

West Michigan Conservation Network 2023

MISSION STATEMENT

The West Michigan Conservation Network is an effective, diverse, and sustainable partnership of environmental groups, educational institutions, governmental organizations, and private citizens working to conserve and enhance our natural communities through ecosystem restoration and public education.

The West Michigan Conservation Network (WMCN) was formalized in 2016 as a way to provide an all-encompassing structure reflective of the full organizational body of work. Under this new organization, there are three subcommittees; Habitat Restoration & Management, Learning & Engagement, and Structure & Function. Together, these three committees help address conservation issues in West Michigan

HABITAT RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

During the 2023 field season, the Habitat Restoration & Management Subcommittee continued to advance invasive species management in west Michigan. Three Strike Teams and two Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) Crews worked diligently to survey and treat invasive species.

The Strike Teams work to address a variety of invasive plants on both public and private properties. The Teams focused on several species including Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard, Phragmites, European Frog-bit, and more. The three teams are based out of the Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa Conservation Districts.

The HWA Crews spent the winter months surveying and collecting data in preparation for the summer hemlock treatment season. The HWA Crews are based out of the Muskegon and Ottawa Conservation Districts.



2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WMCISMA STRIKE TEAMS

1,098 - Sites Surveyed & Treated
1,370 - Acres Surveyed & Treated

WMCISMA HWA CREWS

28,553 - Trees Surveyed
1,512 - Acres Surveyed
37,388 - Trees Treated
2,384 - Acres Treated

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, & GRANTS

7 - Outreach Activities
5 - Grants Awarded
8 - Grants Completed
5,955 Website Views
2,427 Website Visitors

PARTNER METRICS

290 - Trees Planted
4.77 - Acres Restored
52 - Acres Treated
2 - Grants Awarded
4 - Grants Closed
9,013 - Individuals Reached
170 Partner Events



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LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

WMCN continued to provide relevant, timely education to the public and partners. Virtual programs on developing land management plans and connecting community resources were offered in the winter in preparation of field season. Field programs gave examples of best practices for oak wilt and green infrastructure for watershed management, in addition to learning about bumble bee conservation. To end the year, the Fall Feature addressed the essential question of how to involve more voices in conserving our natural features.

Beyond the WMCN-led programs, were events offered by individual partners. Almost 170 programs, by 15 different organizations, were posted on the WMCN Event Calendar, with many more not posted. These conservation events include stewardship workdays, native plant sales, educational seminars and much more. Each program contributed to the collective growth and impact of the Network, its partners and the West Michigan community.



STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION SUBCOMMITTEE

On June 22, WMCN partners came together for our annual meeting to share accomplishments at the new Kent County Park building. Ginny Wanty and Mark Fitzpatrick were each honored with a service award. On September 21st we met to add two new steering committee members: Kelsey Bockelman, MSU Ext. Aquatic Invasive Species Educator and Sky Harsch, Stewardship Coordinator of Oceana CD. There are now nine steering committee members. If a grant is leveraging the larger area of seven counties, partners will have a chance to advise.

We closed the year by hosting a December 18th meeting officially approving the strategic management plan updates and redesign of the organizational structure to include the three additional elected members. In addition to the two new members added in September, Larry Burns was elected to the Steering Committee. Ginny Wanty was unanimously elected to serve as Emeritus Historian. Wanty graciously keeps the WMCN website updated. Our next meeting, open to all partners, will be held via Zoom on March 28 at 2:30pm.



TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF IN 2024

The WMCISMA Habitat and Restoration Subcommittee has been working with various partners to plan native seed collections. The goal is to propagate the collected seeds and distribute them back to partners for planting and restoration projects. The funding is provided through the United States Forest Service.

SUBCOMMITTEE CONTACTS

We encourage everyone to join our subcommittees! Please contact the committee leads with questions.

Habitat Restoration and Management

Natalie Bekins: natalie.bekins@macd.org

Learning and Engagement

Melanie Manion: mmanion@cascadetwp.com

Structure and Function

Jessie Schulte: jessie.schulte@macd.org

Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WMCISMA

Email us at wmconservationnetwork@gmail.com

NEW FOR 2023

In 2023, the WMCISMA received \$200,000 from the Sustain Our Great Lakes Program through the National Fish and Wildlife Federation. These funds are granted to the WMCN to survey and retreat all existing Japanese knotweed, invasive bittersweet, and Phragmites sites in the Pere Marquette, Muskegon, and Lower Grand watersheds, which feed directly into Lake Michigan. All three Strike Teams worked diligently to complete the first year of this project. Thank you to our grantor for the opportunity to continue management in these critical watersheds!

