MPSU Management and Control of Invasive Alien Species

The Mountain Province State University (MPSU), guided by its Vision to be "An internationally recognized higher education institution for cultural continuity and innovations that transforms lives and fosters sustainable development," and its Mission to "pursue responsive instruction and innovation to produce resilient and productive citizens who promote transformational governance and contribute to sustainable development while rooted in their cultural heritage," is committed to upholding ecological balance on all its campuses. This Policy on the Management and Control of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is a direct response to this mandate. By actively protecting the campus's unique biodiversity, which is intrinsically linked to the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the local communities—such as the wild tea plants documented on these grounds—the university ensures that its environment remains a living laboratory that supports research, instruction, and the well-being of the surrounding community.

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) represent a significant and growing threat to the environmental stability, native plant diversity, and the genetic resources found within the University's domain. Uncontrolled IAS can outcompete native and endemic flora, disrupt natural ecosystems, and ultimately undermine the sustainable development goals MPSU has committed to achieve. Therefore, this policy establishes a comprehensive framework for proactive Prevention, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), and strategic Control and Management of these harmful organisms. This structured approach not only ensures compliance with national environmental laws, particularly the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, but also transforms the campus into a visible model of environmental stewardship, promoting a resilient, productive, and culturally-rooted educational environment.

The management of invasive alien species (IAS) in the Philippines is primarily governed by Republic Act (RA) No. 9147 and RA No. 11038, which are further operationalized by a national strategic plan.

- Republic Act No. 9147 (The Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (2001))
    - This is the main legal instrument regulating the introduction of non-native species. It states that no exotic species shall be introduced into the country unless clearance from the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is first obtained. Crucially, it specifically mandates that exotic species shall not be introduced into protected areas and identified critical habitats (which a university with significant natural areas may include).
    - If an introduction is allowed outside of protected areas, it requires an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) focused on the bioecology and socioeconomic effects.
- Republic Act No. 11038 *The Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) Act (2018)"

This law formally defines "Invasive Alien Species" (IAS) as "species introduced deliberately or unintentionally outside their natural habitats where they have the ability to establish themselves, invade, outcompete native species, and take over the new environment. It reinforces the mandate to protect biodiversity within protected areas, which implicitly includes the removal and management of IAS to preserve the natural ecosystems.

2. National Strategy and Action Plan
   - Joint DENR-DA Administrative Order No. 2020-02 (National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan - NISSAP 2020-2030)
     - This joint policy by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) adopts the NISSAP as the national framework for IAS management.
     - The NISSAP provides a holistic approach with specific goals that mirror the University's proposed policy, including Prevention, Early Detection and Rapid Response, Control and Management, and Education and Public Awareness.

The University's policy acts as the institutional mechanism to implement these national laws. By adopting a policy of prioritizing native species and establishing an EDRR system, MPSU ensures compliance with the national legal framework, which views IAS as a major threat to the country's biodiversity—a threat particularly relevant to mountainous regions like the Cordillera Administrative Region where MPSU is located.

Objectives

Primarily, to protect the ecological integrity and native biodiversity of the Mountain Province State University (MPSU) campuses.

The objectives are to:
1. Prevent the introduction of new Invasive Alien Species (IAS) to the campus environment.
2. Manage and control existing IAS populations to reduce their impact on native flora and fauna.
3. Promote the use and conservation of native and endemic species on campus grounds.
4. Comply with relevant national legislation and international agreements concerning biodiversity and invasive species management (e.g., the Philippine National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan).

II. Scope
This policy applies to all areas within the jurisdiction of Mountain Province State University, including all campuses, academic and administrative areas, green spaces, botanical collections, and any associated natural or protected areas.

III. Policy Provisions and Implementation Strategies
A. Prevention of Introduction

1. Landscaping and Horticulture: The use of native and endemic plant species shall be prioritized in all campus landscaping, redevelopment, and habitat restoration projects.
2. Prohibition: The intentional introduction, planting, or release of any known or suspected Invasive Alien Species (IAS), both flora and fauna, on campus grounds is strictly prohibited without explicit authorization from the designated university office (e.g., the Research and Extension Office or Facilities Management).
3. Materials Sourcing: All construction and landscaping materials, including soil and imported plants, must be sourced and inspected to ensure they are free of IAS propagules (e.g., seeds, plant fragments) or pests.

B. Identification and Monitoring

1. Campus Surveys: Regular biodiversity surveys shall be conducted by the College of Forestry, Department of Biology, or a designated research center to identify the presence, location, and extent of existing IAS on campus.
2. Database and Mapping: A comprehensive database and map (e.g., using GIS) of all identified IAS hot spots shall be maintained and regularly updated to track their spread and monitor control efforts.
3. Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR): A protocol shall be established for the quick identification and immediate removal of any newly detected alien species before they can become established and invasive.

C. Control and Management

1. Effective and environmentally sound strategies for controlling identified IAS will be developed. These may include:
    - Manual removal (hand-pulling, cutting) and mechanical removal.
    - The use of approved, host-specific, and non-target threatening biological control agents, in compliance with national regulations.
    - The use of herbicides or pesticides shall be considered a last resort and must be implemented by trained personnel in strict adherence to a University-approved integrated pest management (IPM) plan and environmental safety protocols.
2. Removed IAS plant and animal matter must be disposed of properly to prevent their re-establishment or further dispersal.

D. Education and Awareness

1. Curriculum Integration: The importance of native biodiversity and the impact of IAS will be integrated into relevant academic programs (e.g., Biology, Forestry, Environmental Science).
2. Awareness Campaigns: The University will organize awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars for students, faculty, staff, and contractors to raise knowledge about IAS, their risks, and methods for their control.
3. Community Engagement: Students and student organizations shall be encouraged to actively participate in campus IAS removal projects and native species planting initiatives.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

Entity	*Role and Responsibility*
University Administration	Provides necessary budget and oversight for policy implementation. Ensures compliance with national and local environmental laws.
Facilities Management Office (FMO)	Responsible for the day-to-day implementation of IAS control measures and management during campus maintenance and landscaping activities.
Research and Extension Office	Responsible for conducting research on IAS, identifying species, developing monitoring protocols, and providing policy recommendations.
All Campus Users	Responsible for not introducing or contributing to the spread of alien species and participating in awareness programs.