



Wrangling Weeds in West-Central Minnesota

June 2014 Snapshots

Invasive species are in the news a lot these days, but for most people the words conjure images of carp or mussels. The truth is invasive species are everywhere, including your backyard. Invasive species are both prolific and problematic, and have no respect for county boundaries or state lines. They are a very real threat, impacting both the economy and local ecology. In 2008, building on existing models, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) established the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) Grant Program, which funds local organizations that systematically identify problems associated with invasive species and work to solve them by combining resources and working cooperatively.

Initiated by the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in 2009 and joined by the Traverse SWCD two years ago, this CWMA in west-central Minnesota is doing great work, combining the efforts of federal, state and local agencies with non-profits and private landowners to monitor, treat and increase awareness of invasive weeds in the county.



“We’re killing weeds,” Tammy Neubauer, the Big Stone SWCD District Administrative Assistant, said. “It may not sound like a big deal, but some of these weeds are actually dangerous. Beyond that, their ability to take over fields unless they’re controlled can have a devastating effect on farmland.”



The CWMA has worked hard to educate the community about the threat of invasive species, from town meetings to county fair booths, hosting “Weed Watchers” meetings and getting local media involved. The efforts have paid off, as their list of partners keeps growing. Their combined local resource expertise and knowledge of regional landscapes, vegetation, and invasive weed issues has led to increased management efforts on both public and private lands.

Wild Parsnip (top) and Queen Anne's Lace are two of the targeted invasive species in the CWMA.

Those efforts have not gone unnoticed. The 2012 CWMA grant Big Stone SWCD received from BWSR was leveraged into \$185,000 in additional funding from partners to address invasive weed issues in the region. The SWCD was also awarded a “Pulling Together Initiative” grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation based on the strength of their invasive weed program. Those funds enabled them to purchase equipment that has substantially increased the amount of ground they can cover and weeds they can treat.

Thanks to these partnerships, many restoration professionals are seeing renewed hope in the battle with terrestrial invasive species and overall efforts to protect Minnesota land and water resources. The willingness of the local partners involved in the CWMA's to share information and work together is making a difference for Minnesota's landscape.

“It’s a combined effort between government agencies and private groups and landowners,” Neubauer said.
“The progress we’ve been able to make over the last several years has just been amazing.”