

# Grand Traverse Regional Invasive Species Network

## 93 Native Plant Species Found Along GT Bay

Alexandra De Sosa spent a lot of time on the Grand Traverse Bay shore this summer. But she wasn't swimming or lying in the sun – she was cataloging plants on the shore.

Alexandra was working with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and the Au Sable Institute. Her goal was to list species specific to coastal wetlands at six sites. These plants exist between the water's edge and upland areas. She found 93 native species. These plants occur naturally, and we should use them for restoration projects on the shoreline.

“Understanding what vegetation thrives on a healthy shoreline in our region is critical to restoration efforts that may be undertaken to restore disturbed shoreline areas,” says Abby Gartland, stewardship director at the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

The survey indicates that the six sites represent common wetland habitat for Grand Traverse Bay. Of the 93 native species found, nine were found on all six sites, while 50 were found at at least three sites.

One plant found on all six sites was *Scirpus americanus* or three-square, a type of bulrush. Bulrush and other plants that are partially submerged provide habitat for aquatic insects, which fish and other wildlife eat. After aquatic plants die, their decomposition by bacteria and fungi provides food for the insects. Ducks and geese eat the seeds and rhizomes.

Another plant found at all six sites was silverweed, or *Potentilla anserina*. It is low-growing with multi-lobed leaves with silvery hairs on the bottom and small, yellow flowers. Bees, who see ultraviolet light, see a red bull's eye in the center!



Another plant found on four of the sites was *Eupatorium perfoliatum*, or boneset. It was used by Native Americans and early settlers for medicinal purposes. It provides great butterfly habitat, along with common milkweed and blue vervain.



Top: Natural shorelines are healthy for children and other living things. Photo ©KenScottPhotography.com. Left: Silverweed, or *Potentilla anserina*, is a native shoreline plant that was found at all six survey sites along Grand Traverse Bay. Native shoreline plants are our best defense against invasives. Photo by Atiwok.

Several plants found – including blue vervain, red osier dogwood, red maple, common milkweed, joe-pye weed, and boneset – are available at nurseries. Many sedges, willows, and bulrushes were also found. Some of these are available at the Grand Traverse Conservation District's spring plant sale. The Watershed Center will work with the Grand Traverse Conservation District and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to develop a plant list for the bay's shoreline.

# Phragmites Treatment Expanded to Public Land

This fall marks the third year of herbicide treatment for *Phragmites australis*, an invasive tall grass also known as common reed, along the Grand Traverse Bay shoreline. In 2008 the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) convened a stakeholder group after conducting an aerial survey that identified invasive *Phragmites* along the bay. The Watershed Center is the lead organization for invasive *Phragmites* control strategy in Grand Traverse County.

Invasive *Phragmites* has been found on other lakes in Grand Traverse County, such as Silver Lake and Long Lake. Both of these lakes have lake associations that have helped coordinate treating invasive aquatic plants, such as *Eurasian milfoil*, in the past. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's permitting process for aquatic nuisances makes it easy for these associations to add invasive *Phragmites* treatment to their existing permits for treating other invasive species.

Also new this fall is coordinating treatment of invasive *Phragmites* stands in road right-of-ways, on state lands, on parts of the TART Trail, and public parklands managed by the Grand Traverse Conservation District. The Grand Traverse Conservation District is coordinating this work through partnerships with the Grand Traverse Road Commission and MDNR, among other agencies through funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. These collective efforts have helped control the spread of invasive *Phragmites* where it has been found in the county to date.

(continued below)



Phragmites takes over shores and waterways very quickly. It crowds out native plants, providing little or no habitat or food for wildlife. The rhizomes can grow up to 30 feet each year and host countless new plants. Photos by Maureen McManus.

Last summer, 68 acres of invasive *Phragmites* were treated in Peninsula Township. The township has adopted a treatment ordinance, which has facilitated comprehensive treatment of its 42-mile shoreline. In Acme Township, six acres of invasive *Phragmites* were treated. Acme Township uses a voluntary program; treatment depends on written permission from landowners. Less than one acre of invasive *Phragmites* was treated in East Bay Township. And less than one-half acre was treated in Traverse City. Both of these programs are voluntary as well, seeking landowner permission.

For the first time this fall, Rennie Lake, Denzer Lake, and Vandervoight Lake in East Bay Township will be treated. East Bay Township is helping coordinate treatment because these lakes do not have lake associations. Invasive *Phragmites* has been found on other inland lakes in the township, and our experiences this fall will help us expand the program to other lakes next year.



As individuals, we can also help control the spread of invasive *Phragmites*. Perhaps the most important measure is to allow native plants to grow on as much of our shorelines as possible to limit the areas where invasive *Phragmites* and other invasive plants can take hold. You can also clean your boat when you take it out of a lake. Even a small piece of the invasive *Phragmites* root is enough to start a new plant and a new patch in a different lake.

# 3,575 Gallons of Garlic Mustard and Counting

Almost a year ago, organizations from the region, including the Watershed Center, formed the Grand Traverse Regional Invasive Species Network. The network's goal is to prioritize and remove invasive species, prevent the introduction and spread of new invasives, and educate the community about stewardship of its natural resources. The Invasive Species Network is coordinated by the Grand Traverse Conservation District and spans Benzie, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Antrim and Charlevoix counties. To learn more about the network, its partners and their efforts, visit [natureiscalling.org](http://natureiscalling.org) and click on Invasive Species.

In the first half of 2011, Invasive Species Network partners surveyed nearly 2,000 acres of natural areas for invasive species; engaged volunteers in more than 875 hours of service; led a 3-day field course for teachers and environmental professionals on the schooner Inland Seas; treated 28 acres of Canada thistle, bull thistle, reed canary grass, wild parsnip, and Japanese knotweed; AND removed 3,575 gallons of garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, and various other invasives from the region. Phew. It's truly amazing what can be accomplished when the community comes together for a common goal.



Left: The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy pulls garlic mustard at its Parr Preserve in Benzie County. Photo courtesy of Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. Below: Grand Traverse Conservation District staff train volunteers to identify invasive plants at a survey expedition at the Natural Education Reserve in Grand Traverse County. Photo courtesy of Grand Traverse Conservation District.



While we've taken great strides in the last several months, we need your help if we're to achieve long-term success. We're asking community members to avoid purchasing common landscaping plants which have become invasive, such as Japanese barberry, myrtle, honeysuckle, or swallowwort, and to avoid planting newly introduced non-native plants, all of which have the potential to become costly nuisances to homeowners and their neighbors. The Invasive Species Network offers a variety of educational opportunities to help you better learn what plants to avoid. This includes field guides, workshops and expeditions, through which you can also learn simple, effective control measures. We invite you to learn more by attending the **Looking Beyond the Landscape workshop to be held on October 19** at the Grand Traverse Conservation District's Boardman River Nature Center. Learn more at [natureiscalling.org](http://natureiscalling.org).

## Grand Traverse Regional Invasive Species Network Major Partners



Northwest Michigan CWMA



### Grand Traverse Regional Invasive Species Network

This material is provided through the Grand Traverse Regional Invasive Species Network (ISN), coordinated by the Grand Traverse Conservation District. The ISN is made possible through funds from a \$935,182 grant provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. To learn more, visit [www.natureiscalling.org](http://www.natureiscalling.org).





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## Clean Boating for Clean Waters

Michigan has more than 1 million registered boaters, second only to California. Add that to our 13,752 boatable lakes, 2,147 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, and more than 1,300 public access sites, and you have a great potential for spreading invasives.

There are already more than 180 invasive species in the Great Lakes basin. Their rapid spread is due to human activity, such as boating, bait dumping and cargo transport. They threaten our water quality by:

- Reducing game fish populations by competing for food or killing them
- Choking off boat and swimming access with excess plant growth
- Threatening local communities' water tourism-based economies
- Reducing property values with water quality problems and chronic weeds that make recreation near impossible
- Reducing populations of native species
- Degrading ecosystems

**H**ere are some easy ways you can help reduce invasive species:

- Never move live plants or animals away from a water body.
- Never release fish, plants or animals into a water body unless they came from it. Put unused bait in the trash.
- Remove any mud, plants, fish, or animals from boats, trailers and equipment after leaving each water body to remove any microscopic larvae.
- Drain water from motor, live well, bilge and transom wells at boat access before leaving so invasives aren't transported to other bodies of water.
- Power wash boats, trailers and equipment at 104 degrees or dry for five days to kill microscopic larvae before boating in a different water body.
- Wash dogs with the warmest water possible after they swim, and brush them thoroughly.
- Never release any aquarium or aquatic pets, water or plants into or near a body of water or storm drain.
- If you do find an invasive species, put it in the trash, not back in the water. Take a photo if you can and report it to Michigan Sea Grant at 734-741-2287. Your help allows rapid response!

Watch for juvenile bighead carp in bait!



**For more information visit [gtbay.org](http://gtbay.org), [natureiscalling.org](http://natureiscalling.org), [miseagrant.umich.edu](http://miseagrant.umich.edu) and [protectyourwaters.net](http://protectyourwaters.net)**