



Strategic Plan

Completed and Approved September 2018
Updated December 2019

Mission

To protect, enhance, and promote northwest lower Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management¹ and outreach.

Strategic Scope

The Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN) is a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) or Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) serving Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee counties. ISN focuses primarily on supporting and leveraging the partnerships upon which it is built to manage¹ invasive species. ISN cooperates and collaborates with nation-wide, state-wide, and other regional efforts, including other CISMAs through the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition and its Strategic Plan.

With a principal focus on terrestrial invasive plants, ISN also works to have expert knowledge regarding invasives of all types, including aquatic plants and animals, forest pests, terrestrial animals, and agricultural pests with habitat impacts, as well as the habitat implications of these invasive species. This may be achieved through training of staff, leveraging partner expertise and experience, and/or cooperating and participating with other knowledgeable groups and efforts outside of ISN's service area. ISN presently provides expertise and a gathering "place" for invasive species management in the region. This has been accomplished in a variety of ways, including staff (four full-time staff), outreach materials, volunteer events, presentations, contract invasive species control, restoration plantings, trainings, partner meetings, and seasonal crews. Seasonal crews have focused on either treatment (mechanical or chemical) or monitoring of invasive species and been composed of two to four people. ISN resources, including staff, crews, equipment, and outreach materials, are made available to partners whenever possible, thus increasing efficacy throughout the region.

This Strategic Plan is designed to be a guiding document, capturing the organization's goals, to be used to guide grant-seeking and inform funders so the specific work aligns with ISN's priorities. Deliverables may be specified by grants and donors. ISN staff and partners are encouraged to be creative in implementation of the Strategic Plan, and prioritize activities and resources that address multiple Goals and Strategies.

This plan is a living document, with the intention of being reviewed and changed annually. In addition, one Goal category will be reviewed in-depth in each quarter to ensure ISN's work is aligning with it, and that the Goal aligns with ISN's work.

Goals

1. Goals Regarding ISN's Role

- a. ISN is seen as the go-to source of information regarding invasive species in its service area
- b. ISN provides assistance and capacity building to partners
- c. ISN's budget is self-sustaining

2. Prevention & Education Goals

- a. No new invasive populations or species are established in northwest lower Michigan
- b. Northwest Michigan residents, policymakers, and visitors are aware of the threat of invasive species and the steps they can take to mitigate these risks
- c. Landowners and land managers are able to make informed decisions regarding invasive species on their property

3. Go Beyond Beauty Goals

- a. The public no longer plants or demands invasive species in landscapes/gardens
- b. *Go Beyond Beauty* is the standard of excellence for garden professionals in the region

¹ Management is defined as all aspects of reducing or eliminating the impact of invasive species on native ecosystems, regional economies, and human health including prevention, identification, control, and monitoring.

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- c. *Go Beyond Beauty* recognizes and celebrates the many levels of commitment by professionals and other groups
- d. Enrollment in *Go Beyond Beauty* is beneficial to participating businesses, whether through profits, staff knowledge, celebration by the community, or other

4. Management¹ Goals

- a. ISN and its partners have the ability to effectively manage invasive species
- b. Existing populations of high-priority invasive species are managed to a maintenance level²
- c. Long-term management strategies are implemented for source populations
- d. New invasive species and new populations are controlled early and effectively

Strategies	Priority	Supports Goals
A. Keep ISN functioning at a basic level	1	1, 2, 3, 4
B. Identify and utilize a positive, unified invasive species message for the region (<i>Habitat Matters</i>)	1	1, 2, 3, 4
C. Promote healthy native habitats and the benefits they provide to people, wildlife, and northwest Michigan	1	1, 2, 3, 4
D. Utilize consistent branding to identify ISN's products and projects	1	1, 2, 3, 4
E. Create, provide, and disseminate region-wide education and outreach materials using the message and branding in (A) and (B)	1	1, 2
F. Provide a central "space" for shared knowledge, questions, and information—in person and virtually—to better equip Partners and the public to manage invasive species	1	1, 4
G. Act as link between more widespread efforts and local invasive species work, including advocating for and disseminating research	1	1, 2, 3, 4
H. Seek new and non-traditional partner organizations, including other CISMAs	3	1, 2, 3, 4
I. Identify source populations of high-priority invasive species	3	2, 4
J. Monitor for new and expanding invasive species in accordance with best management practices	2	2, 4
K. Keep ISN's priority species lists up-to-date and reflecting the region's goals and priorities	1	1, 2, 4
L. Maintain contact with local governments (and others) regarding ISN's resources/services and invasive species ordinances	2	1, 2, 4
M. Provide partners with high-quality, up-to-date educational opportunities for partner staff and volunteers	1	1, 2
N. Assist partners with invasive species-related projects & events	2	1, 2, 4
O. Seek additional funding to diversify and strengthen ISN's budget	1	1
P. Host workbees, workshops, and other opportunities to educate the public regarding invasive species topics	1	2, 4
Q. Host workshops and share educational materials through <i>GBB</i> to teach businesses and the public about invasive ornamentals	2	2, 3
R. Create and implement tiers of involvement and commitment for <i>GBB</i>	3	3
S. Communicate with <i>GBB</i> participants regularly, looking especially for increased interest in not planting invasive species by customers & ways to achieve/improve this	1	2, 3, 4
T. Remove or simplify hurdles to joining <i>GBB</i>	2	3
U. Seek additional funding to diversify <i>GBB</i> 's budget	3	3
V. Collect, share, & promote best management practices for all high-priority invasive species	1	1, 4

² "Maintenance level" is the point at which a population of invasive species has been reduced to where it can be effectively managed by the landowner without unreasonable hardship (e.g. no more than weeding a garden) or to the point that treatment is needed every-other-year or less.

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W. Treat/remove top-priority species regularly and according to best management practices and prioritization, funding permitting	2	1, 4
X. Address high-priority invasive species vectors and put strategies in place to mitigate them	1	2, 4
Y. Manage source populations and other invasive species populations in accordance with long-term restoration plans	3	2, 4
Z. Prioritize and eradicate early detection species	1	1, 2, 4

Workplans

Workplan details will largely be set by funding deliverables and invasive species priorities, but these Activities will always link back to Strategies. Workplans will be created annually by the Coordinator and staff and approved by the Steering Committee. The following is an *example*, general workplan for a given year, and therefore might not address every strategy in the Strategic Plan:

Quarter	Activity	Notes & Specifics	Addresses Strategies:	Deadline	Lead
Ongoing	Update budget--reimbursements		A	Ongoing	Coordinator
	Keep Partners updated	Monthly reports, outreach materials, etc.	A, B, D, E, F, G, K, M, S, V	ongoing	Coordinator
	Reporting (esp. grants)	progress reports, weekly updates, monthly reports	A	Ongoing	Coordinator
	Participate in MISC	quarterly	A, G	Ongoing	Coordinator
	Update & participate in MISC forum		A, B, D, E, S	Ongoing	all
	Research grant opportunities		A, O, U,	ongoing	Coordinator
	Data management		A	Ongoing	HMS/all
	Work with GBB participants	Keep informed, meet need	A, P, Q, R, S, T, U	Ongoing	OS/all
	eNews	monthly	C, D, E, V	Ongoing	CS
	Presentations		C, D, E, G, L, M, N, P, V	Ongoing	OS/CS
	Update website		C, D, E, V	Ongoing	CS
	Update FB	≥2 posts/wk	A, B, C, D, E	Ongoing	OS/CS
	Work with road commission to inform of efforts and assist in ID and treatment. Establish no mow areas		A, F, G, H, I, J, L, M, V, W, X	Ongoing	HMS
	Work with interested townships to implement planning guide or update planning lists		A, E, G, L, V	Ongoing	CS
	Coordinate Steering Committee meetings		A	quarterly	Coordinator
	Update & print GBB inserts		A, B, C, D, E, S, V	Jan/May	OS
	Mentor other CISMAs	especially NC & CAKE	A, G	ongoing	Coordinator
	Submit permits for DNR properties		A, W, Y, Z	as needed	HMS
	Submit DEQ permits for aquatic Tx		A, W, Y, Z	as needed	HMS
	Create/update all outreach info		A, B, C, D, E, K, M, P, Q, V	as needed	OS
Research invasive topics		A, E, F, G, J, K, M, W, Z	ongoing	CS/seasonals	
Q1 Oct-Dec	GBB fall meeting		Q, S, T	Oct	OS
	GBB end of year survey		S	Nov	OS
	Fall workbees		P, W	Sept/Oct	OS/all

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	Performance Appraisals		A	Oct/Nov	Coordinator
	Late-year treatments (PH, woody)		J, W	Oct-Dec	HMS
	Summarize year's treatments		A	Nov/Dec	HMS
	EOY Report		A	Dec	Coordinator
	Prep data for MISIN		A	Dec	HMS
Q2 Jan-Mar	Post & hire Seasonal positions		N, W, X, Y, Z	Feb/Mar	Coordinator
	Data submission to MISIN		A	Nov/Jan	HMS
	GPS collection & calibration		A	January	HMS
	Pre-field equip purchases		A	Feb/Mar	HMS
	GBB spring meeting		Q, S, T	mar/Apr	OS
	Bid out large-scale treatments		W, Y, Z	Mar-July	HMS
	Establish year's priorities	treatment & restoration	A, I, J, K, W, X, Y, Z	March	HMS/Coord
Q3 Apr-Jun	Field season prep		A	Apr	HMS/all
	Host Partner Meeting		A, E, F, K, M	Mar/Apr	Coordinator
	Spring GM workbees		P, W	May	OS/all
	Spring restoration		C, X	May/June	HMS/Coord
	Spring JK treatments		W, Y	June	HMS
	Seasonal treatment & surveys begin		N, W, X, Y, Z	May	Coordinator
Q4 Jul-Sept	Summer treatments		N, W, X, Y, Z	Jul-Sept	HMS/seasonals
	Seasonal treatment & surveys conclude		N, W, X, Y, Z	Sept	Coordinator
	Fall restoration		C, X	Sept	HMS
	Fall Partner Meeting		A, E, F, K, M	Mar/Apr	Coordinator

CS = Communication Specialist

HMS = Habitat Management Specialist

OS = Outreach Specialist



- 1) **Partners**—ISN is only as strong as its Partners, and relies on them for support (e.g. knowledge, in-kind-match, communication, and more) and works to support Partners in their invasive species management endeavors (e.g. expertise, personnel, local forum for invasive species topics, outreach & control resources).
 - a) Active Partners have signed the US Forest Service Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Many serve on the ISN Steering Committee and are committed to the success of ISN through the sharing of knowledge, resources, and time.
 - b) Supporting Partners have not signed the US Forest Service MOU, but regularly attend Partner meetings or engage in ISN conversations/activities and are committed to the success of ISN. Supporting Partners may also serve on the Steering Committee.
 - c) All Partners will be invited to and encouraged to attend semi-annual Partner Meetings (usually spring & fall), though attendance is not a requirement for participation.
 - d) More regular communication with Partners will take place through the ISN Google Group. Communication in this setting can be from ISN to Partners, from Partners to ISN, and/or between Partners to best facilitate useful conversations.
 - e) Partners may be units of government, non-profit organizations, or even small citizen groups. Partners may join and leave ISN at any time.
- 2) **Steering Committee**—ISN will be governed by a Steering Committee of five to ten representatives from Partner organizations.
 - a) Steering Committee Duties and Procedures The Steering Committee ensures that the Coordinator is operating ISN in accordance with the Strategic Plan and the will of the Partners.
 - i. Meet quarterly to discuss ISN’s progress and trajectory, especially with regard to ISN’s Strategic Plan and Goals.
 - ii. Assist and advise Coordinator with decision-making outside of day-to-day operations, usually via email.
 - iii. Develop, review, and make recommendations to the Board of ISN’s Fiscal Agent with respect to pursuit of funding and legal/personnel matters.
 - iv. Generally speaking, decision-making and recommendations shall be accomplished through consensus. In the event that multiple opinions surface and continue, a verbal vote may be used; a 2/3 majority of those present is needed to pass.
 - v. Decision-making snafus
 1. Quorum—defined as one more than half of the number of those serving on the Steering Committee (e.g. if there are 8 members, 5 must be present for a meeting to be legitimate)
 2. Conflict of Interest—in the event that a Steering Committee member has a Conflict of Interest regarding issue before the Steering Committee, they should recuse themselves from the decision-making process. Another member of the Steering Committee may also request a member recuse themselves; in the event it is necessary, a 2/3 vote of the Steering Committee members present could remove a member from working with the Steering Committee and/or voting on a topic.

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3. Split Decision—in the event of a split decision, a topic may be tabled for the next meeting with further investigation, tabled for a special meeting, or sent to the entire Partnership of ISN for a vote.
 4. Request for input by all Partners—if the Steering Committee needs a ruling on a split decision or otherwise feels that the topic would be best served by discussion and vote by the full Partnership, the topic will be forwarded to the next Partner Meeting or a Special Meeting on the topic.
- b) Steering Committee Members An effort will be made to encompass the many types of organizations that make up ISN's Partner base (local, state, federal, & tribal governments, non-profits, education, terrestrial & aquatic, etc.). Steering Committee Members will serve 2 year terms, and be elected at the Fall ISN Partner Meeting.
- i. Chair Runs Steering Committee Meetings and works closely with the Coordinator to ensure day-to-day running of ISN is going smoothly and according to ISN's Strategic Goals. The Chair may or may not be the same as the Coordinator's supervisor.
 - ii. Vice-Chair Assists Chair with meetings and fills in for the Chair in assisting the Coordinator as needed; may be filled by two Co-Vice Chairs.
 - iii. A representative from the Fiscal Agent of ISN must always serve on the Steering Committee.
 - iv. In some cases, if a member is not able to make a meeting, they might send another member of their organization. This is subject to the agreement of the Steering Committee.
 - v. If a member is not able to fill their full term:
 1. If it is the member of the Steering Committee representing the Fiscal Agent, the Fiscal Agent will nominate another representative until such time as they can be voted in by Partners at the regular Partner Meeting.
 2. In the event that the Steering Committee feels that a member must immediately be replaced, they shall recruit & approve someone to fill the position until the next regular Partner Meeting.
 3. In the event that the Steering Committee does not feel that a member must be immediately replaced, they shall be replaced at the next regular Partner Meeting.
- 3) **Staff**—In a Partner meeting in 2010, Partners recognized that the work ISN was doing could be accomplished with or without designated staff, and would continue regardless of funding. However, as ISN has evolved, permanent staff have become integral to accomplishing its goals, as recognized at Partner meetings in 2014 and onward.
- a) Coordinator Required for the continued function of ISN, the Coordinator oversees the yearly workplan and daily function of the group with the guidance of the Steering Committee. This includes grant writing & management, supervising staff, implementing and working with staff to implement grants and contracts, and collaborating and coordinating with Partners. If an additional staff member is missing or needs assistance, the Coordinator will assist or take over those duties to the highest possible extent. When possible, the Coordinator also represents ISN state-and region-wide, including on the Michigan Invasive Species Core Team.

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- b) Additional Staff Critical to the high level of productivity at ISN, additional staff implement the many facets of ISN on the ground and allow the Coordinator to focus on big-picture work.
- i. Outreach Specialist Oversees outreach and education work by ISN, including events, presentations, creation & maintenance of printed resources, work with school groups, and overall messaging.
 - ii. Habitat Management Specialist Oversees invasive species treatment and habitat restoration, including working with the Coordinator to coordinate the work of seasonal employees. Permitting, permissions, and on-the-ground work are all under their purview.
 - iii. Invasive Species Specialist Oversees day-to-day work of crews (working with the Coordinator and Habitat Management Specialist) and completes treatments and monitoring. Works with the Habitat Management Specialist to assist with permitting, permissions, and reporting.
 - iv. Other Staff As ISN continues to grow, additional staff may be needed, or the above positions may change to better serve the needs of ISN and its Partners and service area.
- c) Seasonal Staff Seasonal or other short-term employees of ISN to assist with on-the-ground treatment and monitoring of invasive species.
- i. ISN Crew As funding permits, ISN will hire a small seasonal crew to assist Partners with invasive species projects as well as treat invasives on public and private lands. If the Crew has 3 or more members, a Crew Leader will be appointed to be the main point of contact.
 - ii. ISN Survey Technicians As funding permits, ISN will employ survey technicians to monitor invasive species, especially focusing on new populations and Early Detection and Response species. They may assist Partners and work on public and private lands.
- 4) **Funding**—Since 2005, ISN’s funding has been, by and large, from large grants. While ISN has enjoyed great success in grant writing, it has become clear that this is likely not sustainable in the long run.
- a) Current Funding ISN is currently supported mainly by grants from the Environmental Protection Agency, US Forest Service, and Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program. Smaller grants, contracts, donations, and cost-share from landowners also assist ISN’s work.
 - b) Future Funding While ISN’s funding is currently in good standing, grants cannot be counted on forever.
 - i. Create a business plan for securing and utilizing future funding
 - ii. Continue applying for grants to augment and support ISN
 1. ISN and ISN Partners will communicate openly regarding invasive species-centric grants applied for to increase cooperation and discourage conflict
 - iii. Seek additional funding for ISN’s continued function, including but not limited to:
 1. Explore a Fee-for-Service program with municipalities, Partners, etc.
 2. Continue and expand ISN’s cost share program to (help) cover seasonal worker costs
 3. Explore partners’ millage funding for diversification of ISN’s funding sources

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- 5) **Fiscal Agent/Liability**—while all Partners are encouraged to seek funding to support the functions of ISN, there will be one Fiscal Agent that assumes fiscal responsibility and legal liability for the organization and its employees.
 - a) The Fiscal Agent and its Board of Directors will be responsible for setting Employee Code of Conduct, approving funding applications, hold liability for employees and activities, and supervise employees
 - b) The Steering Committee will create recommendations or make suggestions to the Fiscal Agent’s Board of Directors regarding legal/personnel issues for ISN
 - c) Any Partner organization applying for invasive species funding should alert the group
 - i. If funding is for the Partner, simply share with the group at the nearest semi-annual meeting to keep everyone apprised
 - ii. If funding is for ISN activities or on behalf of ISN, the application requires the approval of the Steering Committee and written consent of the Coordinator
- 6) **Prioritization**—as a “hub” of invasive species information and expertise, ISN uses a combination of site and species priorities to educate partners and the public and manage species when funds are available:
 - a) Priority Species ISN Partners described a “Top 20” list of invasive species in 2010; this list is re-visited and updated annually.
 - i. In 2016, a “Focus Four” list was created to highlight those species in the Top 20 that ISN directly works on the most
 - ii. Early Detection and Response species (especially those not yet found in ISN’s service area) are an additional focus, both for surveys and management
 - b) Priority Habitats/Locations ISN focuses on high-quality habitats (e.g. relatively un-invaded wetlands), high-priority habitats (e.g. Lake Michigan sand dunes, wetlands), and high-risk areas (e.g. trailheads, boat launches, roadsides).



Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network Organizational Chart, 2018

Funder(s)

ISN Steering Committee

Chair: Becky Hill, Leelanau Conservancy
Co-Vice Chairs: Doug Barry, DNR-Parks
Members: Koffi Kpachavi, GTCD; Tad Peacock, BCD; Buzz Long, LCD; Josh Fields, MCD; Carolyn Henne, USFS; Jake Bournay, GTRLC, Melissa Witkowski, GT BOI, Monnie Peters

Manages direction and mission of ISN

Grand Traverse Conservation District

Fiscal Agent

Governed by Board of Directors
Executive Director supervises ISN Coordinator

Manages fiscal, legal, and liability aspects of ISN

ISN Employees

Coordinator

Katie Grzesiak

Habitat Mgmt Specialist

Fields Ratliff

Invasive Species Specialist

Audrey Menninga

Outreach Specialist

Emily Cook

Seasonal Employees

Volunteers

ISN Supporting Partners

See the full list at

www.HabitatMatters.org/our-partners

ISN Active Partners (2016 MOU)

- Leelanau Conservancy
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
- Inland Seas Education Association
- Benzie Conservation District
- Grand Traverse Conservation District
- Leelanau Conservation District
- Manistee Conservation District
- Huron-Manistee National Forest
- The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
- Michigan Natural Features Inventory