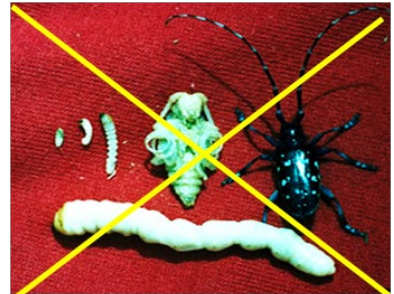




**NORTH COUNTRY
COOPERATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA**

STRATEGIC PLAN

Updated & Revised 2021



**North Country
Cooperative
Invasive
Species
Management
Area**

Fighting Invasives, Protecting Assets, Restoring Habitats

NORTH COUNTRY COOPERATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA

STRATEGIC PLAN

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THE MEMBERS OF THE NORTH COUNTRY COOPERATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES AREA STEERING COMMITTEE
HEREBY ADOPT THE 2021 REVISION OF THE NCCISMA STRATEGIC PLAN AS DOCUMENTED BY THE
SIGNATURES BELOW:





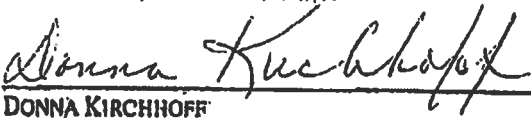

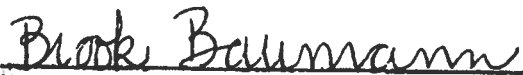


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SECTION I INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THIS PLAN

The North Country Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (NCCISMA) developed this Strategic Plan to enhance the effectiveness and extend the reach of its efforts to fulfill its mission of fighting invasives, protecting assets, and restoring habitats throughout its six-county region. While NCCISMA has been successful since its inception in building awareness and focusing resources to address the problems presented by invasive species, having this Strategic Plan in place is seen as key to taking the program to the next level.

Among the objectives the Strategic Plan is intended to address are:

- 1) Outline the scale and scope of the invasive species problem in our region
- 2) Clearly define our goals and the steps necessary to achieve those goals
- 3) Set short-term and long-term priorities for NCCISMA operations
- 4) Serve as a road map for carrying out projects, including criteria for the prioritization of invasive species management activities
- 5) Discuss control and prevention techniques likely to be used by NCCISMA
- 6) Provide a framework for sustaining and diversifying funding of NCCISMA
- 7) Define a procedure for periodically updating the Strategic Plan and keeping it current

B. NCCISMA BACKGROUND

NCCISMA was formed in May, 2015 in conjunction with a state-wide effort to establish regional coalitions of key resource management entities that were interested in addressing the growing problem of invasive species. Initially, NCCISMA was comprised of a five-county region that included Lake, Mason, Osceola, Missaukee and Wexford Counties. In 2016, Mecosta County was added. NCCISMA is overseen by a Steering Committee and a Program Coordinator. The Organizational Structure and ByLaws of NCCISMA are outlined in Appendix A.

NCCISMA's first challenge has been to spread the word about invasive species. When NCCISMA began, many of the invasive species that have significantly altered the landscape in other parts of Michigan were just beginning to get a foothold in its counties. At the same time, the level of knowledge regarding invasive species was generally lacking in the region. As such, it was crucial to begin an effort to inform people about the potential negative

impacts that invasive species posed, and to arm people with the information and weapons needed to more effectively prevent, treat and control these species.

Throughout its existence, NCCISMA has done much to raise awareness of invasive species within the region. Building partnerships, working with local media, and engaging with the wider conservation and stewardship community, have been important elements of this effort.

This increased awareness has led to invasive species control efforts by many NCCISMA partners and collaborators, including road commissions, schools, conservation districts, local land conservancies, and managers of public lands in the region. In addition to these large organizational partners, NCCISMA has worked with numerous private property owners to promote and lend direct support to best management practices for addressing invasive species on their own property, thus helping to preserve their property value and improve the local environment overall.

C. FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

NCCISMA was begun with funding through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). NCCISMA is dependent on grant sources, as it is impractical to seek direct funding from fiscally strapped local government entities.

Since its initial funding support provided through the MISGP, NCCISMA has also received specific grant project funding awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency and the USDA Forest Service – Great Lake Restoration Initiative program. Continuing to expand its grant funding sources, along with the continued base support from the MISGP, is essential to the success of NCCISMA in addressing invasive species issues. NCCISMA's strategic goals include diversifying its funding to address invasive species management in the region by collaborating with partners on areas of mutual concern.

Fiduciary responsibilities for NCCISMA have been determined on an individual grant basis and have been provided by the Wexford Conservation District, the Mason-Lake Conservation District, and the Mecosta Conservation District. The Steering Committee will continue to monitor fiduciary management responsibilities, and decide whether to determine this role on an individual grant basis, or to establish a single fiduciary responsibility.

SECTION II Mission, Goals and Structure

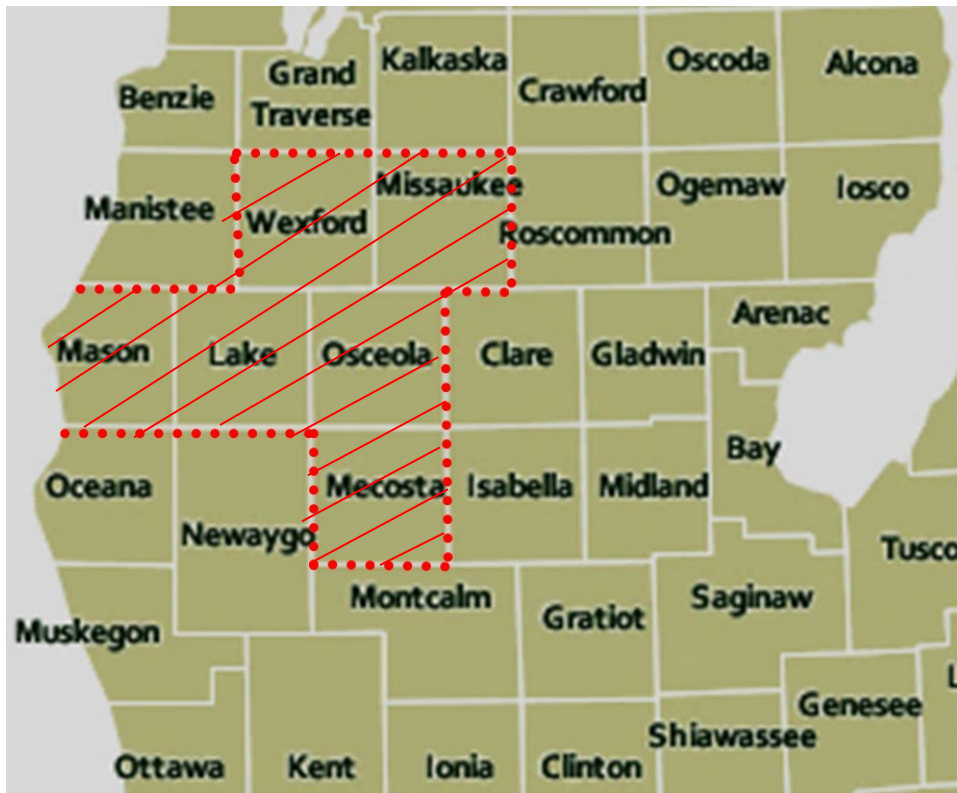
A. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Invasive species are organisms that are not native and are likely to cause negative impacts on human health, the economy, or the environment. There are many non-native species in our landscape that do not become invasive. Invasive species are those that have been proven to have detrimental effects on the value of land and water. Recent history from more heavily populated areas, like southern Michigan, has taught us that many exotics can bring devastating changes to the landscape. NCCISMA is working to prevent relatively isolated occurrences of these species in our region from expanding and having the same adverse landscape level impacts, and to prevent the onslaught of new invaders.

B. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The geographic scope of NCCISMA encompasses six counties in northern lower Michigan: Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Osceola, and Wexford.

FIGURE I. – NCCISMA GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE



C. MISSION AND OVER-ARCHING GOAL

As noted earlier, NCCISMA views its mission as fighting invasives, protecting assets, and restoring habitats, throughout its six-county region.

NCCISMA's over-arching goal is to act as a facilitating umbrella organization that enables a diverse set of partners to collaborate on programs and projects designed to combat invasive species in order to protect, restore, and improve the character of public and private property throughout the region. The partners that form NCCISMA are listed in Appendix B of this Strategic Plan, and a principle part of the over-arching goal is to continue to grow the partner collaboration list.

The protection component of the goal involves both preventing the introduction of new invasives, and stopping the spread of existing invasives to other locations in the region where they do not currently exist. The restoration component involves efforts aimed at returning a habitat degraded by invasives species to a healthy, self-sustaining condition that resembles, to the extent practical, its condition prior to invasives establishment. The improvement component looks to consideration of specific habitat objectives that may be incorporated in post-invasive treatment prescriptions.

D. GOAL ELEMENTS AND FOCUS AREAS

The three-pronged overall goal components of protection, restoration and improvement drive the criteria that NCCISMA employs in determining where to focus its efforts. In deciding what species and specific infestations should be prioritized for treatment efforts and resources, some of the key criteria that NCCISMA will consider include whether the species or infestation:

- Can alter hydrologic and ecosystem function
- Adversely impacts fish and game sport activities
- Reduces access to and recreational use of public open space
- Adversely impacts the productive or recreational use of private property
- Can damage roads and other infrastructure, including roadway sight distances
- Increases wildland fire hazards
- May adversely affect property values
- Has the potential for negative impacts to human health

The assets of the NCCISMA region, such as agricultural productivity, public recreation and tourism, property values, existing infrastructure investments, providing for public safety,

and preserving local ecosystems, can all be affected by invasive species. The ecological degradation that occurs with the proliferation of invasive species can have impacts not only on native plant and wildlife species, but also on human well-being.

As broader recognition of the problems associated with invasive species has developed, and people begin to recognize high priority species along their lakeshores, roadsides, and favorite recreation, hunting and fishing areas, and even in their own home landscaping, the need to provide for treatment of these species has become an increasingly important focus of NCCISMA.

E. NCCISMA PRIORITY, WATCH LIST AND OTHER SPECIES

The principle focus of the NCCISMA efforts is on invasive plant species, both in upland and wetland landscapes. However, cooperation with the efforts of DNR, the US Forest Service and other partners, like Trout Unlimited and the area Foresters, on target insect and aquatic invaders, is a secondary NCCISMA goal.

Based on its overall goal and goal elements, NCCISMA has identified lists of Priority Species, Watch List Plants, and Other Watch List Species. These are shown in Table I. Priority Species, Watch List Plants and Other Watch List Species. The parameters that suggest the groupings and how they fit into NCCISMA's action plans are as follows:

- I. Priority Species are those invasive plants that have been shown elsewhere to have the potential for adverse landscape level impacts, but which NCCISMA and its partners believe can still be controlled in our region. While they have been observed in a number of locations throughout the NCCISMA region, by employing strategic targeted action that includes education, prevention and aggressive treatment, their further spread and adverse impacts can be largely prevented. Identifying and pursuing treatment of these plants sits at the top of the NCCISMA operations agenda.
- II. Watch List Plants are invasive plants that have been observed in other locations, particularly southern Michigan and its bordering states. They either have not been observed in the NCCISMA geographic region, or their observation has been limited to a few isolated occurrences. For example, Chinese yam has spread to 16 southeastern states since its introduction in the 1800's and has been recorded in some locations in Michigan. It can grow up to 16 feet in height, engulfing surrounding vegetation along the way. While this vine dies back in the winter, it grows and reproduces quickly enough to reduce plant diversity and threaten native

ecosystems. The management objectives for these species rests heavily on education and identification efforts that will hopefully prevent them from becoming established and spreading in our region. Finding a watch list species triggers an Early Detection Response (EDR)(see section G below).

- III. The Other Watch List Species consists of those non-plant species that our organization and other partners have identified as being a priority in their invasive species efforts. The Asian long-horned beetle, for example, is currently found in Ohio, but has not been observed in Michigan. If the species were to gain a foothold in Michigan, the potential damage to Michigan’s hardwood forest resource would be extensive and very expensive. Programs aimed at those species are being led by outside partnering agencies and partners. NCCISMA performs as a supporter of those programs, in an effort to extend their reach, and increase citizen awareness of the need for prevention and control efforts.

Table II.1 Priority Species, Watch List Plants and Other Watch List Species

High Priority Species	Watch List Plants	Other Watch List Species
Phragmites	Flowering rush	Asian long-horned beetle
Japanese knotweed	European frogbit	Hemlock woolly adelgid
Giant knotweed	Pale swallow-wort	Red swamp crayfish
Glossy buckthorn	Black swallow-wort	New Zealand mudsnail
Common buckthorn	Chinese yam	Thousand cankers disease
Garlic mustard	Japanese stiltgrass	Asian crazy worm
Oriental bittersweet	Jetbead	Spotted lanternfly
Wild parsnip	Kudzu	Bighead carp
Tree of Heaven	Giant hogweed	Silver carp
Bristly locust	Water hyacinth	Black carp
	Water lettuce	
	Water soldier	
	Yellow floating heart	
	Lesser celandine	
	Japanese chaff flower	
	Himalayan balsam	

In addition to these targeted invasive species, NCCISMA also recognizes a number of invasive species as being Species of Local Concern. The Species of Local Concern group includes invasive plants that are already generally well established and fairly wide-spread in our region. Nevertheless, in specific locations and habitats many NCCISMA partners may want to pursue aggressive control efforts against these species to achieve specific management objectives. Examples include aggressively controlling spotted knapweed in areas where endangered Karner blue butterflies are being managed, or controlling autumn olive in areas that are being managed for public recreation use. NCCISMA can effectively support these efforts by providing information and equipment, and publicizing the need for, and success, of these projects.

The NCCISMA Species of Local Concern include:

- Autumn olive
- Spotted knapweed
- Oak wilt disease
- Purple loosestrife
- Multi-flora rose
- Japanese barberry
- Honeysuckle
- Baby's breath
- Burning bush
- Norway maple
- Bradford pear
- Black locust
- Oregon grape

Agricultural pests are not included in NCCISMA's high priority, watch list, or local concern species lists. Agricultural pests do not meet NCCISMA's criteria for being listed as an invasive species. A focus on agricultural pests may diminish the core message of NCCISMA regarding the threats associated with invasive species as important to all citizens of the region, as opposed to a niche group, such as farmers. This is not to imply that agricultural pests are not important, or that they could not have a serious negative impact on the economy of the region, but rather they are excluded since there are other entities in place that routinely work with farmers and are better situated to handle these issues. Questions received by NCCISMA regarding exotic agricultural pests, such as spotted wing drosophila, Asian chestnut gall wasp, and brown marmorated stink bug, will be referred to the appropriate MSU Extension professionals.

Changes to NCCISMA's priority species lists will be accomplished through an open discussion with partners at our annual Partner Working Meeting. All suggestions will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. Finalization of additions or subtractions of species on the watch or high priority list will be done by a motion of the Steering Committee, at their next meeting following the Partner Working Meeting. Species that are suggested for inclusion, but do not receive the final approval of the Steering Committee will be added to the species of local concern list, or will otherwise be addressed in the Strategic Plan. Following this protocol for reassessing these species lists will ensure that high priority and watch list species are kept current with our changing environment.

F. TREATMENT AND RESTORATION SITE PRIORITIZATION

NCCISMA's protocol for prioritizing treatments is broken into two categories, contracted treatments and NCCISMA field crew work.

Treatments are contracted for infestations that either are of too large of scale or unreasonable to be safely accessed with the equipment available to the NCCISMA field crew. Decisions on which sites to prioritize for contracted treatments are made by committee. The make-up of this committee is established by the NCCISMA Steering Committee.

NCCISMA field crew work is prioritized by the NCCISMA Program Coordinator, with the following criteria being considered as listed, in weighted order:

- High-priority species cost-shared treatments
- Proximity to high environmental value natural habitats
- High visibility of the infestation for the public
- Infestations that NCCISMA has received numerous inquiries about

Committing to and prioritizing post-treatment restoration sites is determined by the NCCISMA Program Coordinator, with input, as needed, from the NCCISMA Steering Committee. The following criteria are observed and measured by NCCISMA staff in the field and are used to guide decision making.

- Environmental and economic value of the habitat
- Proximity of either native or invasive species seed sources
- Observations of volunteer species sprouting following treatment
- Visibility of the location, and consideration of its potential role in serving as a showplace for the work of NCCISMA

G. EARLY DETECTION RESPONSE (EDR) PROTOCOL

To ensure that NCCISMA staff is promptly notified of any reported watch list species within NCCISMA's area, the Program Coordinator will register for species alerts through MISIN for all state and regional watch list species. If a report of a plant watch list species is received, NCCISMA will perform a site visit to confirm the identification, and will notify state and federal partners, as appropriate. If any species from NCCISMA's or the state's watch list are confirmed within NCCISMA's geographical boundaries, an EDR response will be triggered. NCCISMA will coordinate EDR responses with state and federal partners, leveraging local resources, as available, for response actions. If any species for NCCISMA's or the state's list of Other Watch List Species (i.e., non-plant) is found within NCCISMA, NCCISMA will immediately notify the DNR Invasive Species Program staff, and provide support for mitigation or spread prevention, as guided/requested to do so.

H. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OBJECTIVES

Collectively planning and implementing joint projects with our regional partners and stakeholders will help to ensure that these goal elements and focus areas will be addressed. Having this Strategic Plan as a framework for action is key to engaging partners and increasing NCCISMA's capacity to conduct inventory and control projects that respond to these priorities.

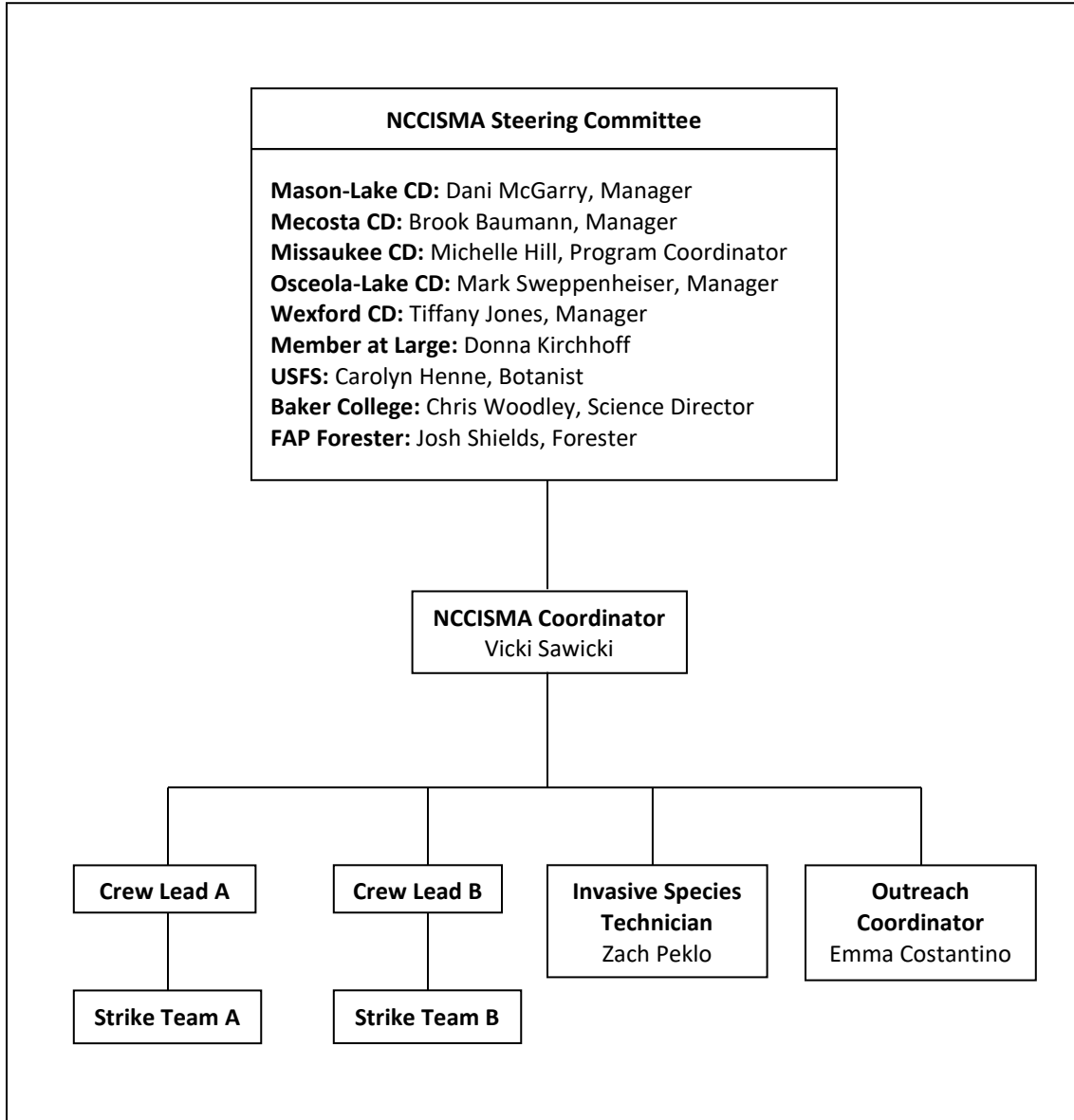
While active inventory and control projects will undoubtedly continue to be the lead activity in the region, NCCISMA is also committed to seeking out and engaging, through its partners, in efforts aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of new invasive species in our region. Partner involvement in the NCCISMA planning process is an important part of that effort also.

The NCCISMA Steering Committee is comprised of one representative from each of its five partnering conservation districts, and up to six other representatives of the public or other NCCISMA partners. The current make-up of NCCISMA's Steering Committee is given in figure 2: NCCISMA Organizational Chart. The roles of the steering committee, the Program Coordinator, and the grant fiduciary are discussed in Appendix A.

The input of our partners is essential as we plan for the future of NCCISMA. Maintaining a focus on increasing collaboration among our partners will enhance the ability of NCCISMA to address the large regional challenge of invasive species, without stressing the resources of any single organization. The NCCISMA Coordinator and steering committee will

routinely solicit partner input to guide the direction of NCCISMA and the projects they pursue.

Figure 2: NCCISMA Organizational Chart



I. Strategic Plan Review and Revision Procedure

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, that will evolve over time to keep up with emerging issues, and the needs and concerns of NCCISMA partners. The narrative for this document will be reviewed once each five years. An annual review will be done on Section III: Desired Outcomes and Success Indicators and Section V: Implementation Work Plan. Accomplished objectives from these sections will be left in the tables as completed,

for one year following goal achievement. Strategies for completed objectives will be removed from section IV: Implementation Strategies.

Partner input for adding goals, objectives, and tasks to this Strategic Plan will be collected at the NCCISMA Annual Partner Work Meeting. All partner suggestions will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. Partner commitments and collaboration will be encouraged in revisions to Section V: Implementation Work Plan.

SECTION III

Desired Outcomes and Success Indicators

This portion of the Strategic Plan is aimed at defining desired outcomes and success indicators in four major areas that will help to keep NCCISMA on track in terms of achieving its mission and goals. The four areas are: A) Organizational Structure and Function, B) Public and Partner Learning and Engagement, C) Invasive Species Inventory, Treatment and Control, and D) Monitoring and Restoration. For each of these areas, long-term desired outcomes and success indicators are defined, and then intermediate outcomes and indicators that contribute to the long-term objectives are detailed along with establishing target achievement dates.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

As was discussed in the mission, goals and structure section above, NCCISMA recognizes the need to define its organizational structure and function. These objectives, which are to some extent procedural in nature, need to be clearly stated for operational efficiency and focus purposes. The desired outcomes and success indicators in this area include:

- All members of NCCISMA clearly understand their responsibilities as a partner, their role in the organization, and the opportunities for participation in NCCISMA projects.
- The format for NCCISMA communication, interaction, and function is inclusive and implemented with minimal logistical impediments.
- Data, finances, and progress toward desired outcomes is clear and made readily available to partners, stakeholders, and the public.
- Established NCCISMA structure and by-laws (see Appendix A) are periodically reviewed and available to all partners.

Table III.1 Organizational Structure and Function

Intermediate Outcomes	Completion Target
1. Public and stakeholder involvement in NCCISMA is strengthened and partner base is expanded.	Ongoing
2. An annual meeting of NCCISMA partners will be held to track progress in achieving the goals and to elicit input on NCCISMA's Strategic Plan review and revisions.	Yearly
3. The Annual Work Plan will be collectively developed with partner input from the annual Partner Work Meeting.	Yearly
4. Encourage all active partners to formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NCCISMA.	Ongoing
5. Explore options to make NCCISMA's fiduciary management arrangements more cohesive.	2022

B. PUBLIC AND PARTNER LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

As the NCCISMA Background discussion highlighted earlier, public education and awareness has been a major component of our mission from the outset. Continuing to expand and build on the strategies that have been used to implement those efforts is essential to building a better understanding of the need for invasive species control, and enlisting public support for those efforts. The desired outcomes and success indicators in this area include:

- The regional public has access to easily comprehensible and balanced information, and education opportunities and materials, on the issues of the greatest conservation concern relating to invasive species.
- NCCISMA partners are provided opportunities to increase their organizational capacity, skills, and expertise through coordinated training and tool sharing.
- Additional conservation-themed presentations and events are held as necessary, mutually-benefitting NCCISMA and partners.

Table III.2 Public and Partner Learning and Engagement

Intermediate Outcomes	Completion Target
1. Partnerships will be built and strengthened through our annual partner work meeting.	Yearly
2. Host and support regional community outreach and educational events.	Ongoing
3. Identify capacity or expertise gaps among partners .	Ongoing
4. Coordinate with partners to develop trainings and workshops that will aid them in their support of NCCISMA and their individual organizational missions, being mindful of any identified expertise gaps.	Ongoing
5. Maintain a public resource guidebook for partners and the community.	Update yearly
6. Outreach to private property owners to promote NCCISMA assistance programs.	Ongoing
7. Support and promote existing programs for invasive species awareness and control.	Ongoing
8. Engage primary, secondary, and post-secondary students and educators in invasive species awareness.	Ongoing
9. Engage legislators and other decision makers in order to raise the visibility of the need for invasive species management.	Ongoing
10. Develop a better understanding by partners and the public of the proper use of herbicides, and requirements for certification and licensing.	Ongoing
11. Endeavor to get NCCISMA’s message regarding invasive species to previously hard to reach audiences, such as ORV enthusiasts, seasonal residents, and farmers.	2022

C. INVASIVE SPECIES INVENTORY, TREATMENT, AND CONTROL

Over and above any other identity factor, NCCISMA views itself as an action oriented coalition of organizations and agencies that are actively working to achieve its mission of

fighting invasives, protecting assets, and restoring habitats. As such, the inventory, treatment, and control activities are its most visible and important efforts. The desired outcomes and success indicators in this area include:

- Continuing to develop the inventory of invasive species within the boundaries of NCCISMA by encouraging and recruiting participation by partners and the public, and providing training opportunities, where needed, to strengthen identification and inventory skills.
- Control will focus on the high priority species, first targeting outlier occurrences to contain current populations and, as resources allow, treating source populations to prevent future invasions and expansions. These efforts will be in areas where the spread is most likely to affect ecological and human land value.
- We will continue to recruit and welcome new partners in order to expand the capacity of NCCISMA to conduct inventory, treatment and control activities.
- While the primary focus will remain on terrestrial invasive plant species, we will also provide aquatic and insect invasive species identification and assist with control strategies. Additionally, we will continue to provide outreach addressing a variety of invasive species, including invasive animals.

Table III.3 Invasive Species Inventory, Treatment and Control

Intermediate Outcomes	Completion Target
1. Assess high priority and watch list regularly and revise as necessary.	Yearly
2. Assess strike team capacity - focus will be on terrestrial/emergent plant species, and other forest pests.	Annually
3. Provide partners and the regional public with terrestrial and aquatic plant identification and assist with control strategies.	Ongoing
4. Continue to facilitate private landowner efforts to treat invasive species on their own property.	Ongoing
5. Maintain cost-share program utilizing NCCISMA strike team to address priority species.	Ongoing
6. Seek out resources to address source populations beyond strike-team capacity.	Ongoing
7. Survey for high priority and watch list species.	Ongoing

D. MONITORING AND RESTORATION

Having an effective monitoring process does several things. First, it helps to improve our knowledge and understanding as to how effective and efficient selected treatment techniques are. Secondly, it enables us to determine where follow-up treatments may be necessary. And finally, it enables us to determine where restoration or habitat improvement work is needed and likely to be effective.

The restoration objective ties directly to the NCCISMA overall-goal elements of protecting, restoring, and improving the character of public and private property. Restoration with native species will improve the character of the lands that are treated and help to prevent the re-establishment of invasive species in those locations. The use of certain species aimed at habitat improvement objectives can also be incorporated in this process. The desired outcomes and success indicators in this area include:

- Monitoring of sites treated by NCCISMA and its partners will occur regularly. As needed, sites previously treated will undergo follow-up treatments.
- Evaluation of whether a particular location may be a good candidate for restoration activities will be a component of the initial treatment prescription process.
- NCCISMA will work throughout the region to help restore ecosystem function, and recreational opportunities. Limiting the spread and removing invasive species will also protect human health and infrastructure.

Table III.4 Monitoring and Restoration

Intermediate Outcomes	Completion Target
1. Maintain strategy for follow-up monitoring of all treatment sites.	Ongoing
2. Employ a mechanism for tracking treatment locations and efficacy that will be readily available to our partners and the general public.	2021 and Ongoing
3. Facilitate and perform restoration work following invasive species control.	Ongoing

SECTION IV Implementation Strategies

This part of the Strategic Plan identifies one-time or ongoing efforts to best implement activities in order to achieve the intermediate outcomes for the four major areas outlined in the previous section.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION STRATEGIES

- 1) To ensure that all partners are engaged in the process and aligned regarding goals and strategies, NCCISMA has in place an organizational structure that serves as the foundation for decision making and project implementation.
- 2) Following the established organizational structure, subcommittees or project-based groups are set up to carry out specific activities, as well as assist with the day-to-day function of NCCISMA.
- 3) On a yearly basis, NCCISMA will involve their partners in developing and prioritizing potential projects to pursue (i.e., the Annual Work Plan). NCCISMA will seek out opportunities to participate in collaborative projects with its partners.
- 4) We will continue to strive to recruit and involve additional partners into NCCISMA. Our current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be revised to reflect the established organizational structure, and we will encourage all active partners to formally sign the MOU to collaborate with NCCISMA.
- 5) Toward the goal of smooth functioning and cohesiveness, NCCISMA will continue to operate with fiduciary functions determined on an individual grant basis, but may look in the future to bring the organization under a single bookkeeping/financial management entity.
- 6) An annual report will be utilized to increase visibility of NCCISMA and improve regional understanding of NCCISMA's mission. Accomplishments of partners that coincide with the mission of NCCISMA will be highlighted in this annual report, providing encouragement and recognition to involved partners.

B. PUBLIC AND PARTNER LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- 1) An annual NCCISMA partner business meeting will be hosted to more fully engage partners and the public in the goals, strategies, and work planning of NCCISMA. These meetings will provide a forum for collectively analyzing progress toward achieving goals established in the Strategic Plan, adjusting the Strategic Plan to align with changing goals as necessary, and developing an Annual Work Plan.
- 2) We will continue to host our large half-day regional community outreach event on an annual basis. Participant feedback from previous events, as well as current trends and news in invasive species management, will be used to determine the focus of these events.
- 3) After a yearly review of gaps in NCCISMA staff and partnership expertise or capacity via our survey efforts, NCCISMA will employ expert-led presentations, trainings, and workshops for its partners to address the gaps.
- 4) NCCISMA and partners will share responsibilities for informational presentations or similar events. These will serve as a way to both allow partners to reach a wider audience, and to increase awareness of NCCISMA in the communities we are serving.
- 5) Continue and expand NCCISMA's media based outreach efforts. This may include the use of social media, e-newsletter, website, print articles, and promoting events on TV and radio. New media outlets, including outdoor programs, such as Michigan Out-Of-Doors and Big Boys Adventures, will be pursued.
- 6) NCCISMA will gather information during our partner business meetings to update the resource guidebook we have available to partners and the public. This includes sources of expertise and equipment from among our partners, and information on qualified herbicide applicators. This should allow for better coordination of efforts, and for valuable resources to be shared, eliminating waste, and freeing up limited funds for equipment and staff time.

C. INVASIVE SPECIES INVENTORY, TREATMENT, AND CONTROL STRATEGIES

- 1) Projects will be initiated to survey for invasive species key locations that are known or potential vectors of spread for invasive species. This may include public parks, trails, and roads, as well as boat launches and landscaped areas.

- 2) A protocol for Early Detection and Response (EDR) will be formalized and explained to partner organizations. Watch list species will be targeted by timely implementation of the EDR protocol.
- 3) Invasive species infestations will be prioritized for control efforts. Control efforts will focus on outlier populations of high priority species. Source populations of high priority invasive species will be targeted for control where it is deemed strategically necessary to curb the spread of a particular species in the region, or where its impact on the value of the landscape is determined to be of the greatest concern.
- 4) NCCISMA will work to develop and disseminate information among partners and the public on the proper use of herbicides, and requirements for certification and licensing.
- 5) We will continue to facilitate private landowner's treating invasive species on their property by maintaining our tool rental programs, providing how-to guide sheets, and promoting our herbicide contractor list.
- 6) We will address source populations through partnerships and alternative funding sources.

D. MONITORING AND RESTORATION STRATEGIES

- 1) At sites where treatments were performed through NCCISMA funding, annual follow-up monitoring and treatment will be a priority.
- 2) We will perform follow-up monitoring of all NCCISMA performed, and contracted, treatment sites to track treatment efficacy and advise us of the need for follow-up treatments or restoration activities.
- 3) We will assess locations prior to treatment to determine if native species will be the most likely to recolonize a treated area. In those instances where there is no quality native seed source nearby, or where an obvious infestation of opportunistic invasive species would be the most likely to recolonize the area, we will look to establish native seed stock or plants.

SECTION V Implementation Work Plan

This Work Plan section of the Strategic Plan is intended to lay out the specific tasks that will enable NCCISMA to achieve its intermediate target outcomes and success indicators in each of the four principle strategy areas that have been outlined above. In some cases, the Work Plan activities mirror intermediate outcome goals on a one for one basis, while in other instances several Work Plan activities are needed to achieve the intermediate outcome.

The review of this Work Plan is intended to serve as the principle basis for the annual partner business meeting to determine an Annual Work Plan, as discussed above in Section IV-B-1. In that resulting Annual Work Plan, individual activity choices and assignments to lead parties will be agreed upon and subsequently tracked by the NCCISMA Program Coordinator and Steering Committee.

Table V.1 Organizational Structure and Function

OUTCOME ADDRESSED *	ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY OR END DATE
1	A survey of partner's expertise, interests, and needs is completed to aid in developing program direction and priorities.	Yearly
1	An evaluation of external strategic partnership opportunities is performed and discussed with the Steering Committee.	Yearly
1	Add dashboard by county summarizing NCCISMA work onto NorthCountryInvasives.org webpage.	2021
1	Seek out additional funding sources and partnerships.	Ongoing
1	Prepare and distribute annual report for public and stakeholders.	Yearly
1	Steering Committee will develop ways to improve NCCISMA branding and marketing.	Ongoing
1	Conduct a review of the web site www.northcountryinvasives.org to determine how it can be improved and more widely promoted.	Ongoing
2	Plan annual community and partner meetings.	Yearly

3	Steering Committee review its current make-up and determine if any changes/additions would improve partner engagement and participation.	Ongoing
3	Develop Annual Work Plan with partner input at annual Partner Work Meeting.	Yearly
3	Annual Work Plan developed at partner business meeting will be approved by steering committee at subsequent committee meeting.	Yearly
4	Highlight the contributions of partners with signed MOUs on NCCISMA's webpage.	2021
4	Suggest partners sign MOUs when NCCISMA is working on projects that directly benefit them.	Ongoing
5	Explore possibility of NCCISMA becoming a 501(c)3 organization.	2022

*Outcome addressed from Table III.1

Table V.2 Public and Partner Learning and Engagement

OUTCOME ADDRESSED *	ACTIVITIES	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
1	Host annual partner work meeting.	Yearly
2	Host regional community outreach and educational events.	Yearly
2	Develop a targeted outreach program for outdoor organizations like Sportsmen's Clubs, Ducks Unlimited, etc., to get them engaged in the invasive species issue.	Ongoing
3	Conduct a survey of current partner's expertise, interests, and needs.	2021
4	Develop a collaborative calendar of events that includes an array of partner activities and is easily accessed on the website, and invite partners to contribute.	2021
4	Work with partners and other CISMAs to develop a training targeted at local landscaping, lawn care, and nursery businesses that will educate them on invasives.	2023
4	Work with partners and other CISMA's to develop a training targeted at lakeshore owners and aquatic nuisance control contractors, that will educate them on invasive species	2021

	identification, spread reduction, and appropriate control techniques.	
4	Develop and promote educational videos for species-appropriate control techniques.	2022
5	Review public resource guidebook for partners and the community at the annual partner work meeting.	Yearly
6	Door-to-door and in-person outreach, and distribution of educational materials.	Ongoing
7	Make a concentrated effort to publicize success stories in a variety of media settings, and at community meetings.	Ongoing
7	Develop and distribute promotional items to increase awareness of NCCISMA and its mission.	Ongoing
7	Assess and improve website for ease of use and robustness of content.	Quarterly
7	Promote website in all articles and media (TV, radio, etc) so that it becomes a “go to” source for area public seeking information on invasives.	Ongoing
7	Actively recruit lakes into the Exotic Aquatic Plant Watch Program (EAPW).	2022
7	Maintain a social media presence.	Ongoing
7	Produce and distribute quarterly e-newsletter.	Ongoing
8	On request, provide educational opportunities to primary, secondary and post-secondary students, and educators.	Ongoing
8	In alignment with NCCISMA staff interest and abilities, seek opportunities and funding to support outreach initiatives for school age children.	Ongoing
9	Present NCCISMA Annual Report and other accomplishments to partnering CDs, County Boards of Commissioners, and other governmental entities.	Yearly
9	Promote the value of aquatic invasive species management to governmental entities.	2021

10	Pursue efforts through Guidebook, website and elsewhere to make partners and public aware of licensing and certification restrictions on the use of herbicides.	2021
11	Collaborate with partners that have working relationships with area farmers, such as MAEAP Technicians and NRCS staff, to reach farmers with NCCISMA's message.	Ongoing
11	Seek funding for project focused on reaching motorized trail users on the importance of recognizing invasive species while recreating and equipment decontamination.	2022
11	As funding is available, perform surveys of lakeshore communities, and reach out to owners of properties containing high priority species and inform them of options for control.	Ongoing

* Outcome addressed from Table III.2

Table V.3 Invasive Species Inventory, Treatment and Control

OUTCOME ADDRESSED *	ACTIVITIES	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
1	Assess Priority, Watch, and Local Concern lists at Annual Partner Work Meetings.	Yearly
2	Focus invasive species control work on outlier populations in accordance with obtained grant deliverables and established priorities, such as along pathways of spread, and other priority habitats.	Ongoing
2	Carry out follow-up treatments as needed, based on monitoring and follow-up criteria.	Ongoing
2	Address species of local concern according to established prioritization protocol.	Ongoing
3	Make plant identification services available and assist with control strategies.	Ongoing
3/4	Annually update NCCISMA's Resource Guidebook for partners and the public to include treatment options and contractor list, as well as resources, tools, and professional references on invasives treatment.	2021 and Yearly
4	Actively refer landowners to existing cost assistance programs.	Ongoing

4	Develop Best Management Practice (BMP) documents for all high-priority species.	2021
5	Promote cost-share program, for private landowners and other partners, to address high priority species.	Ongoing
6	Continue program to contract control of source populations of high priority species.	Ongoing
7	Based on existing funding and willing partners, survey public trails and parks for high priority and watch list species.	Ongoing
7	Continue to utilize citizen science data from the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN) to complete roadside invasive species inventory.	Ongoing
7	Based on existing funding and willing partners, survey lakeshore properties for high priority and watch list species.	2020 and Ongoing

*Outcome addressed from Table III.3

Table V.4 Monitoring and Restoration

OUTCOME ADDRESSED *	ACTIVITIES	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
1	Maintain procedures for follow-up monitoring of NCCISMA treated sites.	Ongoing
2	Work with MISIN to make treatment tracking available to all interested partners and the public.	2022
2	Add treatment efficacy data to Annual Report.	2021 and Yearly
3	Identify and prioritize sites for follow-up restoration work after treatment and control.	Ongoing
3	Utilize monitoring data to pursue follow-up treatment and restoration funding.	2020
3	Provide advice for determining when restoration activities should be pursued and what species/procedures should be employed.	Ongoing
3	Perform restoration activities on NCCISMA-performed control sites according to established priorities.	Ongoing
3	Actively refer property owners to existing cost assistance programs for site restoration.	Ongoing

* Outcome addressed from Table III.4

SECTION VI

Summary and Conclusion

Like all aspects of the NCCISMA story, this Strategic Plan begins and ends with a focus on collaborators and partners who share a common understanding of the need to aggressively address invasive species in our region. We believe the Strategic Plan provides a sound framework for all of the partners to pursue programs that share that common interest.

We recognize that not all of the recommended action steps and goals will be easily or quickly achieved and look forward to working with the partners in the future to strengthen and update the Strategic Plan to ensure it continues to be used by and is useful to all of the NCCISMA partners.

The Steering Committee wishes to thank all of those partners who have contributed to the Strategic Plan's development, from periodic input over the years, but particularly to all those who participated in our Strategic Plan Development meeting held in Reed City on August 21, 2017, and our first Strategic Plan Review, that took place November 2, 2018 in Baldwin, as well as the subsequent annual partner work meetings.

APPENDIX A
NCCISMA
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND BYLAWS

STEERING COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Steering Committee (SC or Committee) is to provide direction, identify opportunities, and further the goal of cooperative invasive species management. The Committee will have up to 11 members, including the Program Coordinator. Each participating County Conservation District will have 1 permanent seat on the committee; additional committee members shall not be an employee or board member of an already represented district. Conservation District representatives will be determined by the represented district. Other members of the committee will be nominated and voted on at the annual partners meeting or by decision of the Steering Committee. Inactive or disruptive SC members may be removed by the unanimous consent of all other members of the SC.

The Steering Committee is responsible for decisions that include:

- Employment and dismissal of the NCCISMA Program Coordinator
- What grant applications will be made
- Approval of the discretionary budget and changes to that budget
- What new programs or initiatives will be pursued
- The establishment or elimination of permanent positions in addition to Program Coordinator
- Creating and participating in subcommittees to oversee special projects
- Such other NCCISMA business as the Committee deems appropriate

Steering Committee members are expected to attend Steering Committee meetings. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they should review the agenda and provide input to the Program Coordinator before the meeting, if possible.

Steering Committee Structure and Roles:

- Chair – The Invasive Species Program Coordinator will lead SC meetings.
- Secretary – The Invasive Species Technician or Outreach Coordinator, whichever is available, will serve as an Ex-Officio (non-voting) member of the SC, acting as recording secretary for the SC meetings and compiling minutes, to be formally approved at the next SC meeting. If neither the Technician nor Outreach Coordinator is available, a volunteer from the Committee will be chosen to take minutes.
- Treasurer - Will be chosen by the Committee. This person will serve as Treasurer until they resign from the position, at which time a new Treasurer will be appointed by the SC. If the Treasurer is negligent in their duties, the SC may remove the current Treasurer by unanimous consent. The Treasurer will be

responsible for tracking unassigned/discretionary funds not being managed by a specific Grant Fiduciary, as referenced further below.

General SC Meeting Structure and Format

- SC meetings will generally follow Roberts Rules of Order
- Program Coordinator will issue an Agenda in advance of scheduled SC meetings
- Any SC member may request additions to the Agenda, prior to the meeting
- The SC will review and approve the previous meeting's minutes
- Grant Fiduciary (see below) reports on grant status will routinely be part of the Agenda
- The Treasurer will routinely report on the status of unassigned/discretionary funds
- Opportunity for each SC member to bring up new issues/motions, or to voice an opinion on the current issue/motion before the Committee will always be provided for
- Following discussion, decisions on motions will be made by a simple majority vote

INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The NCCISMA Invasive Species Program Coordinator supports the communication and collaboration of a large number of diverse partners including local, state, tribal and federal agencies, as well as private organizations and individuals. The Coordinator will work with the partners in the effort to control invasive species and educate the public as to their impacts on the ecosystem. The Coordinator will act as the lead for the SC; and independent of the SC is responsible for the following:

- Grant implementation and purchasing decisions within approved grant budgets
- In collaboration with the Grant Fiduciary, will make hiring/firing decisions for employees authorized under grants, but may seek SC advice, as deemed appropriate
- Day to day management of NCCISMA personnel
- Grant accomplishment reporting

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Partners are encouraged to pursue grants that further the mission of NCCISMA. The Program Coordinator may, at her discretion, provide letters of support, technical advice,

and other expertise in the development of partner grant projects. The Coordinator may seek input from the SC regarding decisions to support partner projects when needed. If a partner organization, such as a conservation district, wishes to pursue a grant for a project that will directly utilize NCCISMA staff time:

- The NCCISMA Program Coordinator will be directly involved in the grant writing and budget development for the project
- Before proceeding with the grant application process the SC will hold a brief impromptu phone meeting to discuss and seek SC input/advice on the project.

GRANT FIDUCIARY

Grant Fiduciary duties will be performed by a Conservation District Representative who is an SC member, and will be determined by the SC in conjunction with grant application decisions. Basic Grant Fiduciary functions shall include the following:

- Processing grant bill payments
- Preparation and submission of grant reimbursement requests
- Reporting to the SC on grant financial status
- Tracking grant in-kind and financial matching contributions
- Such other fiduciary duties as prescribed in the individual grant
- Act as administrative advisor regarding district policy in assisting the Program Coordinator with personnel hiring and management

APPENDIX B

NCCISMA

PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR ORGANIZATIONS

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF PARTNERS

The roles and functions of partners who have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NCCISMA may include the following:

- Meet as a member of NCCISMA annually or more often, as needed, to review and coordinate invasive species management and outreach activities. Input from these meetings will be used to develop work plans and guide revisions to the Strategic Plan.
- Support the exchange of personnel, equipment, supplies, or contract crews throughout NCCISMA, as appropriate for each organization.
- Seek and allow participants to contribute to the management of invasive species within NCCISMA through education programs, research, inventory and monitoring, grants and fundraising, and citizen participation programs.
- Assist in mapping invasives infestations and notifying NCCISMA personnel of new infestations that are encountered.
- Utilize established or well-reasoned control measures to prevent the spread of invasive species while avoiding undue risk to the environment or human health.
- Share information among interested partners and collaborators, and provide assistance and expertise regarding invasive species management.
- Provide opportunities to outside interest groups, private landowners, and the public for involvement in carrying out invasive species management projects.
- Any organization that acts as a fiduciary or has a financial stake in NCCISMA's organization or activities must have a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Formal NCCISMA Partners who have entered into a MOU:

- Big Sable Watershed Restoration Committee
- Fin and Feather Club of Mason County
- Hamlin Lake Preservation Society
- Huron-Manistee National Forest
- Mason-Lake Conservation District
- Mecosta Conservation District
- Mecosta County Parks Commission
- Missaukee Conservation District
- Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
- Nugent Lake Hills Association
- Osceola-Lake Conservation District
- Pere Marquette Watershed Council
- Wexford Conservation District

PARTICIPANTS AND COLLABORATORS

In addition to those organizations that have entered into a formal MOU with NCCISMA, there are already a large number of participants and collaborators who also perform many of the functions outlined above, and the list is continuing to grow.

NCCISMA Participants and Collaborators:

- A Few Friends of the Environment of the World (AFFEW)
- Cadillac Area Land Conservancy
- Cadillac Area Public Schools
- Cadillac Area Quality Deer Management Association
- Cargill Corporation
- City of Big Rapids DPW
- City of Cadillac DPW
- City of Ludington DPW
- City of Evart DPW
- Conservation Resource Alliance
- Consumers Energy
- Friends of the White Pine Trail
- Grand Traverse Hiking Club
- Great Lakes Energy
- JMB Associates
- Lake City DPW
- Lake County Riverside Property Owners Association
- Lake County Road Commission
- Lake Mitchell Improvement Board
- Little Manistee Watershed Conservation Council
- Ludington State Park
- Manistee County Conservation District
- Mason County Parks & Recreation Commission
- Mason County Road Commission
- Mesick Consolidated Schools
- Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Invasive Species Coalition / Michigan Invasive Species Information Network
- Michigan Lakes and Streams Association
- Missaukee County Parks
- Missaukee County Road Commission
- Missaukee Lakes Association

- Mitchell State Park and White Pine Trail
- MSU Extension
- North Country Trail Association of Michigan
- Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network
- Pere Marquette Township – Mason County
- PLM Lake and Land Management
- Sapphire Lake Association
- Spirit of the Woods Hiking Club
- The Nature Conservancy of Michigan
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- West Michigan CISMA
- Wexford County Board of Commissioners
- Wexford County Drain Commissioner
- Wexford County Road Commission