



**Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP)
Strategic Management Plan**

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MISSION

The Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP) is dedicated to the conservation of the native species, habitats and landscapes of Oneida, Vilas, and Lincoln Counties in north-central Wisconsin. WHIP recognizes the threat of invasive species and will work cooperatively to provide education, monitoring and invasive species control.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Formed in 2009, the Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP) is a multi-partner organization created to share resources in order to prevent and manage terrestrial and aquatic invasive species in its three-county area. WHIP is one of approximately twelve Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) operating in Wisconsin (with many more nationwide), which connect multiple partner groups across jurisdictional boundaries for a united purpose.

Currently, seventeen partners have pledged participation in WHIP, including governmental agencies, civic groups, tribal entities, and environmental schools (see Appendix A). Recognizing the importance of cooperation and managing invasive species across borders, these partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to show their support for our shared mission. The MOU is renewed every 5 years. WHIP also collaborates with many non-MOU partners including educators, volunteers, and other interested groups.

Invasive species are known to be a constantly changing stress on the landscape, with significant impacts on the ecology and economics of our part of Wisconsin. Invasive species are moved around geographic regions through many pathways both natural (e.g., wind, waterways, bird dispersal) and human-mediated (e.g., recreation, vehicles, firewood). To address this multifaceted issue, this plan organizes our efforts into five main goals and lists associated objectives. The plan maintains an adaptive approach and may be modified regularly to reflect new research, national priorities, or newly emerging invasive species.

WHIP MANAGEMENT AREA

Location

WHIP's management area is defined as the lands and waters within the geopolitical boundaries of Oneida, Vilas, and Lincoln Counties in north-central Wisconsin (Figure 1). The largely rural 3-county region is home to an estimated 85,455 people. The area contains significant portions of forested land and farmlands towards the south, as well as the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians tribal lands. Vilas County (approximately 651,529 acres) is bound by Upper Michigan to the north, Forest County to the east, Oneida County to the south, and Iron and Price counties to the west. Eagle River is the county seat. Oneida County (779,235 acres) is bound on the north by Vilas county, on the west by Price county, to the east by Forest county, and to the south by

Lincoln and Langlade counties. Rhinelander is the county seat. Lincoln County (580,480 acres) is bound by Marathon County to the south, Oneida County to the north, Langlade County to the east, and Price/Taylor Counties to the west. Merrill is the county seat.

Landscape and Flora

Vilas, Oneida, and Lincoln counties contain areas of two of Wisconsin's Ecological Landscapes, namely the Northern Highlands and North Central Forest¹. The Northern Highlands landscape is characterized by pitted outwash plains, extensive forests and large peatlands, and has one of the highest concentrations of kettle lakes in the world. Soils are acidic and relatively unproductive due to low moisture-holding capacity and lack of organic matter. The North Central Forest's landforms are characterized by end and ground moraines with some pitted outwash and bedrock controlled areas. Kettle depressions and steep ridges are found in the northern portion. Climate data remain similar across the area though mean August highs are nearly two degrees warmer in the southern reaches, which influences plant growth especially invasives.

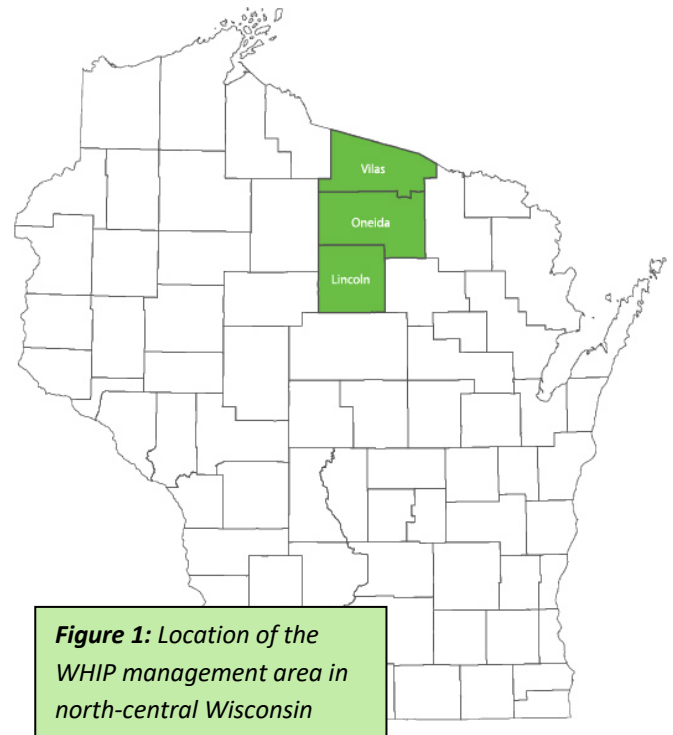


Figure 1: Location of the WHIP management area in north-central Wisconsin

The Northern Highland Ecological Landscape is recognized as one of the Upper Midwest's most important areas for inland lakes and their associated natural communities; the North Central Forest contains nearly as many lake resources. Both are home to large blocks of state and federal forestlands that act as buffers against development and important refuges for wildlife.

The area's forests are largely transitional between the boreal forest and the broadleaf deciduous forest zones.² In many locations, aspen has become more dominant than it was historically. Northern hardwood forests (sugar maple, basswood, paper birch, and red maple) are common throughout the area, along with pines (white, red, and jack), hemlock, spruce, and balsam fir forest types. The forests of Vilas, Oneida, and Lincoln counties are home to bald eagles, grouse, white-tail deer, songbirds, wolves, fisher, marten, and other small mammals. Beaver, muskrat, and mink are found in the lakes and streams along with large sportfish species.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. 2015. The ecological landscapes of Wisconsin: An assessment of ecological resources and a guide to planning sustainable management. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, PUB-SS-1131 2015, Madison.

² Bailey, Robert G. 2016. Bailey's ecoregions and subregions of the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Fort Collins, CO: Forest Service Research Data Archive. <https://doi.org/10.2737/RDS-2016-0003>

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Prevention through Education and Outreach

Outreach and education are paramount in the effort to slow the spread of invasive species. It is our primary goal to promote awareness of invasive species' characteristics, potential negative impacts, and pathways of spread. Prevention is also the most cost-effective way of managing invasive species, when compared to control and other repercussions. WHIP places a foundational importance on education and outreach to the public, with a focus on how visitors and residents can help to slow the spread of invasive species. In addition to programming, WHIP will also provide clear, direct, accessible, outreach material and up-to-date information on current invasive species populations throughout our management area.

Objective 1.1: Conduct educational programs for WHIP partners and the public to increase awareness of the negative impacts of invasive species and promote prevention.

Strategic Actions:

1. Conduct invasive species educational presentations across the entire WHIP area in public meeting areas such as libraries.
2. Respond to requests for invasive species education and training.
3. Assist WHIP partners in training programs for their staff and/or volunteers.
4. Conduct targeted education and training for specific groups such as recreationists, clubs, volunteer groups, etc.
5. Connect with public officials such as town boards and county boards to educate their field crews on invasive species topics and best management practices.
6. Work with area schools to create and implement ways of integrating invasive species topics into curriculum. Conduct field trips where possible.

Objective 1.2: Create and provide readily accessible outreach information and materials.

Strategic Actions:

1. Obtain existing educational publications and resources from other agencies and partners (DNR, USFS, UW-Extension) to distribute at public functions such as county fairs.
2. Maintain a current WHIP brochure to be distributed to the public at community events, and to be available at locations such as Lumberjack RC&D offices, libraries, and chamber of commerce offices.
3. Develop new materials as funding allows, such as:
 - a. General branded items to distribute to public at events (e.g., pens, stickers)
 - b. Targeted items for citizen and specific groups (clubs, gardeners, road crews, etc)
4. Reach a wide audience of both partners and the public, through the internet:
 - a. Provide accurate, updated, and interesting information on the WHIP Facebook page and website www.whipinvasives.org

- b. Use an email list of interested citizens to distribute items of interest.
- 5. Utilize print, radio, and television media to educate and announce invasive species topics.
- 6. Maintain signage as funding allows, to reach both residents and tourists at high traffic areas such as trailheads and along roadways.
- 7. Incorporate state and national campaigns to enhance local outreach materials (e.g., free materials from PlayCleanGo).

Objective 1.3: Maintain awareness of invasive species occurrences, research, and management.

Strategic Actions:

- 1. Encourage WHIP members to keep up-to-date on invasive species topics and occurrences by attending local and regional conferences, conventions, workshops, and meetings as able.
- 2. Use resources to keep WHIP members knowledgeable as invasive species issues are published and/or announced.
- 3. Promote sharing of information among WHIP partners and their colleagues.

Goal 2: Early Detection and Rapid Response

Since established invasive species can be costly or impossible to eradicate, WHIP recommends early detection of high-priority species wherever possible. This involves the adoption of a clear plan that identifies effective steps to be taken as new invasives are discovered. WHIP will facilitate quick communication and easy reporting of new infestations so that response can occur smoothly. Early detection and rapid response to new invasive species facilitates smaller, targeted, control measures with a higher return on investment.

Objective 2.1: Continually improve the capacity to detect and report potential invasive species.

Strategic Actions:

- 1. Create a list of high-priority invasive species to rank infestations for management (e.g., monitoring, pulling, control/eradication, etc) and update with Strategic Plan.
- 2. Identify locations in the WHIP area that are in need of early detection mapping/monitoring, such as places that have never been surveyed, areas deemed “high-risk” due to high traffic, and entry points like campgrounds or popular trails.
- 3. Submit all new reports of invasive species to EDDMapS. Assist in identification of unknown species if needed.
- 4. Repeat roadside surveys every 10 years as funding allows, to detect new species invasions on the landscape.

Objective 2.2: Quickly respond to newly discovered, high-priority invasive species in the WHIP area.

Strategic Actions:

- 1. Report new sightings to EDDMapS.
- 2. Follow protocol determined in Objective 2.3.

3. Secure resources such as WDNR's Early Detection Rapid Response funds to aid response.
4. Compile and maintain WHIP set of tools and supplies for use (loan) by Partners and volunteers to combat invasive species populations.

Objective 2.3: Develop an Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) focused on early detection and rapid response for high-priority invasive plant species.

Strategic Actions:

1. Create a list and map of known invasive species in the WHIP management area.
2. Update resources and information for each known species that threatens the WHIP management area.
3. Prioritize invasive species for management efforts using established methods.
4. Outline a protocol to follow when a new invasive species is reported, with consideration for information sharing and proper reporting pathways.

Goal 3: Control and Management

To confront the negative ecological and economic impacts caused by invasive species, WHIP expends resources for control and management, including times when eradication may not be possible. WHIP will advise partners to carry out control measures as needed, and will directly participate in implementing these measures if needed, as funding allows. In doing so, WHIP will employ an integrated management approach that may include any of the following control methods as appropriate: manual/mechanical, biological, chemical, or cultural. Where deemed necessary, WHIP's Coordinator may carry out herbicide applications on properties with the landowner's permission, under the umbrella of Lumberjack RC&D serving as the licensed commercial applicator business. WHIP's actions shall operate within the guidelines of

- the Lumberjack RC&D Council's Pesticide Policy
- the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)'s Pesticide Application licensing program
- all relevant state and federal laws.
- Details at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Licenses_Permits/CommercialApplicator.aspx

Objective 3.1: Collect, manage, and share invasive species information throughout the WHIP management area and across the region. Refer to ISMP for guidance.

Strategic Actions:

1. Maintain an updated spreadsheet of invasive locations within the WHIP management area.
2. Explore software options for managing the data and/or use Google Maps to share.
3. Share invasive species location data with WHIP partners and other interested parties.

Objective 3.2: Utilize available information to prioritize species control.

Strategic Actions:

1. Consider multiple factors when prioritizing including: past efforts, landowner support, available resources, population size, risk of spread, and local ecological/economic impacts.
2. Research management conducted by other CISMAs and Partner agencies.

Objective 3.3: Use an integrated approach to manage/control invasive species populations.

Strategic Actions:

1. Manage invasive species on a case-by-case basis to limit the economic and ecological negative impacts, using one or several of the following methods:
 - a. Manual/Mechanical: Includes techniques such as pulling, cutting, stressing or physically removing plants or seedheads. Can be used to control small populations.
 - b. Chemical: Herbicide application is sometimes the only effective way to achieve control due to plant physiology, population size, or other risk.
 - c. Biological: “Biocontrol” involves using animals, fungi, or other organisms to feed upon, parasitize, or stress a target invasive species.
 - d. Cultural: Includes methods such as flooding, smothering, prescribed burn, or using cover vegetation to affect invasive species.
2. Provide landowners information on control and management options for their own invasive species management.
3. Monitor controlled areas and revisit.

Objective 3.4: Maintain all required certification and licensing for herbicide applications.

Strategic Actions:

1. WHIP Coordinator will purchase manual for “Commercial Pesticide Applicator” training course through UW-Extension, including inperson exam to obtain Pesticide Applicator Certification for Category 6.0 Right-of-Ways and Natural Areas and renew every five years.
2. WHIP Coordinator will obtain annual Commercial Applicator For-Hire License through DATCP.
3. Lumberjack RC&D Council will obtain annual Pesticide Business License through DATCP.
4. Lumberjack RC&D Council will provide safe storage for all herbicides and related equipment.

Objective 3.5: Support Partner control projects as resources and time allow.

Strategic Actions:

1. Circulate planned activities to generate participation.

Goal 4: Conservation and Restoration of Native Species and Habitats

WHIP recognizes that the ecological consequences of invasive species can have a devastating impact on native species and habitats. Therefore, restoration efforts will be a component of all projects involving control and/or management, including follow-up visits to prevent re-invasion. WHIP will also seek to apply current best management practices and share these lessons with our partners.

Through both education and fieldwork, WHIP shall work toward a landscape with a biologically diverse assemblage of native species and native habitats.

Objective 4.1: Promote and help implement restoration of native species and habitat types in WHIP project areas where invasive species control or removal has occurred.

Strategic Actions:

1. Advocate for restoration through presentations given to public groups or Partners.
2. Attend and support Partner or volunteer-organized restoration efforts as resources allow.

Objective 4.2: Collect and share information on current best management practices for restoring native species and habitat types to disturbed sites.

Strategic Actions:

1. Dedicate a portion of the WHIP website to region-specific restoration information.

Objective 4.3: Track and revisit restoration sites to ensure those areas are not reinvaded.

Strategic Actions:

1. Maintain database of notes on restoration sites.
2. Revisit management options if new invasions become evident (Objective 3.2).

Goal 5: Organizational Structure

WHIP will present a clear message that clarifies our mission, goals, and objectives. Our long-term success is dependent on the structure and strength of the Partnership and our organizational documents, which must be regularly reviewed and modified if needed. As a grant-funded organization, WHIP will continually seek new funding opportunities to support and expand our activities. To strengthen our collaboration, WHIP will work to foster successful relationships with other organizations working with invasive species, particularly the network of other Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) in Wisconsin. Collaborating with neighboring groups will contribute toward a consistent and effective campaign against invasive species.

Objective 5.1: Maintain and update WHIP's organizational structure and guiding documents as needed.

Strategic Actions:

1. Maintain a regularly elected panel of officers with staggered terms.
2. Ensure partners are reminded that all are welcome to attend regular WHIP meetings to participate in the group's activities and planning.
3. Maintain at least one staff position to serve as group coordinator and grant manager.
4. Update governing documents as needed, striving for updates every five years.
5. Maintain communication and transparency by providing regular reports from Coordinator at each WHIP meeting.

6. Submit a quarterly report to Lumberjack RC&D describing WHIP's activities.

Objective 5.2: Seek funding opportunities to support and expand WHIP activities.

Strategic Actions:

1. Work with Lumberjack RC&D to apply for federal, state, and local grants.
2. Focus efforts on grants that can help sustain the Coordinator position.

Objective 5.3: Work across jurisdictional boundaries to maintain and enhance relationships with current and potential partners.

Strategic Actions:

1. Actively recruit new partners and informal cooperators for WHIP activities.
2. Maintain communication with partners through one Annual Meeting, and regular email communications throughout the year.
3. Work to create measurement tools to assess how effectively WHIP is helping its Partners and sharing resources.

Objective 5.4: Cooperate to develop and foster strong working relationships with neighboring CISMAs to strengthen the invasive species message.

Strategic Actions:

1. Work toward securing collaborative grant funding opportunities as they arise.
2. Regularly communicate with other coordinators and board members to share updates and information.
3. Attend conferences and meetings where possible to encourage idea exchange and prevent duplication of materials.

WORKS CITED

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Bailey, Robert G. 1995. Description of the Ecoregions in the United States.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/ecosysmgmt/index.html>

Oneida County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

http://www.ncwrpc.org/oneida/lwrmp/1%20Adopted-Oneida-LWRMP_OnWeb.pdf

Vilas County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

http://www.ncwrpc.org/vilas/lwrmp/0%20Adopted_Vilas_LWRMP_Oct-2014_OnWeb.pdf

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. <http://dnr.wi.gov/landscapes/>

Appendix A:**WHIP PARTNERS**

United States Forest Service, Chequamegon – Nicolet National Forest

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands

The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Chapter

Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.

Oneida County

Vilas County

Lincoln County

Partners in Forestry Co-op

Town of Newbold

Trees for Tomorrow Natural Resources Specialty School

Northwoods Land Trust

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Blackwell Job Corps