



## ISN 2019 Annual Report

2019 was a whirlwind of activity 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 2018-September 2019) have been successfully completed, 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), Gerstacker Foundation, 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, cost-share funds, and providing fee-based services made even more projects possible. Thank you to those who worked with ISN this last year!



*ISN Invasive Species Specialist, Audrey Menninga, surveying for hemlock woolly adelgid*

The year started a little differently with field work taking place as the snow fell. Surveying for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) started in January and continued into early spring. This project is part of a larger-scale effort to stop the spread of HWA which has been discovered south of ISN's service area. The survey crew did an incredible job – a big shout-out to Audrey Menninga and Andy Harmon for remaining optimistic and working hard in unenviable conditions. Additionally, Audrey was hired on as ISN's fourth, full-time staff member. She is now serving as our Invasive Species Specialist and we are grateful to have her on board!

Winter lingered well into April this year, but garlic mustard demonstrated its hardiness by flourishing nonetheless. As in previous years, ISN hosted garlic mustard workbees in all four counties within our service area. We were also able to continue working with regional 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.

Thank you to the City of Frankfort, Lake Township (Benzie), Leelanau Conservancy, Manistee Conservation District, and Grand Traverse Conservation District for hosting those dumpsters! They serve as an excellent resource for folks who are actively managing their own invasive species.

### THIS YEAR ISN HAS:

- Surveyed over 6,000 acres of high-quality habitats for invasive species at over 400 sites
- Restored over 30 acres with native plants
- Treated over 1,200 acres of high-priority invasive species at over 300 sites
- Coordinated 10 workbees and 58 other events
  - Engaged nearly 60 volunteers for over 120 volunteer hours
- Contacted over 3,600 people in-person and over 400,000 using traditional & social media
  - Nearly 400 people contacted ISN for the first time to have their questions answered
- Responded to Early Detection reports:
  - Black swallow-wort populations treated in Kingsley
  - Hogweed population treated in Manistee
  - New species: Chinese yam confirmed in Grand Traverse County
  - Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email

*"It was a pleasure to work with Audrey, Cameron and Jessica last week. These folks are punctual, polite, diligent, informative and fun to work with. They accomplished even more than I had hoped for. Your organization has been a great help in reducing garlic mustard here at the CSA, and I look forward to working with them again next year."*

- Jim Boecker

Additional workbees continued throughout the summer, partnering with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to focus on baby's breath at Elberta Beach in Benzie County. This effort is now in year four and the improving health of the beach and dune is evident with the appearance of new native plants growing, like native dune grass, wormwood, and threatened pitcher's thistle.



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ISN's groundbreaking *Go Beyond Beauty* program to voluntarily remove invasive ornamental plants from trade had another successful year. We established new Achievement Levels for garden professionals and incorporated site visits for private landowners in an effort to grow the program and develop it into a more self-sufficient entity. ISN is excited to announce Old Mission Associates, LLC. as our first Gold Level Achievement participant. Their staff took part in an all-day intensive invasive species training covering everything from proper plant identification to best management practices. 8 nurseries and 14 other landscapers continue to keep their commitment to not sell or use high-priority invasive ornamentals.

ISN also helped remove the invasive ornamental Japanese barberry from many landscapes in our third 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 150 Japanese barberry plants were removed from landscapes. (More than 650 plants have been removed since the program started!) Cheers to Grow Benzie, in Benzonia, for being our second Trade-up site this year!

On the treatment end of things, our "check-out" crew worked with partners and private landowners to treat everything from the newly-discovered black swallow-wort in Kingsley to invasive knotweeds, invasive thistles, Phragmites, and more. Our hardworking crew of Audrey, Jess, and Cam treated and surveyed thousands of acres in rain and shine. We were also able to continue restoration efforts in our service area! 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.

The fiscal year concluded with three very successful autumn olive workshops – one in Leelanau County at Veronica Valley Park and two in Manistee County at Orchard Beach State Park. ISN staff and partners from the Manistee Conservation District, Leelanau Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and DNR teamed-up to educate community members on the best management practices for the highly invasive autumn olive shrub. ISN hopes to hold additional workshops in 2020, so stay tuned for those dates as we enter the new year.

ISN staff and partners are already thinking ahead to the next round of surveys, presentations, treatments, and events. 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.



*Josh Shields, from the Manistee Conservation District, helps educate community members on autumn olive management.*



*Old Mission Associates receiving their Gold Certification Training within the Go Beyond Beauty program.*

### **SINCE 2013, ISN HAS:**

- Contacted **19,189** people directly through outreach
- Worked with **596** volunteers
- Surveyed **29,952** acres
- Treated **10,887** acres
- Restored **72** acres with native plants
- Worked with **8** nurseries, **14** landscapers, and **21** other participants as a part of *Go Beyond Beauty*