Workshop 2: Closing the gaps; setting priorities for marine invasive species management

(Victoria Poppleton and Dave Wall)

Report:

The workshop started with a short presentation on the identified gaps in marine invasive species management in Ireland. Five recent publications on marine invasive species in Ireland had been mined for recommendations, resulting in 58 in total.

The publications reviewed were;

- Marine non-indigenous species dynamics in time and space within the coastal waters of the Republic of Ireland. *Gittenberger et al, 2023*
- Rapid assessment of marine non-native species in Irish marinas. *O'Shaughnessy et al, 2023*
- Alien Species Report: A summary of work carried out by BIM to support the aquaculture sector in understanding, preventing, and managing invasive alien species risks. *BIM, 2024*
- Horizon scan of invasive alien species for the island of Ireland. *Lucy et al, 2020*.
- Review of non-indigenous species (NIS) and best practice in surveillance and monitoring programmes: Marine non-indigenous species in Ireland. *GMIT, 2019*

The 58 recommendations were condensed to 40 (reasons for omission varied, but included “already actioned since publication”, “overlap/similarity with recommendation from another publication” etc). The remaining 40 recommendations were categorized by overarching themes.

Workshop attendees were split into 4 groups and given 10 minutes at each theme “station” to rank and prioritise the recommendations pertaining to each theme. Encouragement was given to add new recommendations also.

Following this, each attendee was given 3 red dots and 2 blue dots to “vote" with. Red dots indicated a vote for priority actions with impact and blue dots indicated a vote for priority actions thought to be most feasible. One vote could be assigned to any recommendation, or multiple votes of the same colour could be used by the individual to assign further voting weight. These votes were done on an individual basis, rather than in groups.

Group prioritisation exercise

The top prioritised recommendations from the combined group discussions were;

Theme 1: Governance and Strategy

Appointment of a National Steering Committee to guide implementation of a National Plan/Establish a national marine NIS Secretariat

Theme 2: Data and Tools

Collation of existing datasets into one central database

Theme 3: Monitoring, Surveillance and Risk Assessment

Routine surveillance and monitoring protocol developed at an all-island scale using standardised methods including direct and indirect approaches targeting wider taxonomic groups and prioritising high-impact species as well as introduction hotspots

Theme 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Education

Facilitate stakeholder engagement through establishment of a framework that creates connectivity between stakeholders, managers and policymakers.

<u>Individual voting exercise</u>

The recommendations which attendees thought would be the most impactful if implemented

1. Collation of existing datasets into a unified database for screening for marine NIS (12 votes)
2. Routine surveillance and monitoring protocol developed at an all-Ireland scale and using standardized methods including direct and indirect approaches targeting wider taxonomic groups and prioritising high impact species as well as introduction hotspots (11 votes)

The recommendations which attendees though would be the most feasible to implement

1. Collation of existing datasets into a unified database for screening for marine NIS (10 votes)