

ISN 2022 FY Annual Summary

The Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network's (ISN) 2022 season has been a year of learning. Due to significant staff turnover in 2021, ISN entered the 2022 fiscal year without a Coordinator! However, ISN persevered. You may remember from last year's calendar-year report, former Invasive Species Specialist Audrey Menninga stepped into the Coordinator role. In April Audrey and Shelly Stusick, *Go Beyond Beauty (GBB)* Specialist, were overjoyed to have Murielle Garbarino join ISN as Habitat Management Specialist! She jumped in immediately to help hire seasonal staff, contact landowners, and start arranging for treatments.



ISN Team: ISN Habitat Management Specialist Murielle (left), Go Beyond Beauty Specialist Shelly (right), and ISN Coordinator Audrey (front)

ISN was also able to continue with - and grow - some of our most popular programs! These include:

- Garlic mustard dumpsters in (drum roll...) **SIX** places! We were overjoyed to welcome Village of Empire to our host sites this year. Through the hard work of volunteers, we were able to collect 93 bags of garlic mustard, which translates to about 30 acres of land protected from this invasive species. The top three reporters to use our dumpster QR codes won a packet of native plant seeds! A big thank you to all who participated and to who made it happen: the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) administered by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

THIS YEAR ISN HAS

- Treated almost 300 acres of high-priority invasive species at almost 200 sites
- Coordinated 10 workbees & 10 other opportunities
 - Engaged over 150 volunteers
- Contacted over 1,100 people & over 320,000 through our website & social media accounts
 - 450+ people contacted ISN for the first time
- Gained 7 new *Go Beyond Beauty* Community participants
 - 4 utilized Gold Achievements
- Helped properly dispose of 374 Japanese barberry plants during Japanese Barberry Trade-Up Week
- Presented to 25 groups virtually & in-person

Thanks to the strong foundations ISN was built on, we were able to navigate these difficult waters to almost return to the same capacity we were in prior to late 2021!



Volunteers pulling garlic mustard (cozied next to another invasive species, forget-me-not) at Tank Hill in Benzie County.

- For a different take on garlic mustard, ISN brought back garlic mustard paper-making with three events. Twenty-five adults and kids from Grand Traverse, Benzie, & Manistee Counties enjoyed turning this rampant invasive species into an attractive craft. We hope to host more of these events in 2023!
- Japanese barberry trade-up days included another milestone for ISN and our *GBB* program as we were able to offer events in **THREE** counties (as opposed to our usual two rotating ones). Partnering with the Grand Traverse Conservation District, Leelanau Conservation District, and the Manistee Conservation District, *GBB* helped safely dispose of over 370 barberry plants and distributed 129 \$5 coupons to be used at participating *GBB* retailers! A big win for home landscapes and habitat.



Garlic mustard paper-making attendees had a particularly scenic event at the Boardman River Nature Center in Grand Traverse County



Pre-registered folks could drive up & drop off Japanese barberry for free disposal & a \$5 coupon per plant (up to \$50!) at our Trade-Up events this past June



ISN Crew Lead Tanner at a treatment site in Manistee County

- Our treatment crew (Tanner, our crew lead and pictured above (right), and our two crew members Kallie and Cecelia) were able to complete our priority treatments of garlic mustard, black swallow-wort, invasive knotweeds, invasive bittersweet, and baby's breath! Due to extra grant funding, Tanner and Kallie were able to stay on a few extra weeks to help us wrap up knotweed sites and start phragmites treatments. Many thanks to them for all their hard work throughout all types of weather!



Before & After: Veteran's Oak Grove Drive, located in Manistee, was heavily covered in invasive knotweed. First treated in 2016 (pictured, left) this spot has received treatment twice a year since. While knotweed still lingers, you can see remarkable improvement this year (pictured, right).

- ISN conducted two autumn olive workshops: one in Manistee County and one - for the first time! - in Benzie County. We had a fantastic turnout with forty people showing up for our Benzie event alone to learn how to manage and control autumn olive. As always, thanks to our partners; the Manistee Conservation District for lending us their experts to participate in this important conversation, Orchard Beach State Park for hosting us in Manistee County, and Grow Benzie for hosting us in Benzie County.
- With grant funding through the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), ISN started a new project which aims to manage baby's breath on private properties along Lake Michigan between Green Point Dunes and Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserves (both owned by GTRLC). ISN has contacted 15 private landowners between the nature preserves and is in process of gathering permissions from landowners to survey and treat baby's breath on their properties. This will help to effectively manage baby's breath populations within the preserves by eliminating outside seed sources.



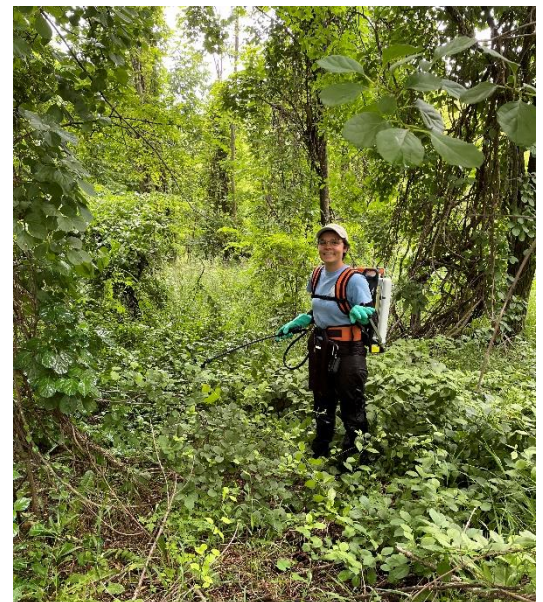
The presentation portion of the autumn olive workshop at Grow Benzie



- In addition to the education, outreach, and growth of the *Go Beyond Beauty* program within ISN's four counties, *GBB* has begun its state-wide expansion! The heart of our popular program, recognizing horticultural businesses and others for not utilizing high-priority ornamental invasive species in their businesses/landscapes, will be enacted by *GBB* "Hubs" (environmental organizations like CISMA's or partners). In FY 2022 we formally partnered with Friends of the St. Clair River in St. Clair County. We couldn't be happier to have such an enthusiastic bunch be our first *GBB* Hub and we've been learning a lot as this collaboration grows. Shelly has been hard at work behind the scenes but soon we will

be shouting from the rooftops! Keep an ear out for a new *GBB* website, future *GBB* Hubs, and an official statewide launch.

To close out ISN's already impressive accomplishments in 2022, we're excited to announce ISN's next potential big move: we are currently exploring the feasibility of becoming a non-profit 501c3 organization. Being such a well-founded and historically well-funded organization, this has been on our radar for a few years. Establishing ourselves as an independent organization could open even more opportunities to better serve our community and partners in all four counties.



Murielle treating invasive bittersweet on private land in Leelanau County as part of ISN's cost-share for landowners



Audrey surveying for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) in Benzie County

Should we decide that becoming a non-profit organization would be advantageous, ISN would be the first Michigan CISMA to take this step!

With all these wonderful achievements, you may be wondering how could ISN do even better? This winter we're resuming in-depth hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) surveys. So far, this invasive pest hasn't established in our service area, though we had a close call in Benzie County in 2021. If you live within ten miles of the Lake Michigan shoreline (which includes the Grand Traverse Bays) and have five acres of property, please contact Murielle to have us survey your property for free. Special considerations will be made for properties that are along the Manistee River or those that have bought hemlock stock from nurseries. Many thanks to Mason-Lake Conservation District who provides funding for these surveys.

We are also happy to announce that we have funding for a seasonal treatment and survey crew. Stay tuned as we put our heads together this winter to plan presentations, workbees, and events/workshops (sneak peek: invasive ID hikes, a focus on ornamental invasives, and an update about early detection species), as well as spread the word about *Go Beyond Beauty* in 2023 around the state!

We could not do any of this without our grantors, partners, and Northwest Michigan community. As always, we deeply appreciate your support for us and our mission. If you have any questions or concerns, never hesitate to reach out to us!

In the meantime, you can keep up with ISN by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or signing up for our quarterly E-Newsletter via our [website](#).

Yours in conservation,

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SINCE 2013 ISN HAS:

- Contacted 23,909 people directly through outreach
- Worked with 893 volunteers
- Surveyed 34,528 acres
- Treated 11,835 acres
- Restored 75 acres with native plants
- Worked with 13 nurseries, 20 landscapers/designers, & 47 other participants as a part of *GBB*

"Protecting, enhancing, & promoting Northwest Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management and outreach"

ISN's work is funded in part through grants from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (administered by the US Forest Service and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), the [Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program](#), Sustain Our Great Lakes (administered by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy), and the Good Neighbor Authority (a partnership of the US Forest Service and Michigan DNR), as well as cost-share from landowners and generous donations from supporters!