

Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area Established

Wisconsin's first Cooperative Weed Management Area has been established in northern Wisconsin. Based on a program developed by U.S. Forest Service staff in Idaho, the Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area (NCWMA) will share resources and jointly pursue grant opportunities aimed at controlling non-native, invasive plants in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron counties.

The NCWMA is organized under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was formally signed on May 11 by the 22 participating agency, tribal, and organizational members. The group's mission is to "encourage and formalize the cooperative relationship necessary for effective management, coordination and implementation of invasive terrestrial and aquatic plant species programs among the [participating organizations]."

The Cooperative Weed Management Area concept was established by Rick VanBebber, Interagency Noxious Weed Coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho. VanBebber was the keynote speaker at a workshop organized by Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Ecologist Linda Parker and held in Ashland in May of 2005. At that workshop, VanBebber presented his "CWMA Cookbook," which is a guide to setting up and managing a Cooperative Weed Management Area.

Partner agencies and organizations of the NCWMA have each committed resources such as staff time, educational materials, tools, and GIS layers to the collective effort, a management plan is being drafted, and a short list of projects is in place for the coming field season. A few of the projects being planned are:

1. An invasive species field trip on the Bad River Reservation in Ashland County aimed at raising awareness of tribal resource managers and community members.
2. An educational poster for the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Convention to be held at Telemark Lodge in Cable on June 30th.
3. Organizing the workshop *Not in my backyard?! A homeowners guide to invasive species in the Northland* to be held June 24th at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute on the campus of Northland College in Ashland. This workshop is geared for the northland homeowner and concerned citizen who wants to know how to identify current and potential invasive species, who are looking for tips and guidelines on how to control unwanted species, and who want to learn how homeowners can prevent future invasions in their backyards and communities.

Additionally, the group is researching funding opportunities that can be used to, among other things, create a "community tool chest" of equipment for cutting and treating invasive plants wherever they may be.

At the May signing ceremony, elections were held for officers and members of the Steering Committee. The group's first Chairperson is Leah Gibala, Wetlands Specialist for the Bad River Natural Resources Department, and the Vice-Chair is Roger Dreher, President of the Bayfield County Lakes Forum. The group's fiscal manager is the

Ashland-Bayfield-Douglas-Iron County Land Conservation Department. The Steering Committee is still being formalized, but will consist of the chair and vice-chair positions, one representative from each agency or organization, and two representatives for cooperating, or “informal,” partners.

The group’s next meeting will be held in conjunction with the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference on June 29th, at the Telemark Resort in Cable. For more information on the NCWMA please contact Leah Gibala at 715-682-7123, or by Email at wetlands@badriver.com.

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Top Row (1-r): Polly Edmunds (Upper St. Croix Lake Association), Leah Gibala (NCWMA Chairperson, Bad River Natural Resources Dept.), Marjy Brzeskiewicz (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest), Carmen Chapin (Great Lakes Network, National Park Service), Miles Falck (Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission), Steven Spickerman (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest), Laura Graf (Lake Superior Biological Station, U.S. Geological Survey), Darienne McNamara (Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge).

Bottom Row (seated, 1-r): Dara Olson (Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission), Ted Gostomski (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources), Becky Sapper (The Nature Conservancy), Terry Beirl (Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College).