



# CWMA Cookbook: A Recipe for Success

A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Develop a  
**Cooperative Weed Management Area**  
in the Eastern United States

This cookbook was adapted from “CWMA Cookbook: A Recipe for Success” created by Rick Van Bebbler and the Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee. Many thanks to the Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee for their assistance with this project.

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## Cover Photo Credits:

*Left to right*

**Black swallowwort** (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*)

David J. Eagan

**Northwoods CWMA Group**

Carmen Chapin, Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team, National Park Service

**Garlic Mustard** (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Ellen Jacquart, Director of Stewardship, Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy

**School children participating in an invasive plant education program**

Stori Snyder and Stacy Duke, Invasive Species Education Project, Hilltop Garden and Nature Center and Hoosier National Forest

**Amur honeysuckle** (*Lonicera maackii*)

John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy

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## Executive Summary

Cooperative weed management is not a new concept. State, federal, and private land managers have worked together to combat invasive plants for years, but often the scale of the cooperative effort is confined by political or land ownership boundaries. As anyone who has grappled with invasive plants can tell you, invasive plants know no boundaries. Even the diligent, intensive control efforts of land managers won't be successful in the long run, if invasive plants can find refuge on a neighboring property. Despite major inputs of time and resources in controlling invasive plants, these species continue to spread.

Land owners and managers in the West decided that a new approach was needed to collectively combat common invasive plant problems. Local citizens, landowners, and not-for-profit groups joined together with city, county, state, tribal and federal officials to create Cooperative Weed Management Areas or CWMA. CWMA are local organizations that provide a mechanism for sharing invasive plant management resources across jurisdictional boundaries in order to achieve widespread invasive plant prevention and control in a broader geographic region. Significant gains were made by the initial CWMA as neighbors began to work together. Physical and social barriers faded as partners experienced new success in dealing with a common problem.

**The term CWMA refers to a local organization that integrates all invasive plant management resources across jurisdictional boundaries in order to benefit entire communities.**

The Eastern states share the same types of problems with invasive plants that are encountered in the West, yet in the East we also have some unique challenges. Western states have vast areas of land owned by the federal government, whereas in the East there are fewer federal holdings. In the East, land also tends to be divided into smaller parcels, unlike the West where single owners often own large tracts of land. Another difference in the East is the much higher density of human population than most Western states have. Finally, counties in Western states often have County Weed Supervisors who are active in local invasive plant control and help create and enforce county weed laws; in the East, very few states have county employees who are responsible for invasive plant management and supervision or sufficient state or municipal weed laws.

Keeping these differences in mind, we have adapted the CWMA concept for use in the Eastern U.S., including all states from the East Coast to the central U.S., extending to the western edges of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. This guide is intended to provide the tools and information needed for the development of CWMA in the Eastern states. The steps to creating a successful CWMA are presented in chronological order; depending on the specific circumstances of your community, the order of the steps may vary. We hope that you will use this cookbook as a general guideline rather than as a recipe that needs to be followed to the letter.

# What is a Cooperative Weed Management Area?

Cooperative Weed Management Areas, or CWMA, are local organizations that integrate all invasive plant management resources across jurisdictional boundaries in order to benefit entire communities. This is a new approach to invasive plant management that was developed by our neighbors in the West to combat common invasive plant problems. Many Western CWMA were started by local citizens, city, county, state, tribal, and federal leaders to more effectively control invasive plants across property ownership boundaries.

Many local communities have established informal partnerships to work together with others in combating invasive plants. Informal partnerships can and have accomplished great things in many areas, but the formal agreement created during the formation of a Cooperative Weed Management Area establishes a long-term relationship that won't disappear after a joint project is completed. This formal agreement creates a mechanism for ongoing resource-sharing and collaboration that can be a highly effective long-term strategy for dealing with a long-term problem.

There is no one right way to form a CWMA and no formal certification of such groups. No matter how a partnership was formed or what it is called, it is considered a CWMA if it has all the elements listed in the text box on this page.

The CWMA concept has taken off in recent years, with several western states now having almost complete coverage by CWMA. Because of the achievements of CWMA in the West in improving monitoring, prevention, and control of invasive plants, as well as raising awareness in local communities, there has been heightened interest in the CWMA concept in other parts of the country. This guide is meant to aid in the organization and operation of CWMA in the Eastern United States.

## A CWMA

- Is a local weed management organization
- Is led by a steering committee
- Is formally organized under an agreement
- Facilitates cooperation and coordination
- Networks across all jurisdictional boundaries



Map of the United States. The dark area indicates the Eastern states addressed in this CWMA Cookbook.

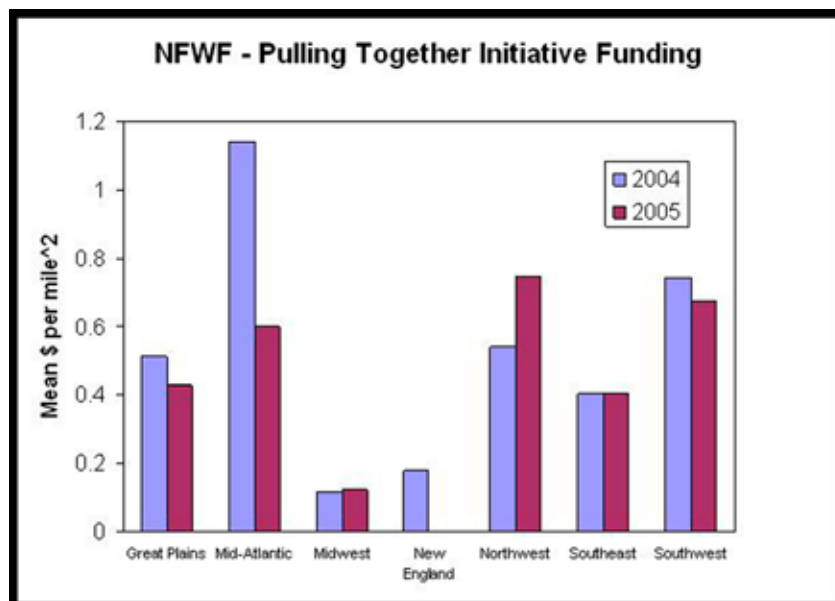
## Why form a CWMA?

CWMAs allow you to cross boundaries; invasive plant management can be carried out along ecological, rather than political, boundaries. They allow partners to share and leverage limited resources (volunteers, tools, herbicides, mailing and printing costs, media contacts, etc.) to the benefit of all. They are highly visible, building community awareness and participation as well as focusing attention and presenting a united effort to state and federal legislators. They can also reduce the risk of control efforts to water, crops, threatened and endangered (T&E) species, and other resources by assuring that all partners are using best management practices. CWMAs can provide an early detection and rapid response network by ensuring that all the partners are aware of and are able to identify new invaders and have a response mechanism. Finally, CWMAs can help you secure funding.

One of the major sources of funds for invasive plant control is the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Pulling Together Initiative (PTI). The Midwest and New England have received much less funding than from the PTI program than other regions, and this is probably due in large part to the lack of CWMAs in these regions. The PTI program encourages funding of multi-partner organizations working across boundaries on invasive plant species issues, since this kind of partnership has proven to be successful. Having an established CWMA can position you to access this funding source, as well as many others.

### What Do CWMAs Do?

- Education and Awareness
- Prevention
- Early Detection and Rapid Response
- Monitoring
- Integrated Pest Management



## An Eastern CWMA Example

### *Long Island Invasive Species Management Area*

Long Island, New York is faced with some unique conservation challenges. At its westernmost end, the island is a highly urbanized part of New York City, including the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn. At its easternmost end, the island is much less populated, dominated by pine barrens, beaches, farmland, and an increasing number of vacation homes. Faced with a wide variety of land use types, numerous land owners, and growing problems associated with invasive plants, The Nature Conservancy and partners decided to establish the Long Island Invasive Species Management Area (LIISMA) in 2001 (originally named the Long Island Weed Management Area, LIWMA). Their goal was to reduce the threat posed by invasive plants to native ecosystems on Long Island. The LIISMA held their first meeting in September 2001. At that meeting, they selected a steering committee and quickly got started on a number of projects.

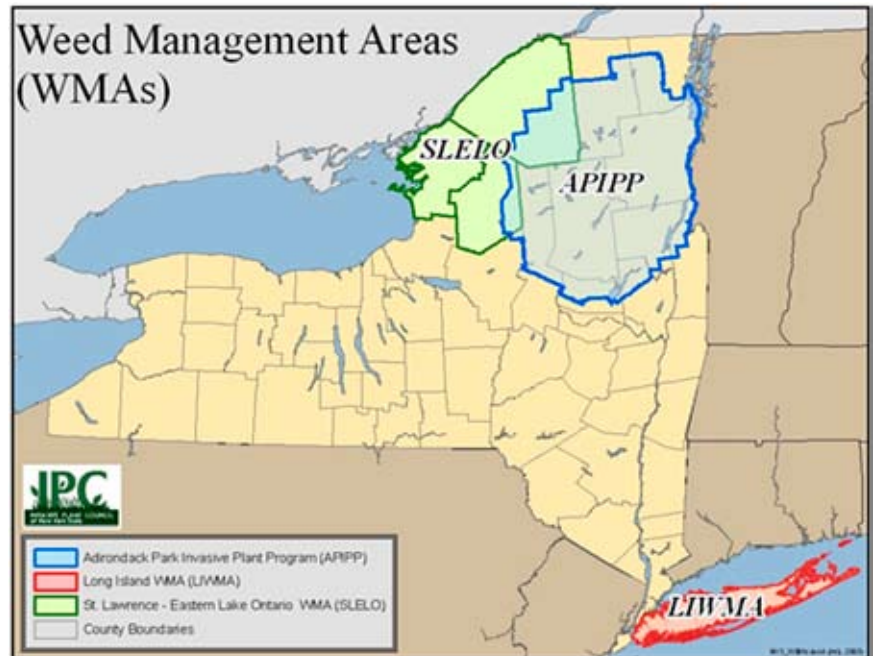


*Polygonum perfoliatum* (mile-a-minute)  
Photo: Britt Slattery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,  
[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)

In their first year, the Long Island group established a volunteer Weed Watchers group and trained them in early detection and eradication methods. They began working to eradicate mile-a-minute (*Polygonum perfoliatum*), and undertook control efforts for common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*). The LIISMA also developed educational materials to help with identification of some of the worst invasive plants on Long Island.

By December 2002, the group had written a strategic management plan, which was adopted by 14 partner agencies. Their plan incorporated a number of elements, including inventory, prevention, early detection, control, revegetation, monitoring, and public education. The group's enthusiasm continued in their second year, and their list of accomplishments continued to grow, including: mapping weeds on 800 acres of the Pine Barrens Core Preserve; assisting in drafting legislation for New York's Invasive Species Task Force; identifying new infestations of giant hogweed, mile-a-minute, swallowwort, and Japanese barberry; working with the horticultural industry, which led to the New York State Landscape and Nursery Association adopting the St. Louis Codes of Conduct for invasive plants ([www.centerforplantconservation.org/invasives/codesN.html](http://www.centerforplantconservation.org/invasives/codesN.html)); creating educational materials, including fact sheets and PowerPoint presentations about invasive plants; and hiring a marketing firm to help publicize their accomplishments. The Long Island Invasive Species Management Area has now been operating for several years and has had continued success.

Another New York group, the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), evolved around the same time as LIISMA. APIPP is a CWMA working to monitor, map, prevent, and control invasive plants in the Adirondacks. Initiated in 1998 and formally established in 2003, APIPP has developed an Invasive Plant Action Plan, which includes both a strategic plan and a plan for implementation. Their work is divided into two projects, an Aquatic Invasive Plant Project and a Terrestrial Invasive Plant Project. Local landowners, volunteers, government agencies, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners have all helped the APIPP to create strong early detection and rapid response and control programs. Both Long Island and the Adirondacks served as models for the St. Lawrence - Eastern Lake Ontario Weed Management Area (SLELO), and for other CWMA's developing in New York state.



Map of New York State Cooperative Weed Management Areas  
 Invasive Plant Council of New York State,  
[www.ipcnys.org/sections/resources/weed\\_management.htm](http://www.ipcnys.org/sections/resources/weed_management.htm), 2005



Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and black swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*) are two of the focus species of the LIISMA.

Photos: Giant hogweed (left) Donna R. Ellis, University of Connecticut, [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org);  
 Black swallowwort (right) David J. Eagan



# Organizing a CWMA

## 1. Start with an initial leader or champion.

A key element to the success of a CWMA is having someone who is excited about cooperative weed management to lead the group as it forms. This leader or champion should have energy, commitment to creating a successful organization, and the time and ability to motivate others to participate. The main tasks of the champion are to invite potential partners, organize and run meetings, make calls, keep the group moving towards getting organized, and make sure agreements (MOU/MOA) are reviewed and signed by all partner groups.

**The CWMA champion is a short-term role and he or she should lead only until the CWMA is fully organized and operating, at which time a chairperson and vice-chairperson assume leadership responsibilities.**



The ability to bring people together and good communication skills are important in a champion.  
Photo: Ellen Jacquart, The Nature Conservancy

## 2. Establish geographic boundaries.

CWMAs can be organized in a variety of ways. Some follow political boundaries, e.g. one or several counties, and some follow ecological boundaries, e.g. watersheds. Determine the scale at which you plan to work and the appropriate

geographic boundaries for your area. If your CWMA covers a large geographic area, you may want to consider organizing the CWMA into smaller administrative subunits such as basins, watersheds, or management zones.

As the CWMA develops and you begin to bring on potential partners, you may need to revisit the extent of the area your CWMA will cover. If you decide to stretch your proposed boundaries to incorporate another interested partner or land feature, remember that while your CWMA needs to be big enough to address your weed problems, it also needs to remain manageable.

Coordinate CWMA boundaries with adjacent CWMAs to avoid excluding areas or overlapping boundaries. Do not extend or reduce your CWMA without careful consideration. CWMAs can vary in size from multiple counties to a single municipality.



The River to River CWMA, a partnership involving eight different agencies in southern Illinois, includes several counties bounded by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.  
Map courtesy of River to River CWMA

### 3. Identify potential partners and begin building support.

Once the boundaries of a CWMA have been defined, participation from each major land management entity within the boundaries of the CWMA is critical. Remember to include federal, tribal, state, county, and local government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, public utilities, transportation departments, corporate landowners, private landowners, universities, and Extension staff to ensure success of your CWMA. If there are County Weed Supervisors within the boundaries of your CWMA, be sure to get them involved early on in the process.

Find out who in your area is impacted by invasive plants, and if there are people intentionally or unintentionally spreading them. Identify each potential partner's needs, concerns, and the resources they have to offer. Notify your state invasive plant or weed coordinator and seek their assistance in organizing your CWMA. Find someone in your state with authority and knowledge on state noxious weed laws and state invasive plant policies who can work with your group. For more information on authorities and contacts in your state, visit [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).

Hold public meetings with county commissioners and local media to build awareness. Meet with local, state, and federal land managers as they may provide significant resources to a Cooperative Weed Management Area. Continue building support through each layer of agency administration for each potential partner until representatives with authority to sign agreements are engaged.

#### What are RC&Ds and SWCDs?

##### Resource & Conservation Development Councils (RC&Ds)

RC&Ds encourage and improve the capability of volunteer, local elected, and civic leaders in designated RC&D areas to plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development. Program objectives focus on "quality of life" improvements.

##### Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)

Working on a wide range of conservation issues, SWCDs provide conservation assistance through a network of conservation districts and local offices.

Local Resource & Conservation Development Councils (RC&Ds) and Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) may also be important participants if they exist in your area. Private landowners are also critical partners and may be the catalyst that brings the CWMA together.

Convey the importance to potential partners of using cooperative efforts to address shared problems. Weeds know no boundaries; it is only by eliminating boundaries that a weed management program will succeed. Partners should understand that combining resources results in greater benefits for everyone.

**Cooperation on a broad scale is the most effective way to prevent and control invasive plants.**

#### 4. Determine common goals.

Invasive plants have negative impacts on our environment, economy, and human health. Agriculture, fishing, hunting, recreation, property values, and the quality and integrity of natural areas are all affected by the presence of invasive plants.

Different individuals or groups in your area may have different reasons for their concerns about invasive plants. Some partners may be concerned about maintaining property values or the economic viability of an agricultural crop, while others might be concerned with preserving habitat quality for nesting birds or protecting a rare plant from encroaching invasive vegetation.

Despite having different reasons for concern, people with different interests may be able to agree on specific species or issues that are of concern to all of them. A CWMA may form around the common desire to control a specific species such as garlic mustard, a group of species such as woody invaders of forests, or a common concern such as early detection of new invaders. Talk to neighbors and community leaders about invasive plants to find out which issues you all agree on. **Find at least one common concern, and focus on it to initiate a CWMA.**



#### 5. Choose a CWMA fiscal manager.

**A CWMA needs to establish fiscal capabilities for the receipt of funds and to make expenditures.** The CWMA will probably be seeking outside funding in the form of donations and grants, which require additional accountability and careful management.

Direct receipt of federal funds by a CWMA requires a federal tax identification number. Applying for and receiving separate non-profit or 501(c)(3) tax status is one option, but it will require significant staff time to manage funds and paperwork for the CWMA.

Another possibility is to enlist a county, municipality, or non-governmental organization (NGO) as the CWMA fiscal manager. Counties, municipalities, and NGOs have tax numbers and may have staff trained in managing grants and other funds. You may be able to make an arrangement for one of these groups to charge your CWMA a fee for administering finances, such as a percentage of grant funds received. However, some counties may not be interested in this approach. Check with local governments within your CWMA to see if this option is available.

Utilizing a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council as your fiscal manager has many advantages. RC&Ds have non-profit status with a tax number, as well as expertise in grant management and preparing reports. RC&Ds may charge an administration fee. **RC&Ds can be important partners, especially for larger CWMA with significant funding.**

A CWMA may be initiated to control the spread of *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), a highly invasive species. Photo: Ellen Jacquart, The Nature Conservancy

## 6. Hold a public meeting, and invite all partners.

Once you have the logistics of financial management and the overarching goals of the CWMA ironed out, it is time to hold a public meeting to increase participation and support for your CWMA. Take care to invite all major landowners and stakeholders within your established geographic boundaries. **The more participation and assistance you have, the more likely the CWMA is to succeed.**

As the CWMA develops, be sure to keep all partners informed about CWMA activities and accomplishments. Send agendas, meeting schedules, and minutes to all partners. Consider setting up a web page for your CWMA to facilitate communication.



An example of an invasive species, *Convolvulus arvensis* (field bindweed), beginning as a single plant, progressing through an infestation of an entire field.  
Photo: Barry A. Rice, The Global Invasive Species Initiative, The Nature Conservancy

## 7. Establish a steering committee.

The steering committee will organize members, establish priorities, make assignments, and accomplish the goals that brought participants together. This group will provide direction, identify opportunities, and generally further the common goal of cooperative invasive plant management.

**Ensure broad representation on the steering committee.** Rotate membership to provide participation opportunities for all partners. Those who are actively involved will have a greater commitment to the CWMA, which is important to maintaining a strong organization. While you may not be able to have a representative from each partner group on the steering committee, make sure that all interests are represented.

Another important consideration is keeping the steering committee at a manageable size. Broad representation and participation are important, but the steering committee must avoid becoming so large that tasks cannot be completed efficiently. Having too many representatives may limit steering committee productivity. Try to keep the steering committee to a maximum of twelve individuals.

It is important to find a balance of representatives on the steering committee, and this will be affected by the composition of the community. In areas where federal lands dominate, federal agencies may have a greater representation on the steering committee, while in areas where private lands dominate, private landowners will play a larger role.

**The Steering Committee provides direction, identifies opportunities, and furthers the goal of cooperative invasive plant management.**

**Set term lengths for steering committee members to allow new representatives to join the steering committee.** Take advantage of changing representation as an opportunity to infuse new ideas and enthusiasm into the CWMA. Set ground rules for how you will conduct meetings to make sure that the process is fair and transparent. Two common procedural approaches to running meetings are Robert's Rules of Order and decision by consensus. Both approaches have been used successfully in existing CWMA's.

**Whether you use voting or consensus for decision-making, it is essential that healthy dialogue precede steering committee decisions.** Allowing adequate time for discussion fosters understanding and helps the group make informed decisions, as well as helping to build a sense of community and belonging to a team. If the participants feel like members of a team, the CWMA will be able to accomplish more than it would as a collection of individuals.

The steering committee should take responsibility for developing a strategic management plan to describe the priorities of the CWMA and determine management responsibilities, as well as an annual operating plan to set a work schedule and identify funding for each project.

The development of the strategic management plan and annual operating plan are discussed on page 16.

## **8. Select a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.**

**Once the steering committee is in place, they should select officers, primarily a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.** The chairperson will facilitate meetings and help organize and energize efforts while ensuring that steering committee members are involved and engaged. The chairperson should be someone with dedication, the ability to motivate, and sufficient time to commit to leadership responsibilities.

The chairperson must ensure that all steering committee members have opportunities to participate and that the discussion is not dominated by one or a few individuals. He or she should initiate participation and then step back, allowing discussion and decisions to flow from the steering committee. The chairperson must step in, when necessary, to guide dialogue and keep the steering committee focused but should not hamper constructive debate. If the steering committee is functioning well, the chairperson will simply be an equal member of the steering committee.

Another important duty of the chairperson is administration. Establishing a schedule of meetings, searching for funding sources, organizing and coordinating efforts, and ensuring compliance with project and grant requirements should all be part of the chairperson's responsibilities.

It is suggested that a chairperson should be in position for a minimum of two years. When the CWMA is first organized, it may be beneficial to select a chair who is willing to serve a longer term or at least two consecutive terms in order to provide continuity and strong leadership as the CWMA gets up and running.



Gerry Moore, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, leads a training session for LIISMA, July 2003.  
Photo courtesy of Marilyn Jordan, LIISMA

**The steering committee should also appoint a vice-chairperson to assist with leadership and administrative tasks.** Consider having the vice-chairperson automatically rotate into the chairperson position. This provides continuity, sharing of leadership responsibilities, and leadership training. It is recommended that, with the exception of the first set of officers, a representative serve on the steering committee for two years before moving to the chair or vice-chair position. This will provide time

Ellen Jacquart, The Nature Conservancy, and Rich Dunbar, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, prepare to release beetles of the genus *Galerucella* onto purple loosestrife plants as a means of biological control of this invasive plant species.  
Photo: Chip Sutton, The Nature Conservancy

**The selection of officers for the CWMA should not be as important as overall steering committee activity. The goal is to move from leadership by one person to leadership by the entire steering committee.**

for future leaders to get acquainted with the workings of the CWMA and the requirements for leading the CWMA effectively.

Working together on coordination and plans typically strengthens relationships among organizations and solidifies organizational goals and plans. Regular meetings will be necessary to conduct business and organize efforts. Coordination is very important to the success of a CWMA, so monthly or bi-monthly meetings are recommended.



## 9. Develop an agreement.

A formal agreement is critical for establishing roles and responsibilities, enabling the sharing of funds and resources, and creating a long-term relationship among partners. This agreement is what differentiates between a CWMA and an informal invasive plant working group. The document used to establish a formal agreement is usually called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), but these terms can have different meanings in different agencies and organizations. Make sure that the document you select allows you to share funds and resources with your partners. It's a good idea for each partner to have their organization's legal staff review the document before it is signed.



The Northwoods CWMA Group after signing their MOU. Photo courtesy of Carmen Chapin, Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team, National Park Service

You may also want to consider creating a Hold Harmless agreement, which will allow workers to enter a specific private or public property to work on CWMA projects without fear of being held liable for potential unintended consequences of their control efforts.

Establish a document specifying the terms of agreement, and assure that every partner carefully reads, subscribes to, and supports that agreement.

Individual legal requirements and autonomy for each partner must be recognized and protected. A CWMA should not overshadow or preclude partner considerations.

Keep the agreement short, generic, and as simple as possible. An agreement should:

- identify the partners and their responsibilities
- establish the legal authority(ies) under which the agreement is made
- define the purpose of the agreement
- list items of agreement
- describe land area covered under the agreement
- detail how the CWMA will function
- describe products CWMA will produce, such as a strategic plan, annual operating plan, and reports

Other items could address partner contributions, waivers of claims, exchange of resources, injuries, federal laws and orders, and accountability. **The purpose of an agreement is to facilitate cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries and eliminate administrative barriers.** For examples of a MOU and a Hold Harmless Agreement, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).

## 10. Develop a strategic management plan.

A strategic management plan will help define the goals of the CWMA and the steps planned to accomplish those goals. It serves as a road map for the CWMA as it begins to carry out projects.

The strategic plan should clearly define CWMA objectives and priorities. A strategic invasive plant management plan will help you identify concerns, quantify scale and scope of problems, and set short-term and long-term priorities for CWMA operations.

For example, the plan should include:

- an accurate map of the CWMA
- an inventory and a map of known priority invasive plant infestations
- management responsibilities including the establishment of management areas or zones
- criteria for the prioritization of invasive plant management activities
- control techniques likely to be used in your CWMA
- equipment, supplies, people, and other resources available for the CWMA from each partner

Revisit this plan periodically to ensure that projects support the strategy. Adjust the plan to reflect revised goals and objectives as appropriate. For examples of a strategic management plan, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).

*Humulus japonicus* (Japanese hops) invading a city park along a river bed. A strategic invasive plant management plan would be beneficial in managing this invasion.

## 11. Develop an annual operating plan.

Once the steering committee develops the strategic plan, work priorities for the upcoming year can be identified in an annual operating plan. This document will detail annual projects, expected in-kind contributions, necessary funding, and the personnel needed for project completion, and will serve as the basis for outside grant requests. If there are County Weed Supervisors in your area, be sure to get input from them in the development of your plan.

Each project identified in the annual operating plan should have an assigned project manager. This is the person responsible for project implementation, coordination, expenditures, in-kind documentation, completion, photo records, and final reports.

Annual operating plans vary greatly in size and complexity. Newly established CWMAs may have one or a few annual projects and may include grant applications as part of the annual operating plan. For examples of an annual operating plan, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).



Photo: Marcia Moore, Friesner Herbarium, Butler University



## 12. Establish and utilize committees.

**Enlist additional help from partners and the community by establishing *ad hoc* and standing committees.** *Ad hoc* committees are groups that are organized on a temporary basis to focus on specific assignments and are usually disbanded upon completion of a project, such as a cooperative work day or a conference. Standing committees are established for the long term to handle on-going issues, such as an education committee, a mapping committee, or a giant hogweed task force.

Establishing committees increases participation by partners and citizens not included on the steering committee and increases ownership of the CWMA in the broader community. Committees also perform tasks that provide more time for the steering committee to devote toward coordination and administrative duties.



A *Phragmites australis* (common reed) task force could be a possible focus of an *ad hoc* committee.  
Photo: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service  
[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)

## 13. Implement plans.

CWMAs can take on a wide variety of projects related to invasive plants. Be creative in developing projects that will help you achieve the goals in your community. The following paragraphs illustrate just a few examples of projects with which a CWMA may be involved.

### Education

Raising awareness about invasive plants within a community is one of the most important functions of a CWMA. Some examples:

- **Support and promote Invasive Species Awareness events at the state and federal level.** Many states sponsor “Invasive Species Awareness Month” in June. In addition, “National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week” is held in late February of each year. These events provide good opportunities to educate the public about invasive species.
- **Teach a weed identification class for landowners and land managers.** Once people learn what species they should be watching for, their ability to report and/or control invasive plants will increase greatly. Offering an identification workshop led by local invasive plant experts will provide useful information to the community and is a great way to get more people involved with the CWMA.



Aquatic Weed Identification Training Workshop, LIISMA.  
Photo courtesy of Marilyn Jordan, LIISMA

- **Develop educational materials on invasive species for grade school classes in your area.** Partners that have experience in education can develop educational materials and messages to add to grade school classes. Visit [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) (select Education) to read about an entertaining example in which students dressed up as different invasive plants. A facilitator dressed as Sherlock Holmes gave students clues on how to determine if these plants were guilty of being invasive or not.



School children dressed as common periwinkle, garlic mustard, and multiflora rose.  
 Photo: Stori Snyder and Stacy Duke, Invasive Species Education Project, Hilltop Garden and Nature Center and Hoosier National Forest

- **Create “Most Wanted” posters.** Some communities have had great success in raising awareness by creating colorful posters explaining the impacts and identifying characteristics of some of the worst invaders in their areas and posting them in public places. These posters are both eye-catching and informative and may help reach a broad cross-section of the community.

**Prevention**

Prevention is by far the most cost-effective strategy when it comes to invasive species. Working to stop the introduction and spread of invasive plants in your CWMA should be a priority. Some examples:

- **Boot brush stations.** To keep small-seeded invasive plants from being introduced into natural areas by hikers, work with your CWMA partners to develop boot brush stations, and place them at entry points to natural areas. Using a common sign on these stations with all the partners’ logos prominently displayed allows the public to see a consistent educational message and know that partners are working together on prevention of invasive plant species. For more information on designing and building these stations, go to [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) and select Prevention.
- **Be a good neighbor - rid your landscaping of invaders.** Start a program where landowners can apply to the CWMA to have their invasive landscaping plants removed and replaced with non-invasive plants. Subsidize the cost and labor through utilizing what your CWMA partners can offer: e.g. free nursery stock, mulch, or tools; flyers publicizing this service; press release mailings; connections to youth groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.) to do the labor.



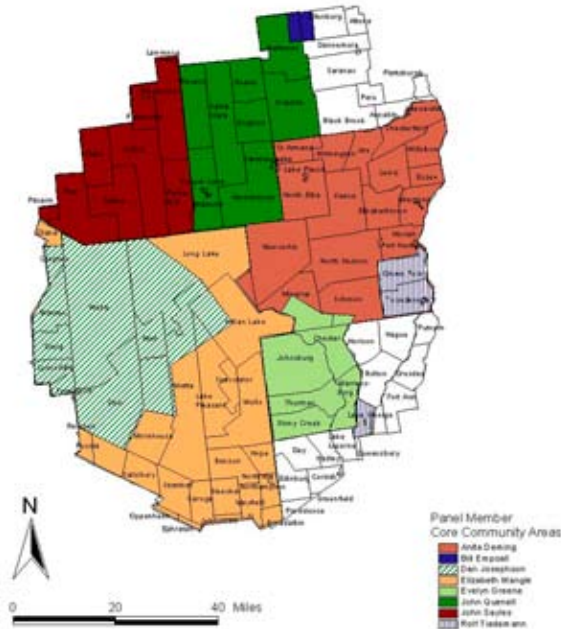
A boot brush station placed at the entrance to a natural area will help keep invasive species out when used properly and consistently.  
 Photo: Ellen Jacquart, The Nature Conservancy

## Early Detection

Early detection requires lots of trained eyes watching for new invasive infestations. CWMAAs are a natural way to bring people together to accomplish this. Some examples:

- **Weed Watchers training.** Work together with CWMA partners to put on 'Weed Watchers' training for land owners and managers in the CWMA each year to alert them to invasives that are approaching or newly detected in your area. Train these Weed Watchers on how to identify new invasive species and where they should report new sightings. Organize the Weed Watchers to assure key areas in the CWMA are regularly checked for new invasive plant populations.

Adirondack Park  
Aquatic Invasive Plant Project  
Advisory Panel Core Community Areas



Map of Advisory Panel Core Community Areas for the Adirondack Park Aquatic Invasive Plant Project  
Map courtesy of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program,  
[www.adkinvasives.com](http://www.adkinvasives.com)

- **Rapid Responders team.** Set up a system for responding to new invasion sites using partner resources. Establish a communication network for the team, assemble control tools and supplies, designate a person to handle landowner contacts and permission to treat, and have certified herbicide applicators conduct the treatments.

## Control Efforts

As vigorously as you work to keep out new invaders, there are also established invasive species you will probably want to control. Here are some examples of how you might use your CWMA to organize such efforts:

- **Invasives pulling party.** Publicize a volunteer day to pull garlic mustard on land in the CWMA. Bring in the kids (and their parents) by offering 50 cents or a dollar for every large garbage bag a child under 12 years old can fill. Make it fun! Dress someone up as a garlic mustard plant (green clothes, white flowers on their head) and have him or her wear a burglar mask. He/she can walk around handing out educational brochures about the CWMA and its activities on invasive plants and explain that he/she is a 'resource thief', stealing water and nutrients from all the native plants.
- **Invasives control crew.** Apply for grant funds to supplement or match any CWMA partner funds, and use the money to jointly hire an invasives control crew. The crew would control invasives across all the lands that have owners/managers who are part of the CWMA.

## **Monitoring**

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of your projects. For instance, did your Invasives Pulling Party significantly decrease the garlic mustard in the area? In addition to weed population and control efforts, the desired natural community should be monitored as well. Focus on the plants you want to be there, not just the plants you want to get rid of. Make sure that any project has a monitoring component, so you can change tactics if it turns out you're not being successful. Such project monitoring is also necessary to demonstrate your success to your partners, donors, and grantors.

You should also be monitoring or assessing the overall effectiveness of your CWMA. Is the steering committee working together smoothly to set priorities and strategies? Are all grant funds administered correctly and deliverables produced on time? This kind of regular self-assessment can keep your CWMA functioning effectively.



A work crew in the Adirondack Park controls *Phragmites australis* (common reed).  
Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program,  
[www.adkinvasives.com](http://www.adkinvasives.com)

## **14. Celebrate success and get media attention.**

Celebrating successful CWMA projects will reinforce partnerships. **Utilize media and newsletters to broadcast your accomplishments.**

Make sure to take advantage of institutional resources that your partner organizations might have, such as free news release services, websites, or newsletters. Publicizing successes will help build additional interest and support in the community. Consider designating a communication committee to be responsible for the dissemination of information.

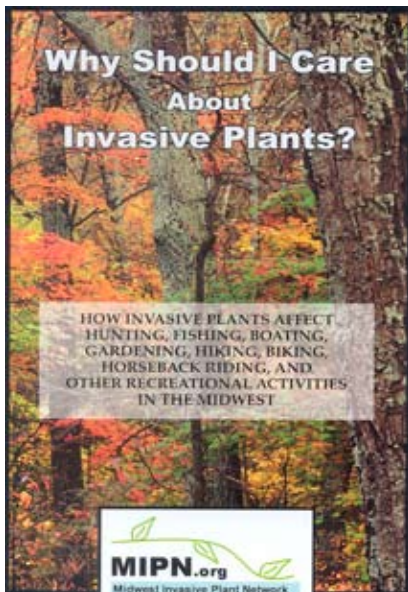
**Hold an annual meeting of partners, participants, volunteers, and interested members of the public.** This is a great opportunity to educate attendees and strengthen cooperative relationships. If possible, include in-the-field training on plant identification, control methods or new research findings. Pesticide applicator recertification credits may also normally be available to participants in invasive plant educational meetings. Coordinate availability of recertification credits with the appropriate state Department of Agriculture or extension program.

Annual meetings should also be a time to discuss work projects and to reward efforts. In general, these gatherings can solidify established bonds, attract new partners and build recognition for a CWMA, as well as attracting new funding sources. Consider giving out awards to partners and elected officials who provided assistance with CWMA projects.

### **Prepare and distribute an annual report.**

An annual report can be an important communication tool for the public and stakeholders. Keep it simple and remember to give credit to partners, cooperators, funders, volunteers, and all who participated in your efforts.

**A Cooperative Weed Management Area can benefit any community by heightening awareness, increasing knowledge, and strengthening relationships.**



Brochures like this one published by the Midwest Invasive Plant Network can draw attention to the problem of invasive plants and educate the public about how to prevent and control infestations.

## **Summary**

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are an effective way to formalize partnerships among public and private entities working toward a common goal of increased awareness and effective prevention and control of invasive plants. CWMA's are a mechanism for long-lasting cooperation and community awareness and involvement.

We hope that the information included in this Cookbook will facilitate the formation of new CWMA's in the East. The information we have included in the Cookbook has been gathered from participants in successful CWMA's and should be used as a guide for those wishing to form their own CWMA's; however, the steps to follow are not set in stone. The unique circumstances of your community may require you to alter the order of steps or other details. We encourage you to be flexible and do what works best in your community to achieve long-term cooperative management of invasive plants.

CWMA's are not a small undertaking. They require time, effort, and commitment, but the outcome will be worth the investment that you will make.

A Cooperative Weed Management Area can benefit any community by heightening awareness, increasing knowledge, and strengthening relationships.

CWMA's may use different approaches and have different projects, but they all benefit from the formal partnership provided by a CWMA.

# Funding Opportunities

**National Invasive Species Information Center.** Provides a comprehensive gateway to invasive species information and links to many funding opportunities such as those listed below.

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/toolkit/grantsrequests.shtml>

## Federal Funds –

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Pulling Together Initiative.** Provides support for the formation of CWMAs. <http://www.nfwf.org/programs/pti.cfm>

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Private Stewardship Grants.** Provides grants to individuals and groups engaged in conservation efforts that benefit at-risk species.

[http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/private\\_stewardship/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/private_stewardship/index.html)

**U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** Provide funding for a variety of conservation actions. [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs)

## State Funds –

Though the type and amount of available funding varies greatly, there are a number of federal money pass-through programs (listed below) that funnel money for conservation to states. Depending on your state's rules and application guidelines, this money may be available for invasive control.

See “State Contacts and Authorities” in the CWMA section at [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) for specific authority and contact information for your state.

**Landowner Incentive Program**

**Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Program**

**State Wildlife Grant**

**State Noxious Weed Program**

## County Funds –

In some states there are additional resources available at the county level.

**Soil (Land) and Water Conservation Districts**

**County Weed Supervisors**

## Other Resources

### General Invasive Plants Information Sites:

National Invasive Species Information Center - <http://www.invasivespecies.gov>

Global Invasive Species Initiative - <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/>  
TNC projects and success stories from around the country; photo archive; planning strategies; control methods.

Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) Invasives Prevention -  
<http://www.centerforplantconservation.org/invasives>

Center for Invasive Plant Management - <http://www.weedcenter.org/>

Invasive Exotic Plant Management Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers -  
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/index.htm>;

Invasive Plants of the Eastern United States: Identification & Control - <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/>

Weeds Gone Wild: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas - <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/>

North American Weed Management Association - <http://www.nawma.org/>

### Regional Exotic Plant Pest Councils (EPPCs):

Midwest Invasive Plant Network - <http://www.mipn.org>  
(Includes MN, IA, MO, IL, WI, MI, IN, OH)

New England Invasive Plant Group - <http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane/index.htm>  
(Includes, ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, with NY included on the steering committee)

Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council, - <http://www.ma-eppc.org/>  
(Includes DE, MD, PA, NJ, VA, WV, Washington D.C.)

Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council - <http://www.se-eppc.org/>  
(Includes FL, TN, NC, SC, GA, KY, MS, AL - all have individual state chapters)

**State Contacts and Authorities** - See [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) for information on contacts and authorities for your state.

### Resources discussed in this book:

- Long Island Invasive Species Management Area (LIISMA) - (previously LI WMA)  
<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/projects/newyork.html>
- Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and CWMA - <http://www.adkinvasives.com>
- RC&D website - <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rcd/>
- SWCDs website - <http://www.nacdnet.org/about/aboutcds.htm>

**For an electronic version of the CWMA Cookbook (PDF) and the accompanying PowerPoint slide show, please go to the Midwest Invasive Plant Network website, [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) to download.**



## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to reduce the impact of invasive plant species in the Midwest.

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