

## Northwoods Weed Group coming together to form a **Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA)**

by Patrick Goggin - Vilas County Conservationist/IPAW President



In early November 2005 partners involved in the Northwoods Weed Initiative participated in a meeting designed to begin establishing a Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA) for their area. CWMA's are grassroots organizations that include a collection of individuals, organizations, agencies, municipalities and others interested in working together on managing weeds in their communities. CWMA's are NOT a federal program or mandate. Information on CWMA's is listed at:

<http://www.idahoag.us/Categories/PlantsInsects/NoxiousWeeds/Documents/cwma/cookbook.pdf>.

Carmen Chapin presented the reasons why various partners gathered at the meeting care about invasive species control and management. These included: concern for natural habitat; property values; aesthetics in our communities; economic costs/impacts to forestry and agricultural sectors; quality of pasture for grazing; existing legal mandates pertaining to noxious species; and an executive order for federal agencies on the issue. This was followed by a discussion of what a CWMA could do to help battle invasive species in the communities. CWMA's assist partners with early detection and rapid response work; they provide a working agreement for sharing resources, equipment, and knowledge; they provide an avenue to formulate an organized plan for weed control; and they can help secure both federal and non-federal funding for special resources to combat invasive species in our communities. CWMA's are a little different than the current Northwoods Weed Initiative in that a Cooperative Weed Management Association is a legally documented agreement between partners that gives them power to work outside their organizations' normal boundaries such as a park, forest, or municipal line. CWMA's also can seek out grant funding and other financial resources. A successful CWMA includes many agencies and individuals all working towards a common goal.

Another focus of the meeting was to identify a "weed champion" for the evolving CWMA. This person serves as the initial leader of the group, helping coordinate the initial efforts and ensuring good communication between the partners. Dara Olson, an Aquatic Invasive Species Project Coordinator with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, agreed to take on this challenge for the group. She can be contacted at: [dolson@glifwc.org](mailto:dolson@glifwc.org).

The specifics of a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) between participating groups were also discussed at the meeting. This is a cooperative agreement between the various partners describing who they are and how they will be working together to fight invasive species. Folks interested in participating in the CWMA or in developing the MOU should contact Dara Olson.

We Energies, through the Wisconsin Energy Corporation Foundation, donated \$6,000.00 to the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin, Inc. on November 10, 2005, in support of our education and communications materials over the next three years. Thank you very much!