



# 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

Revised 2011

This cookbook was adapted from “CWMA Cookbook: A Recipe for Success” created by Rick Van Bebber and the Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee. Many thanks to the Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee and Janet Clark of the Center for Invasive Plant Management for their assistance with this project.

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## Cover Photo Credits:

*Left to right*

**Black swallowwort** (*Cynanchum louiseae*)

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**Garlic mustard** (*Alliaria petiolata*)

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**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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## Introduction

Invasive plants threaten our economy, environment, and even human health. Natural resource managers and land owners across the country spend huge amounts of resources trying to manage invasive plants that are encroaching into natural areas, agricultural lands, backyards, and other properties.

State, federal, and private natural resource managers have worked together to reduce populations of 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.

In 1992, the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee created a unified strategy for invasive plant management after a large fire dramatically altered their landscape. There was the first Cooperative Weed Management Area, or CWMA, and their success encouraged others in the West to create similar groups that would allow collaboration and cooperation among agencies. Local citizens, land owners, and not-for-profit groups joined together with city, county, state, tribal, and federal officials to create CWMA's across the West, with some states having almost 100% coverage by CWMA's. CWMA's are local partnerships that coordinate efforts to address the threat of invasive plants across jurisdictional boundaries.

**Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA's) are local partnerships that coordinate efforts to address the threat of invasive plants across jurisdictional boundaries.**

The concept of CWMA's was slow to catch on in the Eastern United States, because many people weren't sure how to implement this idea in a very different landscape. 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 lands. In the East, land 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 or sufficient state or municipal weed laws.

Keeping these differences in mind, this guide is intended to help natural resource managers and land owners in the East develop CWMA's in their areas. In recent years, the number of CWMA's in the East has grown rapidly, yet there are still many areas that could benefit from a collaborative approach to invasive plant management. This guide lays out several steps for the development of Cooperative Weed Management Areas. The steps are presented in chronological order, but depending on the specific circumstances of your community, the order of the steps may vary. This Cookbook should be used as a general guideline rather than as a recipe that must be followed to the letter.

## What is a Cooperative Weed Management Area?

Cooperative Weed Management Areas, or CWMAs, are partnerships of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, individuals, and other interested groups that manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in a specific area (as defined by the Western Weed Coordinating Committee). CWMAs may have different names in different parts of the country, for example, Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs), Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs), or Invasive Species Teams or Partnerships. They can be organized in a variety of ways, but they share six basic characteristics:

- 1) They operate within a defined geographic area, distinguished by a common geography, weed problem, community, climate, political boundary, or land use.
- 2) They involve a broad cross-section of landowners and natural resource managers within the CWMA boundaries.
- 3) They are governed by a steering committee.
- 4) They have a long-term commitment to cooperation, usually through a formal agreement among partners.
- 5) They have a comprehensive plan that addresses the management of invasive species within their boundaries.
- 6) They facilitate cooperation and coordination across jurisdictional boundaries.

CWMAs include local citizens, city, county, state, tribal and federal leaders, and both nonprofit organizations and for-profit corporations to more effectively control invasive plants across property lines. Some CWMAs have been started by government agencies taking a larger, region-wide approach to invasive plant management, while others have been formed by concerned citizens partnering with agencies, organizations, and corporations that can provide additional resources. No matter where the impetus comes from to start a CWMA, the goal is the same: to work together with all interested parties in the area for more effective invasive plant management.

Many local communities have established informal partnerships to work with others to manage invasive plants. However, the formal agreement created to form a Cooperative Weed Management Area establishes a long-term relationship and a mechanism for ongoing resource sharing.



Using cut-and-swab treatment to control Japanese knotweed, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, New York.  
Photo: Hilary Smith, The Nature Conservancy

## Why form a CWMA?

**CWMAs cross boundaries.** Groups that have an agreement in place that allows cooperation across land ownership boundaries can address invasive plants on the landscape as a whole, rather than piecemeal. Coordinated invasive plant management efforts are likely to be much more effective than treating a particular species at different times and with different methods on separate properties.

**CWMAs allow partners to share and leverage limited resources** for the benefit of all. One partner may have a group of dedicated volunteers, another may have tools or herbicides they are willing to share, and another may have the ability to send press releases to media contacts. Partners joining together have access to more resources.

**CWMAs are highly visible, building community awareness and participation.** Cooperative



efforts can bring the issue of invasive plants to the attention of state and federal legislators and demonstrate broad support from the community for preventing and controlling invasive species.

**CWMAs can improve control efforts** by training all partners in the use of best management practices. Training local landowners in control methods can reduce non-target damage and help them select the most appropriate methods for their situation.

**CWMAs can provide an early detection and rapid response network** by ensuring that all the partners are aware of and are able to identify and respond to new invasive species in the area.

**CWMAs can help secure funding.** An established CWMA can access multiple funding sources, including government grants, private foundation grants, and donations. The “working together” concept is attractive to many funders.

The Northwoods CWMA in northern Wisconsin rented a table at the local farmer's market to educate the community about invasive plants. Photo: Northwoods CWMA

# River to River CWMA: A Success Story in Southern Illinois

The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, established in 2006, covers the southernmost 11 counties in Illinois, stretching from the Mississippi River in the west to the Ohio River on the CWMA's eastern border (see map on page 8). Established by 12 signatory partners (see list below), River to River CWMA has become a model for other CWMA's in the Midwest and beyond.

Early in their establishment, River to River CWMA hired a coordinator who has helped advance the goals of the CWMA and coordinate outreach, inventory and mapping, and on-the-ground control projects. Some of their projects are highlighted below.

### River to River CWMA Projects:

- Surveyed 64 boat ramps on 27 lakes for aquatic invasive plants
- Created a strike team to treat high priority invasive plant infestations in natural areas and along potential pathways of spread
- Created a database of exotic plant distribution information within the CWMA
- Volunteer invasive plant control work days
- Invasive plant control equipment loan program for private landowners and conservation organizations
- Invasive plant control demonstration plots to show a comparison of managed and un-managed forest areas
- Private lands control assistance program, providing small grants to landowners for invasive plant control on their property
- Collaborated with CWMA's in Ohio and Indiana to survey the Ohio River and its tributaries for invasive plants



A garlic mustard pull event for K-12 students organized by the River to River CWMA. Photo: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA

### River to River CWMA Partners:

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge  
Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
Illinois Dept. of Agriculture  
Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources  
Illinois Dept. of Transportation  
The Nature Conservancy

Shawnee National Forest  
Shawnee RC&D, Inc.  
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale  
University of Illinois Extension  
USDA-APHIS  
USDA-NRCS

# Organizing a CWMA

CWMAs organize themselves in different ways. Some start with putting together their organizational structure, while others jump into collaborative, on-the-ground projects and get around to dealing with paperwork and funding later. In this section, we describe 16 steps for creating a new CWMA. They can be accomplished in any order, but all of them are important actions for creating a successful CWMA.

## 1. Select a leader or champion.

A key element to the success of a CWMA is finding someone who is excited about cooperative weed management to lead the group as it forms. This leader or champion should have enthusiasm, 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, move the group toward organization, and follow up on action items (e.g. make sure agreements are reviewed and signed by all partner groups).



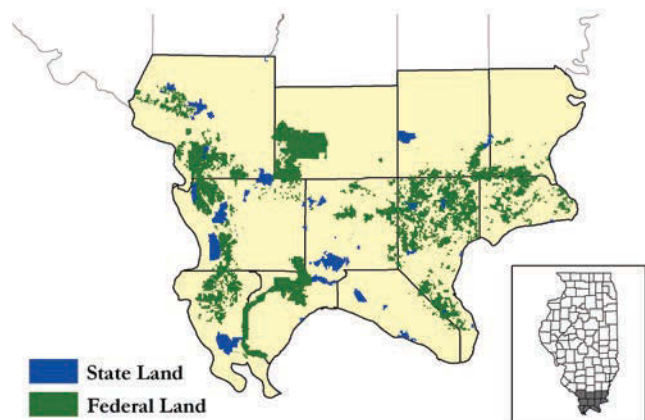
The ability to bring people together and good communication skills are important in a champion. Photo: Alycia Crall

**The CWMA champion may be a short-term role, leading only until the CWMA is fully organized and operating, at which time an elected chairperson may assume leadership.**

## 2. Establish geographic boundaries.

CWMAs can be organized in a variety of ways. Some follow political boundaries, such as county or township lines, and some follow ecological boundaries, such as watersheds. **Determine the scale at which you plan to work and the appropriate geographic boundaries for your area.**

CWMAs can vary in size from multiple counties to a single park or municipality. Your CWMA needs to be big enough to address your invasive plant problems, but it also needs to remain manageable. A CWMA that covers a large geographic area and has many partners may be organized into smaller administrative subunits or management zones.



The River to River CWMA, a partnership in southern Illinois, includes 11 counties bounded by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Map: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA

## 3. Identify potential partners and build support.

Once the boundaries of a CWMA have been defined, representation from each major land management entity within the boundaries of the CWMA is critical. Partners might include federal, tribal, state, county, and local



government agencies, nonprofit organizations, public utilities, transportation departments, corporate landowners, private landowners, university science and Extension staff, and local businesses, such as landscapers or nurseries. Involve everyone early on in the process.

Identify each potential partner's needs, concerns, and the resources they have to offer. Notify your state invasive plant or weed coordinator, if you have one (check with the state Department of Agriculture or Department of Natural Resources). Find someone who is knowledgeable about state noxious weed laws and state invasive plant policies to work with the 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.

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 essential partners and may be the catalyst that brings the CWMA together.

Convey to potential partners the importance of cooperatively addressing shared problems. Invasive plants know no boundaries; it is only

## What are RC&Ds and SWCDs?

**Resource & Conservation Development Councils (RC&Ds):** RC&Ds are local organizations that help plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development. Program objectives focus on "quality of life" improvements.

**Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs):** SWCDs are local government agencies that work with landowners to carry out programs for the conservation, use, and development of soil, water, and related resources, such as preventing erosion, protecting wetlands, and stabilizing shorelines.

by eliminating boundaries that an invasive plant management program will succeed. Partners should understand that combining resources results in greater benefits for everyone.

**Cooperation on a broad scale can effectively and efficiently 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.

Individuals or groups may have different reasons to be concerned 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 their different interests, partners may be able to agree on a common concern, such as a particular invasive species (e.g. garlic mustard) or group of species (e.g. woody invaders of forests), protection of a treasured natural area, or a pressing issue like early detection of new invaders. Alternatively, the group may agree on a desired outcome (e.g. improved bird habitat, clear hiking trails, native plant restoration) and then work backwards to determine what actions are necessary to achieve that vision. Talk to neighbors and community leaders about invasive plants to find out which issues you all agree on. **Focus on at least one common concern or shared vision to initiate a CWMA.**



Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)  
Photo: Kate Howe, Midwest Invasive Plant Network

## 5. Select a name.

The term “Cooperative Weed Management Area” was developed in the West where many invasive plants are legally designated as “noxious weeds” on state and federal Noxious Weed Lists. For many eastern states, where noxious weed lists tend to include only a small number of agricultural pests, the term “invasive plants” is more frequently used and indicates non-native plants that harm or have the potential to cause harm to our economy, environment, or human health. A group may choose to call itself a Cooperative Weed Management Area, a Cooperative Invasive Plant Management Area, or even a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, if invasive animals or pathogens will be addressed. The term “CWMA” is used in this guide, because it is the most familiar and widely recognized. However, **pick the name that best represents the work that you intend to do and appeals to most of the partners.**

## 6. Choose a CWMA fiscal manager.

**A CWMA must establish fiscal capabilities to receive and spend money.** The CWMA will probably seek donations and grants, which require fiscal accountability and careful management.

Direct receipt of federal funds by a CWMA requires a federal tax identification number. Applying for and receiving nonprofit 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 identification numbers and may have staff trained in managing grants and other funds. You may be able to arrange for one of these groups to charge your CWMA a fee for administering finances, such as a percentage of grant funds received. Check with local governments within your CWMA to see whether this option is available.

Some CWMA's have used a Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council as their fiscal manager. RC&D's have nonprofit status with a tax identification number, as well as expertise in grant management and preparing reports. RC&D's can be important partners, especially for large CWMA's with significant funding.

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

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

As the CWMA develops, keep all partners informed about CWMA activities and accomplishments. Send agendas, meeting schedules, and minutes to all partners. Consider setting up a web page and an e-mail group to facilitate communication. The Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia has created a CWMA

Website Cookbook and Template to assist in website development. See the Additional Resources section on page 23 for links to those documents.

## 8. Establish a steering committee.

The steering committee organizes members, establishes priorities, develops strategic management and annual operating plans, documents progress, and reports on goals accomplished by participants. This group provides direction, identifies opportunities, and generally furthers the common goals of the CWMA.



Partners gather for a meeting of the West Michigan Cluster of The Stewardship Network. Photo: Melanie Manion, Western Michigan Land Conservancy

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.

**Ensure broad representation on the steering committee.** 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 with large federal land holdings, federal agencies may have greater representation on the steering committee, while in areas where private lands are more prevalent, private landowners will play a larger role.

**Set term lengths, and 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 for maintaining a strong organization. Make sure that all interests are represented on the steering committee, but avoid creating such a large committee that tasks cannot be completed efficiently. Try to keep the steering committee to a maximum of 12 people.

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 CWMAs.

**Whatever method you use for decision-making, it is essential that healthy dialogue precedes 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 teamwork. 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.

## 9. Select officers.

Once the steering committee is in place, they should select a chair to facilitate meetings and to organize and coordinate efforts. The chair will also be responsible for ensuring compliance with project and grant requirements.

It is suggested that the chairperson 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.

The steering committee may also appoint a vice-chairperson to assist with leadership and administrative tasks or other officers as necessary.



Training volunteers on mapping and data sharing in Wisconsin. Photo: Alycia Crall, University of Wisconsin

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



Meeting of the Southeast Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium. Photo: Belle Bergner, Bergner Associates

## 10. Develop an agreement.

A formal agreement establishes roles and responsibilities, enables the sharing of funds and resources, and creates a long-term relationship among partners. A formal agreement differentiates a CWMA from 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 partners to share funds and resources. **The purpose of an agreement is to facilitate cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries and eliminate administrative barriers.** Legal staff from partner organizations may want to review the document before it is signed.

Keep the agreement short and as simple as possible. An agreement should

- identify the partners and their responsibilities.
- establish the legal authority or authorities 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 the 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 CWMA may also consider creating a “Hold Harmless” agreement that allows 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.

For examples of an MOU and a Hold Harmless Agreement, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).



Ohio’s Iron Furnace CWMA Steering Committee hard at work. Photo: Chad Kirschbaum, U.S. Forest Service

## 11. Develop a strategic management plan.

A strategic management plan will help clearly define the goals of the CWMA and the steps necessary to accomplish those goals. It quantifies the scale and scope of problems and sets short-term and long-term priorities for CWMA operations. The strategic plan serves as a road map for the CWMA as it begins to carry out projects.

The plan should include

- desired outcomes for the CWMA (short-term and long-term).
- an accurate map of the CWMA.
- an inventory and a map of known priority invasive plant infestations.
- management responsibilities, including the establishment of management or prevention areas.
- criteria for the prioritization of invasive plant management activities.
- control and prevention techniques likely to be used in the CWMA.
- equipment, supplies, people, and other resources available 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 strategic management plans, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).

Roadside signs bring attention to invasive plant management in the Crooked River WMA, Oregon  
Photo: Brooke Gray, The Nature Conservancy

## 12. 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.

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 CWMAAs may have one or a few annual projects and may include grant applications as part of the annual operating plan. For examples of annual operating plans, see [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org).





A common reed (*Phragmites australis*) task force could be a possible focus of a standing committee. Photo: Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves

### 13. Establish committees.

**Enlist 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 species-specific task force.

Establishing committees increases participation by partners and citizens not on the steering committee and creates a sense of ownership of the CWMA in the broader community. Committees also share the workload, allowing the steering committee to devote more time toward coordination and administration.

### 14. Consider hiring a CWMA coordinator.

Many CWMA find that they are able to accomplish more when they hire a full- or part-time coordinator to help manage projects and conduct outreach. A paid coordinator can dedicate more time to CWMA work than most volunteers. However, if you hire a coordinator, be prepared to pay salary and other expenses (including benefits, office space, insurance) and provide guidance and oversight of the coordinator's work. **A CWMA coordinator is not necessary for the success of a CWMA but can be a great benefit.**

### 15. Implement plans.

CWMAs can take on a wide variety of projects related to invasive plants. Be creative in developing projects that will help achieve the goals of the CWMA. The following projects are examples that illustrate what a CWMA can do.

#### Education

Raising awareness about invasive plants within a community is one of the most important functions of a CWMA. Here are a few examples of projects that CWMA have used to educate a wide variety of audiences.



Educational Weed Wagon presentation, Crooked River WMA, Oregon. Photo: Brooke Gray

- **Support and promote Invasive Species Awareness events at the state and federal level.** Many states sponsor an Invasive Species Awareness Week or Month. These events provide good opportunities to educate the public about invasive species. In addition, National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) is held in Washington, DC in January or February and provides opportunities to learn more about policy and funding programs, as well as time to talk with your legislators about invasive plants.

- **Teach a weed identification class for landowners and land managers.** When people know what species to watch for, they can better report and control invasive plants. Offering an identification workshop is a great way to get more people involved with the CWMA.

- **Develop educational materials on invasive species.** CWMA's have created a variety of materials, from general informational brochures, curricula for K-12 students, or websites with pictures of invasive plants in their area. See [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org) for links to resources.

- **Create posters or calendars.** Some communities have had great success in raising awareness by creating and posting colorful posters or calendars explaining the impacts and identifying characteristics of some of the worst invaders in the area. These pieces 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.



A boot brush station at the entrance to a natural area will help keep invasive species out when used properly and consistently. Photo: Chad Kirschbaum, U.S. Forest Service

- **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).



- **Invasive plant trade-in program.** 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 the service; press release mailings; connections to youth groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and others) to do the labor.
- **Prevention management zones.** Designate invasive-plant-free areas of the CWMA as special prevention management zones. Work with landowners to develop signs or brochures emphasizing appreciation for the area and responsibility to prevent invasions.



Volunteer pulling garlic mustard for the Adirondack Invasive Plant Project, New York. Photo: Hilary Smith, The Nature Conservancy

### Early Detection

Early detection requires lots of trained eyes watching for new invasions. CWMA's are a natural way to bring people together to accomplish this. Early detection projects that some CWMA's have accomplished are

- **Weed Watchers training.** Work with CWMA partners to host annual Weed Watchers training for landowners and managers to alert them to invasive species that are approaching or newly detected in the area. Train 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.
- **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 contracts and permission to treat, and have certified herbicide applicators conduct any herbicide treatments.

### Control Efforts

No matter how vigorously the CWMA works to keep out new invaders, there will probably still be established invasive species to manage. Here are some examples of how a CWMA might organize such efforts.

- **Volunteer invasive plant control day.** Be creative when thinking about ways to bring

in volunteers. Publicize a volunteer day to pull garlic mustard on land in the CWMA. Bring in kids (and their parents) by offering 50 cents or a dollar for every large garbage bag a child can fill. College students can help with invasive plant management, as well, and some professors will offer extra credit for community service projects.

- **Invasive species control crew.** Apply for grants to supplement or match any CWMA partner funds, and use the money to jointly hire an invasive plant control crew. The crew could control invasive plants across all the lands owned or managed by CWMA partners.

### **Monitoring**

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of projects. For instance, did the Volunteer Invasive Plant Control Day 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. Fo-



Early detection of perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) by the Coastal Watershed Invasive Plant Partnership of New Hampshire. Photo: Florence Peterson, U.S. Forest Service

cus on desirable plants, not just invasive plants. Make sure that all projects, including those aimed at public education and outreach, have a monitoring and evaluation component, so tactics can be changed if goals are not achieved. Project monitoring is also necessary to demonstrate success to partners, donors, and grantors.

CWMAs should also monitor or assess their overall effectiveness. Is the steering committee working together smoothly to set priorities and strategies? Are all grant funds administered correctly and deliverables produced on time? Regular self-assessment can keep the CWMA functioning effectively.

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

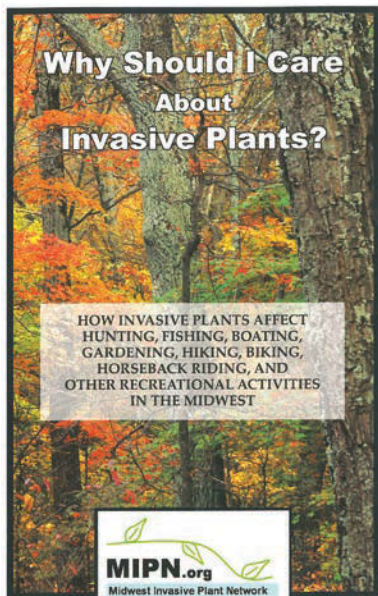
Celebrating successful CWMA projects will reinforce partnerships. **Use media and newsletters to broadcast your accomplishments.** Take advantage of institutional resources that partner organizations might have, such as free news release services, websites, or newsletters. Consider using social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and RSS feeds. Publicizing successes will help build additional interest and support in the community. Consider designating a communications 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. Providing an opportunity for attendees to earn pesticide applicator recertification credits may increase participation.

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 awards to partners and elected officials who provided assistance with CWMA projects.

**Prepare and distribute an annual report.** An annual report is an important communication tool for the public and stakeholders. Keep it simple, post it online, and remember to credit partners, cooperators, funders, volunteers, and all who participated.



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 common goals of increased awareness, effective prevention, and control of invasive plants. CWMA's are a mechanism for long-lasting cooperation and community awareness and involvement.

Information included in this Cookbook has been gathered from participants in successful CWMA's and is intended to 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. 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. A Cooperative Weed Management Area can benefit any community by heightening awareness, increasing knowledge, strengthening relationships, and improving the integrity of landscapes.

Groups may take different approaches and carry out different projects, but they all benefit from the formal partnership provided by a CWMA.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1) What is an MOU? Do we need one? Do I have to sign one to participate?**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement among agencies, corporations, and organizations to participate in a CWMA. Cooperation and collaboration are possible without an MOU, but MOUs help ensure that partnerships are long-lasting and don't dissolve with staff turnover, loss of funding, or shifting priorities. While you don't need a formal agreement to collaborate with partners, it is strongly recommended that you work toward the signing of an MOU or similar agreement. Some volunteers or small business owners may be hesitant to sign a formal agreement with government agencies. The creation of a simplified participating agreement, in addition to the formal MOU, may help those partners feel like a part of the CWMA without requiring them to enter into an official commitment to cooperate.

### **2) We are having a hard time finding funding. Any ideas on what to do with little or no funds?**

It's always nice to have money to help with large-scale projects, but even with little or no money a CWMA can accomplish important work. Simply talking with your county road departments about the best times to mow to avoid spreading particular invasive plants can go a long way toward reducing spread. Many control and education projects can be done inexpensively as well, such as volunteer work days or creating informational flyers to distribute within the CWMA.

### **3) We are in a remote area and have low volunteer turnout at our events. Any advice on how to recruit more volunteers?**

Finding a group of volunteers to help you get work accomplished can be challenging, especially if you live in an area with low population density. If you have a national park or wildlife refuge in your area, find out whether there is a Friends of the National Park or similar volunteer group that would be willing to help with your work. Local native plant societies and master gardeners' groups may be interested in volunteering, as well. Local colleges or high schools may have a community service requirement for graduation or course credit, so reaching out to schools in your area may provide a pool of volunteers for a work day or other event. Church groups often enjoy opportunities to volunteer in their area.

### **4) Do we need a paid coordinator?**

Many CWMAs accomplish great work through the dedication of a strong champion and active volunteers. A CWMA does not need a paid coordinator to be successful, but having a staff person usually increases the number of projects accomplished. A paid coordinator can also serve as a point person for community outreach, ensuring quick follow up to new invasive plant reports and other questions about invasive plants from the community. If you can find funds to support a coordinator (either through grants or financial commitments from CWMA partners), it's a great opportunity.

### **5) Should we apply for nonprofit status?**

All organizations will need someone to manage their money, and it should be an entity that can accept and manage federal grants. Some CWMAs find that working through a local or state government agency or an existing nonprofit organization works well for managing finances and applying for grants. Using a fiscal agent means the CWMA will have to do less paperwork and administrative work, but most fiscal agents will charge the CWMA for their services, usually a percentage of the CWMA's grant funds or income. Some CWMAs find that it is in their best interest to become an independent nonprofit organization by incorporating in their state and filing for tax-exempt 501(c)(3)

status with the IRS. Nonprofit status will give you more freedom to raise funds and spend money as you choose, but it also brings significant responsibility for administration, compliance, and tax reporting.

**6) Where can I find outreach materials?**

The Midwest Invasive Plant Network provides many free and low-cost educational materials that can be used by CWMA's. For a list of available publications, visit [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org). Invasive Plant Councils in other regions are good resources for outreach materials, too. See the "Additional Resources" section on Page 23 for links to their websites.

**7) One of the major landowners in our area refuses to participate in the CWMA. What should we do?**

Take the time to sit down one-on-one with the landowner and listen to his or her concerns. Try to identify any goals for the area that you might have in common, even if they are very general and long-term. Establishing even a small point of agreement is a good start. Then keep the landowner informed about meetings or activities, whether or not he/she participates. Do your best to respectfully work around the landowner in the near term in hopes that he/she will come on board over time.

Some people are inherently suspicious of anything perceived as "government meddling." If this is the case with the landowner in question, having the landowner's trusted neighbor or peer speak to him/her about the value of the CWMA may be a successful approach.

**8) We received an unexpected grant or donation, and we are having trouble deciding how to spend it. Any suggestions?**

Many government agencies will have small amounts of money available at the end of their fiscal year to be spent on invasive species programs, and CWMA's are well-suited to receiving small pots of money for on-the-ground control work. To avoid arguments over which partner's land is the highest priority for control work when unexpected funds become available and need to be spent quickly, make sure you have prioritized projects ahead of time. Creating a strategic management plan and an annual operating plan will help avoid these sorts of issues.



Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)  
Photo: Debbie Maurer, Lake County Forest Preserve  
District, Illinois

# 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.  
[www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/toolkit/grantsrequests.shtml](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/toolkit/grantsrequests.shtml)

## Federal Funds :

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Pulling Together Initiative.** Provides support for the formation of CWMAs. [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)

**U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wetlands 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)

**USDA Integrated Pest Management Centers Mini-Grants.** Provide funding for projects related to weed and pest management. [www.ipmcenters.org](http://www.ipmcenters.org)

## State Funds :

Though the type and amount of available funding varies greatly, there are a number of federal money pass-through programs (examples 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.

- **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. To find out about funds available through counties, contact local agencies.

- **Soil (or Land) and Water Conservation Districts**
- **County Weed Supervisors**

## Private Funds :

A variety of private foundations and corporations make grants or donations of funds or supplies to support invasive plant projects.

- **Foundations:** Boat U.S. Foundation, National Forest Foundation, local community or family foundations
- **Corporations:** herbicide companies, utility companies, restoration companies, native plant nurseries

## Other Resources

### General Invasive Plant Information Sites:

National Invasive Species Information Center - [www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov)

Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health - [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)

Center for Invasive Plant Management - [www.weedcenter.org](http://www.weedcenter.org)

Invasive Exotic Plant Management Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers - [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/index.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/index.htm)

Invasive Plants of the Eastern United States: Identification & Control - [www.invasive.org/eastern](http://www.invasive.org/eastern)

Weeds Gone Wild: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas - [www.nps.gov/plants/alien](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien)

North American Weed Management Association - [www.nawma.org](http://www.nawma.org)

### Regional Invasive Plant Organizations:

Midwest Invasive Plant Network - [www.mipn.org](http://www.mipn.org)

Invasive Plant Atlas of New England - [www.ipane.org](http://www.ipane.org)

Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council - [www.ma-eppc.org](http://www.ma-eppc.org)

Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council - [www.se-eppc.org](http://www.se-eppc.org)

### CWMA Website Development Tools:

CWMA/CISMA Website Cookbook - [www.invasive.org/cismas/websitecookbook.pdf](http://www.invasive.org/cismas/websitecookbook.pdf)

CWMA/CISMA Website Template - [www.invasive.org/cismas/index.cfm](http://www.invasive.org/cismas/index.cfm)

### CWMA websites:

- Florida Invasive Species Partnership - [www.floridainvasives.org](http://www.floridainvasives.org)
- Hawkeye CWMA (Iowa) - [www.hawkeyecwma.org](http://www.hawkeyecwma.org)
- Iron Furnace CWMA (Ohio) - [www.ironfurnacecwma.org](http://www.ironfurnacecwma.org)
- New York Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) [http://nyis.info/PRISM/Regional\\_Partnerships.aspx](http://nyis.info/PRISM/Regional_Partnerships.aspx)
- Northeastern Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership - <http://niipp.net>
- Northwest Michigan CWMA - <http://garlic-mustard.org>
- Northwoods CWMA - [www.northwoodscwma.org](http://www.northwoodscwma.org)
- Potomac Highlands CWPMA (West Virginia) - [www.phcwpma.org](http://www.phcwpma.org)
- River to River CWMA (Illinois) - [www.rtrcwma.org](http://www.rtrcwma.org)
- Southern Appalachian Cooperative Weed Management Partnership - [www.sacwmp.org](http://www.sacwmp.org)

**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 impacts of invasive plant species in the Midwest.

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