



**Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP)
Strategic Management Plan
2016**

DRAFT

Draft February 29, 2016

MISSION

The Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP) is dedicated to the conservation of the native species, habitats and landscapes of Oneida and Vilas 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 two-county area. WHIP is one of approximately 12 Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) operating in Wisconsin (with many more nationwide), which connect multiple partner groups for a united purpose.

Currently, fifteen formal Partner groups have pledged their voluntary participation in WHIP, including governmental agencies, civic groups, tribal entities, and environmental schools (see Appendix A for a complete list). Recognizing the importance of cooperation and the awareness that invasive species must be managed across jurisdictional 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 informal partners including educators, volunteers, and other interested groups.

Invasive species are known to be a constantly changing stress on our management area, with significant impacts on the ecology and economics of our landscape. There is a constant threat of new introductions on the horizon, as well as newly evolving ways of dealing with current infestations. To handle these issues in a systematic way, the WHIP Strategic Plan outlines major goals and associated objectives that will be met as resources provide. To maintain a dynamic and adaptive approach, this document may be modified regularly to reflect new research, national priorities, or regional invasive threats.

WHIP MANAGEMENT AREA

Location

WHIP's management area is defined as the lands and waters within the geopolitical boundaries of Oneida and Vilas Counties in north-central Wisconsin (Figure 1). The largely rural 2-county region is home to an estimated 57,050 people. The area contains significant portions of forested or otherwise undeveloped land, as well as the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa 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.



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

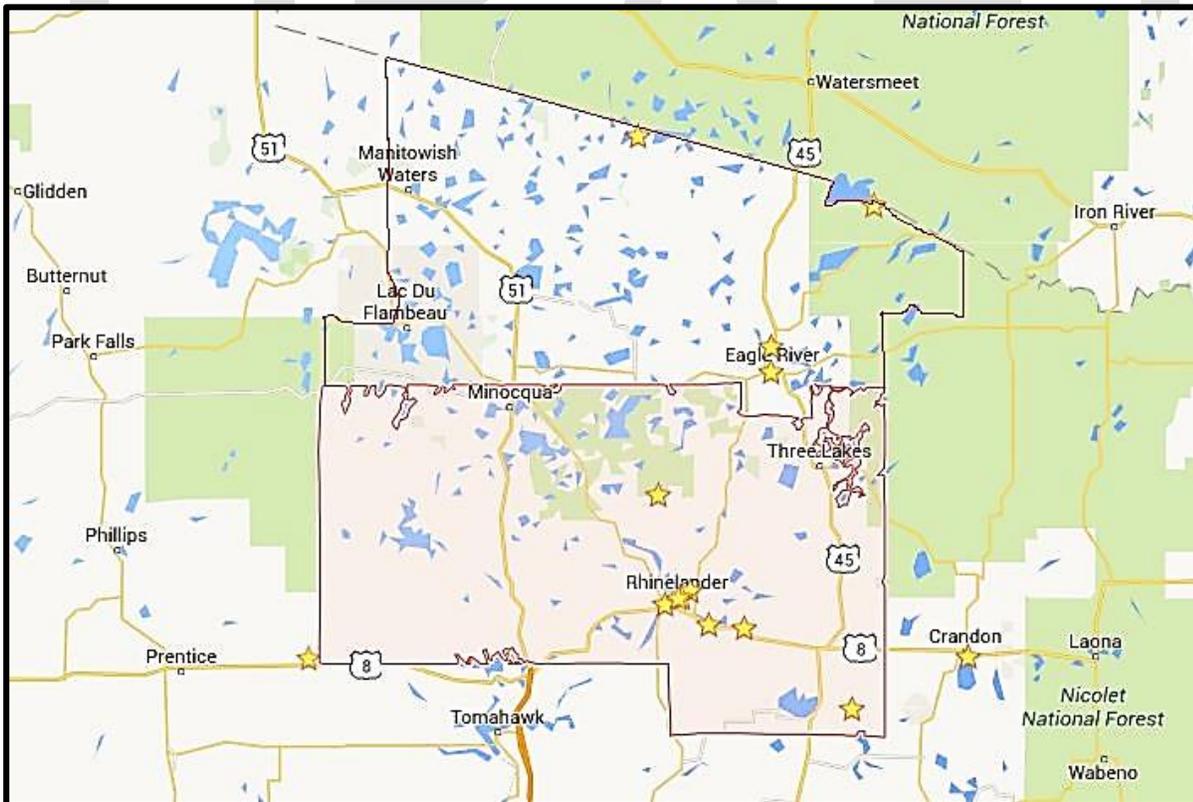


Figure 2: WHIP's management area consists of Oneida and Vilas Counties

Landscape

Vilas and Oneida counties fall within the Laurentian Mixed Forest ecoregion (Bailey 1995) and contain areas of two of Wisconsin's Ecological Landscapes, namely the Northern Highlands and North Central Forest (Wisconsin DNR 2010). 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.

Wildlife and Flora

The forests of Vilas and Oneida 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.

This ecoregion lies between the boreal forest and the broadleaf deciduous forest zones and is therefore largely transitional (Bailey 1995). In many areas, 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.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Prevention through Education and Outreach

The role of outreach and education cannot be overstated in the effort to slow the spread of invasive species. Awareness of the characteristics and potential negative impacts of invasive species is essential to meeting the goals of WHIP and its Partners. Prevention is also the most cost-effective management strategy. Therefore, WHIP shall place a primary importance on education and outreach to the public, with a focus on how both 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 members of the public to increase awareness of the negative effects of invasive species and encourage 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 easily 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:
 - a. General items to distribute to public as needed at events (e.g., pens, signs, posters, pamphlets, other)
 - 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 announcements and invasive species updates.
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., PlayCleanGo, Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers, etc).

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

Strategic Actions:

1. Encourage WHIP staff, Steering Committee members, and Partners, 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 staff and members knowledgeable as invasive species issues are published and/or announced.
3. Promote sharing of information among WHIP Partners, members, professionals, and others.

Goal 2: Early Detection and Rapid Response

Since established invasive species can be costly or impossible to eradicate, WHIP advocates 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). Update prioritization frequently.
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. Determine a protocol to follow if a new invasive species is discovered or reported, with consideration for information sharing and proper reporting pathways.
4. Record new reports of low-priority invasive species. Assist in identification of unknown species if needed.
5. Repeat roadside surveys every 5 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 the Great Lakes Early Detection System.
2. Follow protocol determined in Objective 2.1.
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. Seek Partner input to guide ISMP recommendations and actions.

Goal 3: Control and Management

In recognition of the negative ecological and economic impacts caused by invasive species, WHIP supports the control and management of these species even for those which eradication may not be possible. WHIP will encourage control measures in our area, and will directly participate in implementing control measures as funding allows. In doing so, WHIP will seek to employ an integrated management approach that may include any of the following control methods depending on the species and setting as appropriate: manual/mechanical, biological, chemical, or cultural. WHIP's actions shall operate within the structure of the Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council's Pesticide Policy according to relevant state regulations.

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: e.g., Microsoft Excel, Access, and mapping software such as quantum GIS.
3. Share invasive species location data with WHIP partners and other interested parties as requested. Enter any new reported data into the Great Lakes Early Detection Network.

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/density, risk of spread, and local ecological/economic impacts.

2. Research management conducted by other CISMAs and Partner agencies, to incorporate into our response.

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 in order 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 their seedheads. Can be used to control small populations.
 - b. Chemical: Occasionally, herbicide application is the only practical way to control an invasive 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 and/or control.
3. When conducting any control work, WHIP will adhere to all legal requirements regarding property ownership, herbicide application, and equipment use. WHIP will obtain all landowner permission, records, and copies of required certification in accordance to our Pesticide Policy as developed by our fiscal agent Lumberjack RC&D (2015).
4. Monitor controlled areas and revisit.

Objective 3.4: 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 formal and informal 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 must present a clear and organized 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. Cooperating and 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. Retain a Steering Committee of Partner representatives whose responsibilities are guided by WHIP's Roles and Responsibilities document (2015).
3. Maintain at least one staff position to serve as group coordinator and grant manager.
4. Update governing documents as needed.
5. Incorporate Action Team structure to encourage participation in WHIP activities.
6. Maintain communication and transparency by providing weekly and/or monthly reports from Coordinator.
7. Submit a quarterly report to Lumberjack RC&D describing WHIP's activities.
8. Write an annual Work Plan.

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 sustain the Coordinator position.

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

Strategic Actions:

1. Actively recruit new formal Partners and informal cooperators for WHIP activities.
2. Maintain communication with formal WHIP Partners through at least 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

United States Census Bureau. Accessed on February 2, 2016 online at www.census.gov

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/lwrm/1%20Adopted-Oneida-LWRMP_OnWeb.pdf

Vilas County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.
http://www.ncwrpc.org/vilas/lwrm/0%20Adopted_Vilas_LWRMP_Oct-2014_OnWeb.pdf

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

Appendix A:

WHIP FORMAL 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

Partners in Forestry Co-op

Conserve School

Trees for Tomorrow Natural Resources Specialty School

Northwoods Land Trust

Wisconsin Department of Transportation