

## ISN FY2018 Annual Report

2018 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*. Our projects for the fiscal year (October 2017-September 2018) have wrapped up to great success, with work in Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee counties. Funding through the US Forest Service, US EPA (both grants from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative), Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (through the Quality of Life departments MDNR, MDEQ, and MDARD) enabled ISN to accomplish a lot. Donations and cost-share funds made even more projects possible **(thank you!)**.



Volunteers learn garlic mustard ID at the Manistee county garlic mustard workbee. Magoon Creek Natural Area, May 18, 2018.

ISN also had a special opportunity to collaborate with artist Jane Kramer to not only showcase her beautiful [Foreshadowing](#) series at the Grand Traverse Conservation District, but to host a series of paper-making events! Attendees of the open-house were able to learn about Jane's process and inspirations. The following day, a limited class size worked side-by-side with Jane to make archival-quality paper from garlic mustard harvested in ISN's service area. ISN believes that art is a great way to communicate with the public, and Jane offered a fantastic new window to create and learn at the same time.

We continued workbees throughout the summer, partnering with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to focus on baby's breath at Elberta Beach in Benzie County. It's amazing how much of a difference a group of volunteers can make—the beach is looking so much better.

### THIS YEAR ISN HAS:

- Surveyed nearly 1,000 acres of high-quality habitats for Top 20 invasive species at over 400 sites
- Restored over 30 acres with native plants
- Treated over 700 acres of high-priority invasive species at nearly 400 sites
- Coordinated 19 workbees and 46 other events
  - Engaged nearly 80 volunteers for >170 volunteer hrs
- Contacted over 3,600 people in-person and over 488,000 using traditional & social media
  - Over 350 people contacted ISN for the first time to have their questions answered
- Responded to Early Detection reports:
  - Black swallow-wort populations reported & treated in Kingsley
  - 3 previously unrecorded non-native species county records
  - Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email

As usual, spring saw us scrambling in the woods after garlic mustard. Workbees and lunches in each county were a fun experience to get people involved in invasive species management first-hand. For the first time, ISN was able to work with local partners and the US Forest Service to place garlic mustard dumpsters in every county in ISN's service area for landowners to safely dispose of the invasive plant outside of workbee times. Special shout-outs to the City of Frankfort, Lake Township (Benzie), Leelanau Conservancy, Manistee Conservation District, and Grand Traverse Conservation District for hosting those dumpsters!



Learning to make paper from garlic mustard with fine artist Jane Kramer. Boardman River Nature Center, June 2, 2018.





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ISN's groundbreaking *Go Beyond Beauty* program to voluntarily remove invasive ornamental plants from trade grew in 2018 as well. Participation grew to 9 nurseries, 17 landscapers, and 25 other participants, with 8 new participants joining during the year! We were also able to provide participants signage and increase the educational materials we share with garden professionals.

*"A great example happened yesterday. A customer purchased plant material. I loaded her pickup and noticed she had a barberry she had purchased at Lowes. I asked her if she was interested in purchasing non-invasive plants. She said she was, and I explained our affiliation with ISN. She left Garden Goods and returned the barberry. All it takes is a little polite conversation and gentle explanation!" -Robin Smillie, Garden Goods*



*A truck full of barberry at one of the Japanese Barberry Trade-Up days. June 16, 2018.*

ISN also helped remove the invasive ornamental Japanese barberry from many landscapes in our second year of the Trade-Up program. Participants removed barberry and brought them to ISN for disposal in exchange for a \$5 coupon to a participating *Go Beyond Beauty* professional. Participants were able to use these coupons to purchase a non-invasive alternative. In all, over 225 Japanese barberry plants were removed from landscapes.

On-the-ground work didn't suffer this year, either. Thanks to stewardship-minded citizen Mary Ludwick, ISN was alerted to a brand-new invasive species for our region: black swallow-wort. This triggered a "rapid response" from ISN, working to get permissions from affected landowners, control the invasive plants, and work with volunteers to clip seed heads in areas we weren't granted permission to treat. In all, 26 sites and 4 acres in the village of Kingsley were treated. All that activity generated a lot of media attention springing from a [great video from Nature Change](#). Thanks much to everyone involved—this will be an ongoing project to not only be on the lookout for new populations in our area, but to continue to keep the existing plants in check.



*ISN Seasonal Crew controlling black swallow-wort at the Kingsley Library. August 6, 2018.*



Our "check-out" crew was back, working with partners and small private landowners rain or shine (but mostly shine) to treat everything from the newly-discovered black swallow-wort to invasive knotweeds, invasive thistles, Phragmites, and more. We were also able to continue restoration efforts in all four counties! We worked with partners to plant and protect native plants in areas that had been treated previously or needed native plants to help out-compete invasive species.

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, and others) visit [www.HabitatMatters.org](http://www.HabitatMatters.org) or contact Katie Grzesiak at [kgrzesiak@gtcd.org](mailto:kgrzesiak@gtcd.org) or (231) 941-0960 x29.

*Volunteers planting native plants in restoration project at Maple Bay Natural Area. September 5, 2018.*