

ISN 2017 Annual Report

2017 was an incredibly productive year for the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN) as we continued *protecting, enhancing, and promoting northwest Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management and outreach*. With funding through the US Forest Service, US EPA (both grants from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) and the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (through the Quality of Life departments MDNR, MDEQ, and MDARD), we were able to accomplish a lot. Donations and cost-share funds made even more projects possible (thank you!). Projects in our Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee county service area have come to a close, and ISN workers and volunteers have been quite the busy bees!

THIS YEAR ISN HAS:

- Surveyed over 1,700 acres of high-quality habitats for Top 20 invasive species at over 300 sites
 - Plus over 1,000 mi road, 34 mi Great Lakes shoreline, 40 mi inland lake shoreline, and 100 river-miles
- Restored over 35 acres with native plants
- Treated over 340 acres of high-priority invasive species at over 175 sites
- Coordinated 12 workbees and 52 other events
 - Engaged over 140 volunteers for 360 volunteer hrs
- Contacted over 1,700 people directly and over 383,900 indirectly
- Responded to Early Detection reports:
 - 1 true giant hogweed (re-treated), 1 true black jetbead (no permission to treat)
 - 7 previously unrecorded non-native species county records
 - Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email



Volunteer pulling garlic mustard at Tank Hill in Benzie County, May 19, 2017

As usual, spring saw us scrambling in the woods after garlic mustard. Workbees and garlic mustard-themed lunches in each county were accompanied this year by our first-ever garlic mustard paper-making event! It was a fun experience to get people involved in re-using discarded materials AND using invasive species, all in one event.



Garlic mustard paper-making, May 13, 2017

We continued workbees throughout the summer, focusing instead on baby's breath at Elberta Beach in Benzie County. It's amazing how much of a difference a group of volunteers can make!



ISN's groundbreaking *Go Beyond Beauty* program to voluntarily remove invasive ornamental plants from trade grew in 2017 as well. We opened the program from just nurseries and landscapers to anyone maintaining a landscape—businesses, garden clubs, governments, and private landowners. That meant we nearly doubled our participation with 16 new groups! We were also able to provide participants signage, and increase the educational materials we share with garden professionals. Most notably, we created and distributed a rack card explaining why Japanese barberry wasn't available.

Go Beyond Beauty participant sign at Camp Arcadia, 2017



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We were also able to help remove the invasive ornamental Japanese barberry from many landscapes—first through a trade-up “dumpster day” program for private landowners. Participants removed barberry and brought them to ISN for disposal in exchange for a \$5 coupon to a participating *Go Beyond Beauty* professional. They were able to use these coupons to purchase a non-invasive alternative. To foster further support of local businesses, ISN also hosted a “buy-back program” to remove and replace barberry in business landscapes with native plants. In all, over 270 Japanese barberry plants were removed from landscapes. We’re planning to continue the trade-up program in 2018.



Barberry trade-up participants, May 13, 2017



Before and After: Veterans Oak Grove Drive (Manistee) knotweed populations in 2016 and 2017.

On-the-ground work didn’t suffer this year, either. Though we didn’t have our usual “check-out” crew for partners to use, we did have a team of Survey Technicians looking for new and expanding infestations of plants in our region. We also carried out a lot of treatments, both of large source populations of knotweed and *Phragmites* and of smaller satellite populations of barberry, *Phragmites*, knotweeds, and Oriental bittersweet to prevent them from turning into large infestations. We were also able to do something new: restoration! We worked with partners in all four of our counties to plant and protect native plants in areas that had been treated previously or were in need of native plants to help out-compete invasive species. What a welcome change! We can’t wait to do more in 2018.

Our grant success allowed us to bring on an additional full-time staff member: Rebecca Koteskey has been working hard since March as ISN’s Communications Specialist. Rebecca lives in Benzie County, and her previous two seasons with ISN made her transition into ISN smooth sailing. Her experience with ISN’s messaging and goals means that when she’s out working with local governments on ordinances and planting guides and managing our electronic resources, she’s a real expert. We’re excited to have Rebecca, and all the expertise and enthusiasm she brings, on the ISN team.



Leelanau Conservancy volunteers restoring native plants at Whaleback Natural Area, Leelanau County, 2017

If you have questions, want to get involved, or wish to schedule an engaging presentation to an interested group (school group, garden club, interest group, local government, or other) contact Katie Grzesiak at kgrzesiak@gtcd.org or (231) 941-0960 x29 or visit HabitatMatters.org.