

WMCN Steering Committee Quarterly Meeting

August 4, 2025

Virtual

Steering Committee Members present: Jamie Rye (Fiduciary), Ginny Wanty, Sue Agaard, Murielle Garbarino (West MI CISMA Coordinator), Larry Burns, Emma Waatti, Lea Sevigny and Kenny McMahon

Absent Kelsey Bockelman

Guest: Ryan Wheeler, Terrestrial Invasive Species Biologist in DNR Forest Resources Division and Wildlife Division

Review of the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) two avenues for funding:

1. Project grants (competitive)
2. CISMA core funding (non-competitive) - must meet strategic plan goals,

MISGP Handbook: 2024 - <Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program>

CISMA expectations are tied to the CORE funding, CISMAs should have a strategic plan and a steering committee (See page 27 for steering committee responsibilities.)

Some of the CISMA Steering Committee responsibilities:

- Hold quarterly meetings with the fiduciary and coordinator.
- Provide input on the CISMA's strategic plan, workplan, and deliverables.
- Participate and communicate with the fiduciary regarding hiring of the CISMA coordinator

Feedback from last MISGP application:

County Representation - not every county in West MI CISMA is represented. (It was explained that the WMCN leadership team has tried to get representation from all 7 counties but those partners in Allegan, Muskegon, and Newaygo were not interested. In addition, the leadership team has been interested in representation from all types of partner organizations not just conservation districts.) The MISGPG Grant program → specifies invasive species focus, WMCN has other objectives when selecting Steering Committee members.

Strategic plan -It is the West MI CISMA Coordinator's opinion that the current WMCN is not super helpful to guide the CISMA and would strongly recommend a new strategic plan just for the CISMA.

WMCN vs. WMCISMA - same thing or different??

Jessie – states the WMCN gave birth to the West MI CISMA

Ryan/Larry - not the same (outlined as a workgroup in the strategic plan)

WMCN - not focused on invasive species totally

WMCISMA - focused on invasive species

Natalie Bekins (former Executive Director of Ottawa Conservation District and West MI CISMA Coordinator) explained to Murielle that WMCISMA was “an arm” of the WMCN

MISGP funding - only one source of CISMA funding (but it does fund Murielle’s position pretty much totally and is the only stable funding source that the CISMA has. There is also yearly US Forest Service CWMA (Cooperative Weed Management Area) funding but not sure what US Forest Service CWMA fundings is used for?)

Not all our priorities need to align with MISGP

But Murielle’s funds for her position are meant to be used towards an invasive species focus. No longer able to assist Conservation Districts with tree or plants sales.

Drew Raynor (West MI CISMA Coordinator) stated that the WMCN Annual report was the responsibility of the CISMA coordinator because so much of the Annual Report was focused on invasive species. – Is that still that appropriate or should Structure and Function take over responsibilities of producing a yearly WMCN Annual Report.

Next Steps

- 1) By the Fall Feature on November 9, the goal is to increase the size of Steering Committee to include representation from all 7 counties:
 - Jessie will work on recruiting someone from Newaygo.
 - Emma recruiting some from Muskegon
 - Murielle recruiting someone from Allegan.
- 2) Ryan Wheeler emailed examples of other CISMA’s strategic plans
- 3) Murielle created a number of questions that she would like to ask committee members to respond to:
 - What do you see as the function of the current steering committee for the Conservation Network?
 - What do you see as the function of the current steering committee for the CISMA?
 - What do you view as your role on the steering committee? (i.e., What responsibilities do you feel you provide?)
 - What voice is missing from the steering committee?

Among other agenda items, The WMCN Steering Committee will discuss those questions and responses at the next Steering Committee meeting on Monday, October 6 from 2-3 by zoom.