

Southern Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area

Strategic Plan

2009 – 2014



Adopted December 2, 2009

1. Introduction

Invasive species including the most problematic “weeds” are drastically altering natural habitats throughout the U.S. by displacing native species and reducing species diversity. Fish and wildlife populations and native plant communities are degraded when invasive species, most of which are non-native, dominate habitats such as forests, grasslands and wetlands. Invasive species cost the U.S. economy more than \$120 billion annually in damages to agriculture, industry, recreation, forestry, and human health. Because they often lack natural controls and have high reproductive abilities, invasive species are often very difficult to control. Invasive species include pathogens, insects and other animals in addition to plants.

Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs) are local organizations that integrate available invasive species management resources across jurisdictional boundaries in order to benefit entire regions. The Southern Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area (SICWMA) covers 37 Indiana counties (See Figure 1) within the Interior Low Plateau Ecoregion containing 9 million acres. This area includes the Hoosier National Forest, National Wildlife Refuges, State Forests, State Recreation Areas, State Parks, State Fish and Wildlife Areas, and other public and private land.

Given this large area, SICWMA intends to act as an umbrella organization, with local and regional partner organizations providing local knowledge and resources to control invasive species. In many cases, the local partners will be existing organizations with landholdings in the area – or volunteer organizations with special interests in certain landscapes or species. In other cases, SICWMA will help organize new groups to address invasive species in a local area. SICWMA hopes to foster cooperation and sharing of resources among our many partner organizations.

1.1. Mission

The mission of the SICWMA is:

**TO PROTECT, RESTORE, AND ENHANCE SOUTHERN INDIANA’S
LANDSCAPES BY COORDINATING EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY, PREVENT AND
CONTROL INVASIVE SPECIES**

1.2. Vision

The vision of the SICWMA is a natural landscape defined by healthy, diverse and economically productive communities of native species integrated within a mosaic of other land uses.

1.3 History of SICWMA

Members of the Forestry Committee of the White River RC&D wanted to do something about invasive species in their area and invited Ellen Jacquart from The Nature Conservancy to give a presentation at their December 13, 2005 meeting. One of her recommendations was that the RC&D look into forming a Cooperative Weed Management Area. A sub-committee was formed to hold a workshop, which identified enough interest to hold public meetings to investigate the possibility of setting up a Cooperative Weed Management Area. Some interested individuals began giving programs on the topic and the interest grew along with a mailing list of interested people. In 2008, the group became incorporated, and in 2009 received 501(C)3 status as the Southern Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area.

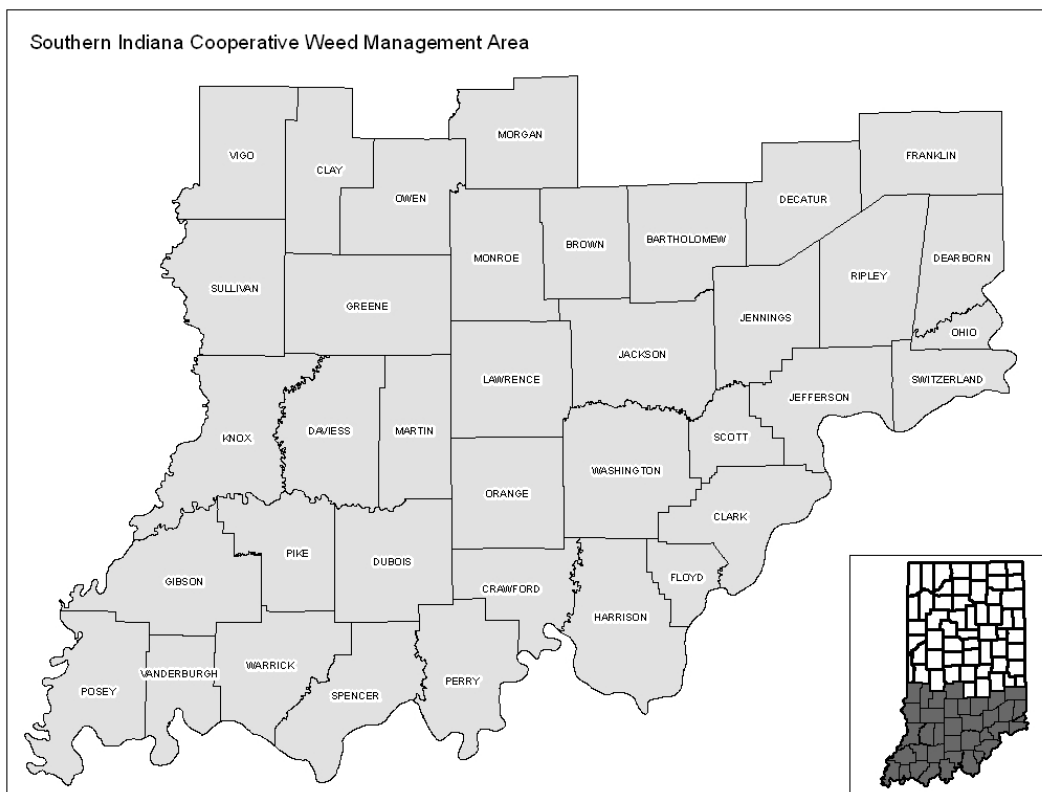


Figure 1. SICWMA county map.

2. Goals and Objectives

2.1 Identify and Prioritize Threats

It is unrealistic to identify, locate and control every invasive weed problem in the 37-county area, so SICWMA must identify the most serious threats, with reasonable expectation of control. Many invasives are already common and widespread to the point that no amount of effort would have any measurable effect – these species are established and can be ignored. Other species are just being introduced and may become common and widespread without immediate action – priority should be given to early detection and control of these species.

Goal 1: By January 1, 2010, develop a list of the top 10 invasive species threats; for each threat identify prevention/control strategies.

Objective 1.1: Complete the following table by January 1, 2010. This list is to be considered dynamic, with annual updates as determined by the Project Committee. Initial priority species should be limited to plant species (including aquatics) that are recognizable and pose an economic or environmental threat. Additional consideration should be given to the level of controllability, rate of spread and presence within, or imminent danger of entering the area.

Species	Location strategy (where is it, how to identify, etc.)	Prevention strategy	Control Strategy

Objective 1.2: Create a web-based GIS database of existing populations of invasive species, using a common mapping process.

Objective 1.3: Create a system to monitor the prevention/control reduction or spread of each priority species.

2.2 Education and Awareness

The general public and many landowners are generally unaware that invasive species exist within our area or that they present ecological and economic problems. Many Southern Indiana residents are unable to identify the common invasive species and they accidentally (or sometimes intentionally) introduce them into native communities. To achieve our mission, the residents and visitors in the SICWMA must be made aware of the invasive species issues.

Goal 2: By 2014, at least 25% of landowners must have basic knowledge of the 10 most important invasive species, including identification of the species and how to (or where to get information on) prevention and/or control.

Objective 2.1: Develop a system to measure landowner understanding of the priority threats. This could include a repeat visit to a short list of organizations, fairs, etc, to both measure awareness and provide a means to distribute information.

- During year 1, design and implement a survey to measure initial levels of understanding
- Repeat the same survey during year 5 to measure change in understanding

Objective 2.2: Develop a system to deliver information to fill knowledge gaps

- Develop and regularly update an introductory brochure
- Develop and regularly update a presentation and exhibit that can be used by volunteers and member organizations
- Organize a speaker's bureau
- Provide basic identification, prevention and control information on the SICWMA web site
- At least once during the 5-year period, provide information through exhibit or presentation to each county fair, SWCD workshop, or similar event in each county
- Conduct at least one annual meeting designed to provide information to the public and recognition for member or landowner accomplishments
- Utilize county extension to the extent possible
- Provide technical training to volunteers and member organizations
- Provide information to elected officials
- Provide information to youth
- Provide information to realtors
- Provide information to garden centers, landscapers, and other retailers and professionals that deal in plant materials

2.3 Prevention/Detection/Early Response

The best time to control an invasive species is before it enters the area. The second best time is immediately upon introduction. The most expensive and least effective time to

control an invasive species is after it becomes established (See Figure 2). For this reason, early detection of invasive species problems and the ability to rapidly respond to the situation is important to the SICWMA.

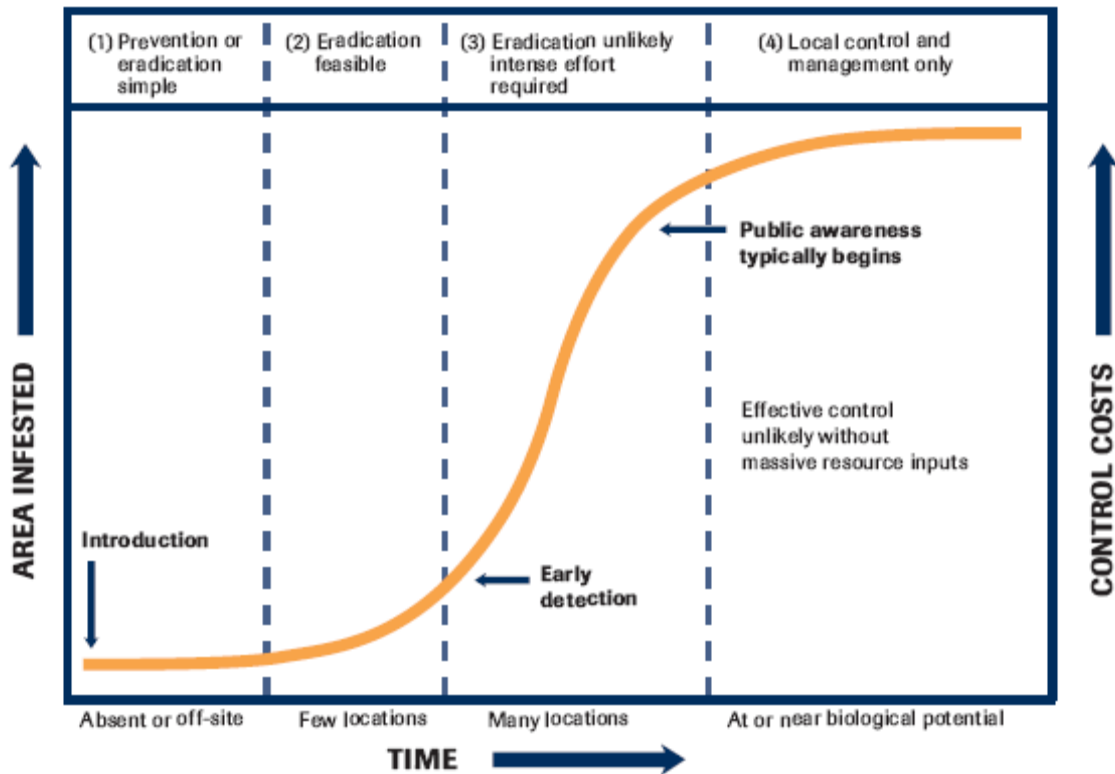


Figure 2 . Weed increase over time. Modified from Hobbs & Humphries, 1995.

Goal 3: Within 3 years (by July 1, 2012) develop an operating process for early detection and rapid response to new infestations of invasive species.

Objective 3.1: Develop an education strategy for prevention of new species introductions, specifically educating key stakeholders about best management practices.

- Include nurseries, parks departments, homeowners, master naturalists, master gardeners, etc. in the strategy
- Investigate a “Grow Native” promotional campaign, possibly in cooperation with RC&Ds
- Work with boating and fishing industry to educate about prevention of aquatic invasives
- Promote the use of boot brush stations at trailheads
- Encourage timber harvesting contractors, consulting foresters, public forest managers to prevent introduction of invasives in harvest areas

- Include county highway departments

Objective 3.2: By July 1, 2010, develop a strike team to identify, locate and recommend (or facilitate) control for the following categories of threats. For each category, include at least one person as a lead (more if possible), with an effective geographic distribution.

- Aquatic and wetland plants
- Grasses and forbs
- Vines
- Woody plants (trees and shrubs)
- Insects

Objective 3.3: Develop a Rapid Response Toolkit by January 1, 2011, to contain:

- Species identification information
- Detailed control recommendations
- Source of pesticides and other supplies
- Cost-sharing assistance
- Contact information for contractors
- Equipment available for loan

Objective 3.4: Assure that landowners have access to a single point of contact for SICWMA, including phone number, website, etc.

Objective 3.5: Develop a process to account for or report accomplishments and provide rewards, etc, by January 1, 2011.

- Accomplishment report of activities
- “Weed Warrior of the Year” award
- Recognize scout troops and other volunteer groups

Objective 3.6: Develop a system to map each occurrence of new infestations of invasive species and to monitor effectiveness of control efforts.

2.4 Control Activities

Controlling invasive species in the SICWMA will require a wide range of activities and cooperation with a wide range of individuals and organizations. The SICWMA can provide the most benefit by helping to identify and prioritize control opportunities, share knowledge on the most effective and efficient control methods, and making control resources available to landowners and land managers. Monitoring and evaluating the results of control activities are also critical.

By engaging a large number of cooperating partners, SICWMA hopes to help provide expertise, training, manpower, equipment and funding to control activities undertaken by local partners and landowners.

Goal 4: Develop a process to encourage partners to control invasive species by July 1, 2010

Objective 4.1: Develop a list of cooperators involved in control activities, and facilitate communication and collaboration including the following elements:

- Encourage at least one project by each cooperator each year
- Complete at least 50 projects each year
- Develop a reporting process or form, to contain at least organization name, goal, number of people involved, acres treated, and species

Objective 4.2: Develop a system to monitor the effectiveness of control activities

Objective 4.3: Develop specific geographic plan to eradicate certain invasive species following the example below:

Priority	Species	Geographic extent	Target Date
1	Kudzu	Area-wide	2011
2	Ailanthus	North of US 50	2013

2.5 Organizational Development / Financial /Operational

The SICWMA assists in the conservation, preservation and protection of southern Indiana’s natural landscapes. With financial sustainability, organizational development and the ability to establish active support from member organizations, the SICWMA can solidify its leadership role in the area of invasive species eradication through its powerful mission.

The SICWMA is fully immersed in the process of strengthening organizational capacity in order to meet the group’s mission and vision. The following goals and objectives will assist in making the SICWMA a stronger organization, thus making their endeavor of eliminating invasive species throughout southern Indiana more successful

Goal 5: Develop by July 1, 2009 and maintain a functional organization.

Objective 5.1: Establish and maintain an organizational structure including the following elements:

- Steering committee, bylaws, regularly conduct meetings, have active committee members
- Maintain 501 (c) 3 status,
- Establish MOUs or letters of support with member organizations
- Establish a system of on-the-ground partners (at least 1 in each county) by July 1, 2014

Objective 5.2: By July 1, 2010, find sufficient temporary funding to support staff, with sustainable funding by July 1, 2014.

Objective 5.3: By January 1, 2011, employ staff, locate an office and basic office support.

Objective 5.4: Provide funding or assistance to find outside funding, to member organizations and land managers for invasives projects, including research, education prevention, detection and control.

Adopted by the Southern Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area Steering Committee, December 2, 2009.

Tom Tremain, President

Teena Ligman, Secretary

Frank Gottbrath, Treasurer