

ISN 2020 Annual Report

COVID-19 Note: 2020 has been a unique year for many of us in an incredible variety of ways. For the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN), this year has driven home how remarkably lucky we are to have the supportive, cooperative partnerships that we have all worked together to grow. When roughly 75% of ISN's budget was paused unexpectedly in April in response to Michigan Discretionary Fund restrictions, over half of our staff was laid off and many programs were abruptly put on hold. Over the next 4 months, partners with the US Forest Service and Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians worked with ISN staff to use our existing grants more flexibly and allow ISN to continue work at a base level. Other partners, from Conservation Districts and conservancies to garden clubs, *Go Beyond Beauty* businesses, and concerned community members shared education materials, fielded questions, and advocated for ISN in countless ways. With funding reinstated, we continue to be humbled by the outpouring of support and couldn't be more thankful for the work—visible and invisible—that kept our network going during a time when everyone, not just ISN, was struggling. **Thank you!**

IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC, ISN HAS:

- Surveyed over 1,500 acres of high-quality habitats for invasive species at over 250 sites
- Restored over 30 acres with native plants
- Treated over 500 acres of high-priority invasive species at over 300 sites (a similar number of sites to 2019!)
- Coordinated 5 garlic mustard dumpsters, 5 trainings, and 17 presentations
 - Engaged over 60 volunteers for over 100 volunteer hours (similar to 2019!)
- Contacted over 3,400 people in-person and over 500,000 using traditional & social media
 - Over 1,300 people contacted ISN for the first time to have their questions answered (WAY up from 2019!)
- Added 8 *Go Beyond Beauty* participants
- Responded to Early Detection reports:
 - Hogweed population possibly eradicated in Manistee
 - Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email

Annual Report:



The public, including budding conservationist Royal Ratliff, played a big part in garlic mustard control.

Winding down from the field season, attending conferences and trainings, and gearing up for the next season was once again punctuated with [hemlock woolly adelgid \(HWA\)](#) surveys in January. Despite pausing surveys in March, Invasive Species Specialist Audrey Menninga and HWA Technician Keith Ferguson surveyed over 110 sites and 1,200 acres and did not detect HWA anywhere in our four-county service area. Thanks to a grant extension, we plan to address missed sites and continue surveys in the 2021 winter season, working to spread awareness and look for this invasive insect.

Just as we were gearing up for a launch of garlic mustard workbees and on-the-ground work, funding was paused. However, garlic mustard dumpsters enjoyed all-time popularity and reporting from steadfast volunteers enabled us to capture a snapshot on these collective efforts, including over 120 bags reported. Habitat Management Specialist Fields Ratliff braved spring knotweed treatments alone, while Coordinator Katie Grzesiak quickly learned to turn an in-person workshop into an online webinar with topics ranging from ISN Partner Meetings to knotweed landowner education. Every day, we could feel the public engaging with natural areas more deeply; people contacting ISN for the first time surged (more than triple previous years), questions rained down (despite giving a fraction of our usual presentations, we had the same number of one-on-one contacts as before), and reports of people working in their gardens, back yards, and local natural areas for the improvement and protection of our world-class habitats were widespread.

When funding was reinstated in August, treatments increased, though we never had a crew; in all, we treated the same number of sites as a normal year, though our acreage was significantly decreased. Treatments focused only on a few of our highest-priority species due to our drastically reduced capacity: invasive knotweeds, black



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swallow-wort, Chinese yam, *Phragmites*, Oriental bittersweet, and butterbur. Giant hogweed, an early detection invader with a single population in Manistee County since 2014, had no plants present this year—we’ll continue to monitor it, but we’re excited to celebrate the early signs of eradication!

“It was such a relief that ISN was able to keep functioning, and that you now have your funding back. I feel like I’d be lost without ISN. Who else would I refer questions to?”
- Holly Wright



Phragmites treatments this fall provided gorgeous “Up North” scenery.

Of course, ISN’s work is much more than just treatments. Outreach Specialist Emily Cook consulted and edited videos, created print and online resources, coordinated online workshops and uploaded them to our [brand-new YouTube channel](#), and ran ISN’s burgeoning social media presence. Even with a sizeable gap in our output, we were able to contact over half a million people with our online presence, newspaper articles, and more. Early in 2020, we also rolled out our new way of prioritizing species in ISN’s service area: say hello to ISN’s [Top 12](#), [Early Detection](#), and [Awareness](#) species lists! We hope the Awareness lists in particular are useful to the public; we organized them by habitat after listening to what people thought would help them the most.

At the beginning of 2020, we were also awarded a grant to strengthen the ground-breaking [Go Beyond Beauty program](#)—including working to bring this garden-focused invasive species prevention program state-wide! Our *Go Beyond Beauty* Specialist, Shelly Stusick, joined our team in April—only to be laid off until September. We’re happy to have Shelly’s enthusiasm and expertise on our team, and even happier that she was able to wait to come back to us. Stay tuned over the next year to see how we grow this incredible program to recognize businesses and community members who commit to not selling or using high-priority invasive species.

ISN staff and partners are still working hard to catch up while planning the next round of surveys, presentations, treatments, *Go Beyond Beauty* growth, and events. If you have questions, want to get involved, or wish to schedule an engaging presentation to an interested group, visit www.HabitatMatters.org or contact Katie Grzesiak at kgrzesiak@gtcd.org or (231) 941-0960 x29.

ISN’s work is funded in part through grants from:

- The [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) administered by:
 - The US Forest Service
 - The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- The Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (www.Michigan.gov/invasives)
- 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.

SINCE 2013, ISN HAS:

Contacted **53,196** people directly through outreach
 Worked with **658** volunteers
 Surveyed **31,445** acres
 Treated **11,383** acres
 Restored **102** acres with native plants
 Worked with **10** nurseries, **15** landscapers, and **26** community participants as a part of *Go Beyond Beauty*



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**Leelanau Co. Private Property
Before and After, 2018 to 2020**



**Gr Traverse Co. Vandervoigt Lk.
Before and After, 2019 to 2020**



Knotweed treatment progress



Phragmites treatment progress



Partner recognition of our work

Autumn Olive Treatment: Chemical

Cut Stump

- Recommended in many situations
 - Low risk for drift/off-target
- Herbicides:
 - Triclopyr
 - Won't kill grasses
 - Glyphosate
 - Will kill grasses
- Any time of year except spring
 - Winter formulation considerations
 - Fall berries





Autumn Olive Landowner Workshop August 27, 2020