

Huron Heartland Invasive Species Network Newsletter

The mission of the Huron Heartland Invasive Species Network is to work collaboratively to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species and to raise awareness to ensure healthy ecosystems and engaged communities across Northern Michigan.

We envision a Northern Michigan where native plants and wildlife thrive uninhibited by invasive species, enriching the quality of life in Northern Michigan.

2020 Field Season Report

Funding freezes, executive orders and COVID-19 couldn't stop our partnership from pushing forward in 2020. Together we accomplished a multitude of projects to protect and restore wildlife habitat throughout the six county Heartland region this field season. Under the leadership of our experienced coordinator Shelby Bauer, the Heartland Invasive Species Network completed a strategic plan, took action to prioritize and inventory sites in a systematic way and our Stewardship Technicians successfully treated priority invasive species. While funding restrictions limited our ability to hire crew the way we had originally planned, Huron Pines project staff pitched in and with partner and volunteer support we were in the field daily to inventory, treat and manage priority wildlife habitats. Here are some highlights:

Pigeon River Country (PRC) tree planting

Through a partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, our 2020 field season led off in June as our Huron Pines staff gathered for socially distant native tree planting in the PRC. This event was an enlightening experience that not only benefited the local elk population and other wildlife but also boosted the staff's team spirit during a time when all were working remotely. Approximately 350 seed and berry producing shrubs and tree saplings were planted between two sites within 10 fenced exclosures to prohibit elk and deer from grazing on the young plants. Huron Pines AmeriCorps members Samantha Peterson and Jen Klemm diligently monitored and watered the plants throughout the summer. Our goal is to continue restoration projects within the PRC that will improve diversity, enhance native habitats and create lasting benefits for wildlife.

"It was nice to participate in a native tree planting day to help turn old oil well pads into a productive part of the forest, benefiting both elk and other wildlife that depend on it."

*~Huron Pines AmeriCorps member
Samantha Peterson*



Camp Grayling

A large portion of this season's success was driven by our renewed partnership with Camp Grayling to conduct invasive species inventories and treatments on the 147,000-acre military training facility. Over the course of 13 days, Huron Pines' Stewardship Team surveyed three inland lakes, 14.5 miles of river and 265 acres of sensitive wetland and grassland habitats. We successfully accomplished six individual invasive species treatments across Kalkaska and Crawford counties totaling 7.6 acres. Camp Grayling contains the rare jack pine ecosystem that attract federally threatened and endangered species such as the Kirtland's warbler, eastern massasauga rattlesnake and the endemic Voss' goldenrod. We strive to continue these efforts of restoring our natural communities and protecting these valuable native species.



"After joining Huron Pines in July, I was quickly introduced to Camp Grayling. After spending weeks on the base, I found out that my grandfather had been stationed there in the 60's. It was inspiring to positively impact a place I could directly connect to a part of my family's past and present."

~Huron Pines Stewardship Technician Logan Hawley



Inventory, Treatment and Outreach

This season, our crew conducted trail and campground inventories throughout our Heartland counties. With the addition of an ATV this year, we successfully surveyed 141 miles of trail systems and 41 campgrounds for invasive species and inventoried numerous stream crossing sites. Our crew also inventoried 52 miles of the Main Branch Au Sable River for invasive species and treated 6 miles of the North Branch for purple loosestrife with the assistance of volunteers. A total of 25 chemical and mechanical treatments across 233 acres were accomplished in 2020 with the help of our volunteers and partners from local lake and river associations and clubs. Huron Pines also hosted three virtual invasive species trainings this year, reaching over 100 participants.

Thank you to Huron Pines AmeriCorps members Samantha, Nick and Jen for all their help this season.

Looking to 2021

2021 will open a new chapter for the Huron Heartland ISN. With our division of the Northeast Michigan CWMA complete, new Steering Committee members engaged and a great plan in place guiding our actions, we are poised to dramatically increase the scale and impact of our contribution to invasive species management. With a diverse base of financial support, we plan to add capacity to provide more inventories, treatments, and habitat/grassland restoration efforts across our six inland counties. New relationships with partners like the US Fish and Wildlife service and local natural resource user groups will open up greater opportunities for collaboration. Our network is constantly growing and developing exciting ways to improve the health of our water, protected places and vibrant communities throughout Northern Michigan. Here is a look at what you can expect from us in 2021:

Pigeon River Country State Forest: Wildlife habitat management through invasive species treatments and planting of diverse native grasslands to provide sustainable wildlife openings for the region's elk, birds, pollinators and other native species populations.

Camp Grayling: Expanded efforts in monitoring and treating invasive species in sensitive wetland and grassland areas within the military training installation. The evolving Northern Pine Plains Partnership will improve coordination and management of this rare ecosystem across ownerships.

Au Sable River project: We will expand relationships with user groups and continue efforts to treat of populations of purple loosestrife, Japanese barberry and other invasive species previously documented along the Au Sable.

Huron Heartland Invasive Species Pathways assessment: The inventory of ORV trails and campgrounds on public lands will continue, addressing likely points for introduction and spread.

Lake associations and clubs: The implementation of treatments and inventories for local clubs and lake association partners. This type of partnership will hopefully extend our reach post pandemic.

Outreach and communication: We will provide guided tours (whether virtual or in person) of our on-the-ground invasive species and restoration projects in high quality natural areas including pine barrens, bogs, grasslands and floodplains. Plans include developing opportunities for engaging in peer-to-peer learning with partners and providing technical assistance to landowners.

Continued outreach and education will occur across all projects within the guidelines provided by COVID-19 protocols.

Thank you to our Heartland steering committee partners:

Rich Corner	US Forest Service
Heather Rawlings	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Brian Mastenbrook	Michigan DNR
Steven Woods	Huron Pines
Ned Caveney	Huron Pines
Matt Kleitch	Camp Grayling
Julie Crick	MSU Extension

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