair
Brian Gregory, Regional IMD Program Manager, CUPN Board Member

From: Steven C. Thomas, Network Program Manager **STEVEN THOMAS**

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Date: 2025.01.31 14:38:01 -06'00'

Subject: Changing Invasive Species Early Detection vital sign to Park Technical Assistance Plan

The purpose of this memo is to document the official change in status of the Cumberland Piedmont Network's (CUPN) Invasive Species Early Detection (ISED) vital sign to that of technical assistance to CUPN parks, while maintaining the goal of the original plan. This change was approved in fiscal year 2024 by superintendents of all network parks after a network biologist communicated the proposed change to each park's resource management point-of-contact (POC). All the resource management POCs who responded were in favor of the proposed change.

In 2014, CUPN first implemented its ISED Plan. The Plan was developed in response to CUPN parks' concerns about the ecological impacts of both invasive plants and forest pests on their parks' ecosystems, both of which were selected as network "vital signs" during the network's planning phase in 2005. While long-term changes associated with invasive plants have been monitored on CUPN parks since 2011 as part of CUPN's on-going Forest Vegetation Monitoring program, CUPN's ISED Plan was established to aid in detecting new populations of invasive species early in their invasion of park lands. The Plan was written as a vital sign monitoring protocol and thus includes several components typical to other approved CUPN monitoring protocols.

Ten years after the ISED Plan's implementation began, it was decided that the Plan could no longer be implemented sustainably as originally written. Several issues had brought about the need for significant revisions and a reduction in its implementation. Including:

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- Limited network and park staff time, and in some cases, expertise.
- Limited Park visitation. Not every CUPN park was visited by CUPN staff every year to make species observations.
- Extensive training requirements. CUPN staff and other NPS entities needed annual training as well as the creation of annually updated park-specific early detection invasive species lists.
- Better ways of obtaining data. Since 2018, CUPN has obtained the bulk of invasive species observation data for parks from iNaturalist, a citizen science nature platform with several benefits regarding reporting new introductions of invasive species on parks.

Therefore, the Network proposed to replace the ISED Plan with a more streamlined ISED Technical Assistance Plan, which resulted in ISED no longer being an official CUPN vital sign and as such, the requirements for using an approved monitoring protocol no longer apply.

The primary goal of the ISED Technical Assistance Plan remained the same as the original ISED Plan: to detect and report to park managers on introductions of new and incipient populations of invasive plants and pests before the species become widespread and/or established in the parks. Through technical assistance to CUPN parks this goal will be met via two objectives:

1. iNaturalist observation data of new and incipient invasive plant and pest species from inside CUPN park boundaries will be “harvested” monthly, using an automated process.
2. CUPN park resource managers and other relevant entities including NPS Invasive Plant Management Teams (IPMTs) will be notified when new incipient invasive species are reported on their parks.

These objectives will allow CUPN park resource managers and IPMTs (where applicable) to assess each species record on an individual basis and target management resources and coordination toward the highest-priority risks.

Approval Signatures

DIANA BRAMBLE



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CUPN Board Chair: Diana Bramble, Superintendent, Cowpens National Battlefield/ Kings Mountain National Military Park/Ninety Six National Historic Site

MARK GREGORY



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Brian Gregory, Regional Inventory & Monitoring Program Manager

Date