



Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area

Working Together to Protect Northern Wisconsin from Invasive Species

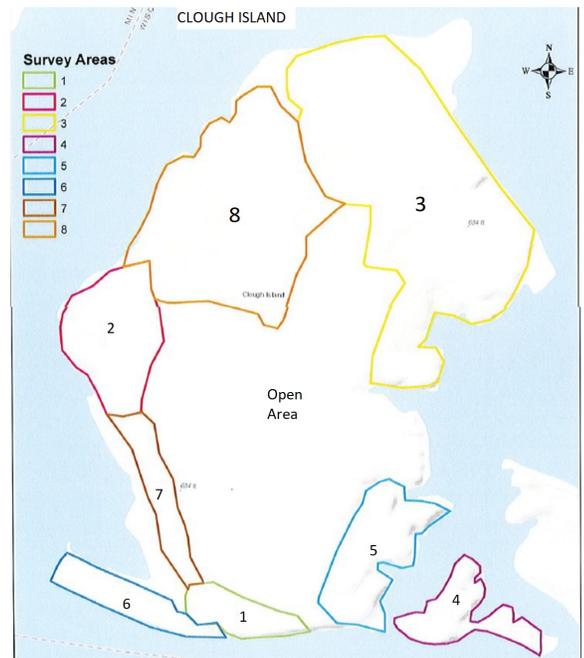
NCWMA | Issue 31

Spring 2020

Managing Common Buckthorn on Clough Island

In 2019, the Wisconsin DNR received a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant to treat buckthorn on Clough Island, which is an island of over 350 acres that sits between Duluth and Superior in the St. Louis River. The grant will fund five years of annual large-scale herbicide treatments of common buckthorn which has infested most forested areas of the island. To manage buckthorn, treatments must be repeated annually over multiple years. The Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area (NCWMA) will also organize work events each fall that bring people to the island to control buckthorn and make people more aware of this unique publicly owned island. *(Anyone interested in taking part in such events, should contact the NCWMA.)*

The reason that Clough Island is so infested with buckthorn can be traced back to the early 1900s. In those days, Clough Island had a dairy and sheep farm. The farm was most active in the first few decades of the century. Its buildings were constructed, forests were logged, a large field was cleared for grazing and racing horses, and evidently many landscaping plants were planted. Buckthorn was often used for hedges in the early 1900s. After the farmhouse burned down in 1956, the island had little human activity, which allowed invasive plants to spread freely. As the island passed from one landowner to another, there were plans for hotels, a golf course and other developments. However, an effort was made to protect the land from development and in 2010 the Nature Conservancy purchased the land from developers and donated it to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in 2011. The WDNR has a goal of restoring the island to its historic forest cover. Controlling the buckthorn is an important component of restoration efforts. In 2013-2015, the WDNR surveyed the property, treated areas with buckthorn, and planted trees. Figure 1 shows the WDNR's map of region within the island. The farmhouse and buildings were situated in Region 5, in the southeast section of the island. The WDNR did treatments of buckthorn in areas of regions 2, 7, 1, and 5.

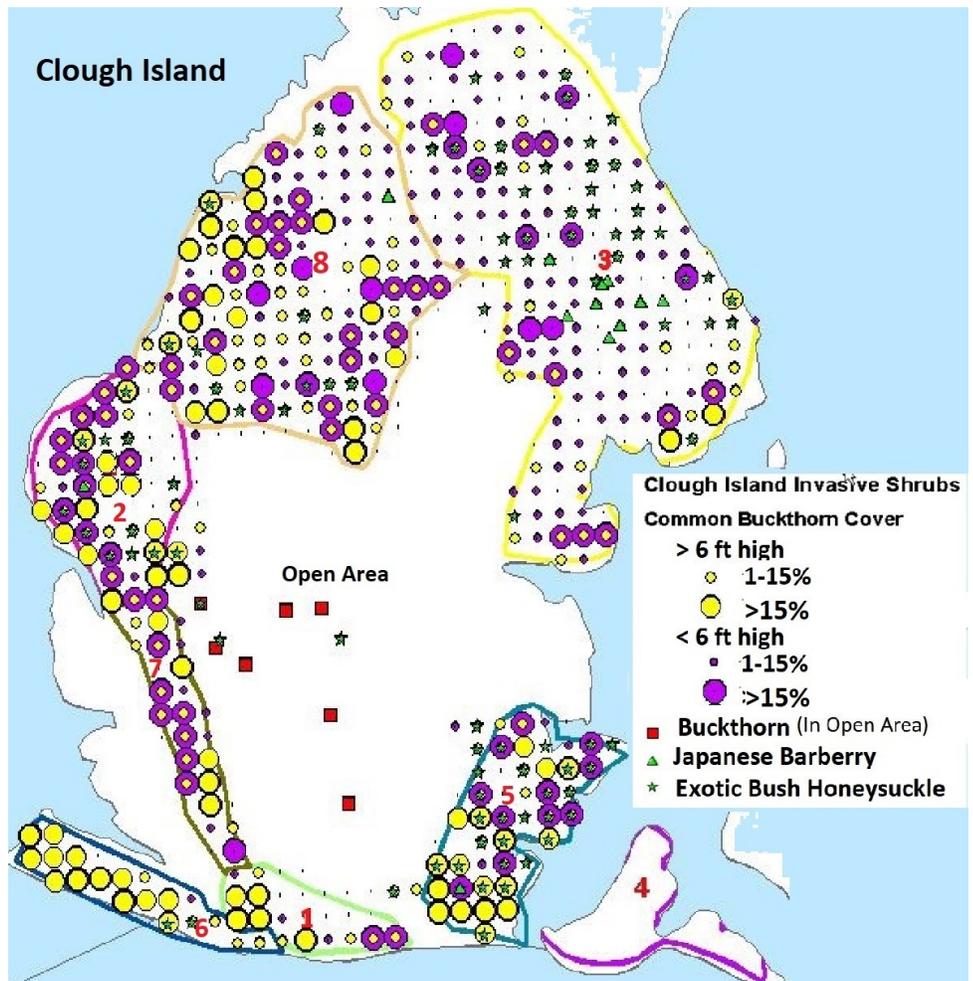


Although common buckthorn is in the forests throughout Clough Island, the invasive shrub is less dense in the northern regions of Clough Island (left –Region 8) than the southern half of the island (Right –Region 6).



The NCWMA assisted in surveying for common buckthorn in the fall of 2019 so that the WDNR can make a buckthorn treatment plan with the new funding. Using hand-held GPS devices, surveyors visited points in a grid of 40 meter spaced points within the forested regions. Information on the habitat and buckthorn density over 6 feet and under 6 feet tall was recorded. Surveys found that quaking aspen and paper birch are the dominant trees found in forested plots across Clough Island. The northern two regions (3 and 8) have more tree diversity with 25% of forested plots dominated by a mix of deciduous trees and conifers including white spruce, Eastern white cedar, balsam fir, and a pockets of red pine (Photo 1 and 2).

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) was found throughout the forested areas of the island, with 76% of plots having common buckthorn present. Figure 2 shows the percent cover of buckthorn over 6 feet in yellow and less than 6 feet in purple. Non-forested plots typically had very low cover of buckthorn. The buckthorn is especially dense in the southern regions. Regions 2, 5, 6 and 7 had an average percent cover of buckthorn of over 15%. Region Region 2, 5 and 7 had areas of buckthorn cut and treated with herbicide by the DNR at least 5 years ago. These regions have more short buckthorn on average that tall plants. Buckthorn in Region 6 was never treated by the DNR and buckthorn over 6 feet had on average over 30% cover. The northern two regions, (8 and 3) had the lowest density of buckthorn in forested plots. Region 3 in particular is the least impacted by buckthorn with an average cover of buckthorn of less than 5%.



There are pockets of buckthorn and honeysuckle patches in the large open area in the center of the island, which was the old farm field. This area wasn't surveyed, but patches of invasive species were GPSed when encountered. Japanese barberry and exotic bush honeysuckle plants were also found throughout the island, but at much lower density than buckthorn.

Volunteers Wanted to Help Treat Common Buckthorn on Clough Island!

- Great opportunity to visit this special island in the St. Louis River!
- Learn manual and chemical methods of getting rid of this most troubling shrub.
- Events will be scheduled for the fall 2020.
- Sign up for special Clough Island updates! Contact Ramona Shackelford for details!

Treating Invasive Plants during the Summer of Covid-19



The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the daily lives and manner people recreate and work throughout the world. Although the pandemic has delayed the hiring of seasonal staff, the management of high priority invasive species manually and chemically will occur as in other years. Often work in the field can be done independently or with keeping six feet or more distance from others on the same team. People can also drive to sites independently and not share vehicles.

Garlic Mustard: Hand-pulling garlic mustard in May is an important part of the treatment of this invasive forest ephemeral. Plants can easily be pulled up and it prevents seed dispersal. Because of the Covid-19 threat and orders for people to stay at home, hand-pulling events with large groups will not occur. However, partnering groups of the NCWMA will still hand-pull garlic mustard sites with social distancing. .

Clean Boats Clean Waters and the Portable Boat Wash: The NCWMA typically hires seasonal staff to wash boats with a portable high-pressure washer at boat launches. This program has been suspended for 2020. For the Clean Boats Clean Waters Program, staff and volunteers interview boaters on boat launches about their boating behavior and awareness of invasive species as well as inspect boats coming and going from launches. The direct contact with many different people from different areas makes this work innately more difficult during the pandemic. This work has been delayed until at least June 1st by the DNR with some uncertainty of when it should begin. The delayed start date and uncertainty may cause some program to not have the ability to hire people for the summer or chose not to have a program this year. Hopefully, people are aware of the importance of cleaning off boats before and after entering water bodies.

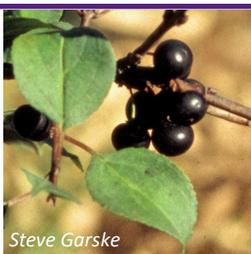
It's Time to Take Out That Buckthorn!



Stuck at home? This is a good time to get rid of that buckthorn in your yard. Glossy and common buckthorn are often in and around yards and nearby forests. They can infest forests and take over the understory. Their berries are spread by birds, so even once large shrubs are killed, new seedlings can pop up. If they are cut, they should be treated to prevent resprouting. No matter what, controlling buckthorn takes persistence over multiple years.

Small buckthorn seedlings can be pulled out, especially when the soil is damp. The NCWMA has weed wrenches that can be checked out for local landowners. These can pullout bushes from the roots. Buckthorn can also be controlled by cutting and then covering the stump with a tin can or a thick plastic "Buckthorn Baggies."

Treating buckthorn with herbicide (above). Common buckthorn with flowers (below, left) and with berries (below right). Glossy buckthorn with berries (lower bottom.)



Steve Garske



Steve Garske

Buckthorn can be treated throughout the year by the "cut-stump" herbicide treatment (except when the sap flow is heavy). Cut bushes to the ground and treat the stump with herbicide within an hour. The UW Extension factsheet recommends using concentrated glyphosate (20 -50%) on stumps. (If treating leaves, the concentration should be much lower [1-2%.]) To make precise treatments, a small dropper bottle can be filled with the herbicide for treatments. An empty contact lens solution bottle works well for this. In local stores, Round-up with the yellow cap (18% glyphosate and 2% triclopyr) or purple cap (50.2% glyphosate) are premixed and ready for treating. Other brands may also be available. When using any herbicide take care to follow

the directions on the label. *Yellow cap: Roundup Poison Ivy Plus Tough Brush Killer Concentrate. Purple cap: Roundup Weed & Grass Killer Super Concentrate.*

Make sure to identify buckthorns correctly. They can be bushes to small trees. Leaves are simple, egg-shaped, 1 to 3 inches long, and have prominent veins that point to the tip. Glossy leaves have no teeth, while common has fine teeth. Both species have inconspicuous yellow-green flowers at base of leaves that develop into pea-sized berries that go from green to red to dark purple when ripe. Common buckthorn has thorns, while glossy does not.

Events*

**Any or all events could become virtual or be cancelled depending on the pandemic situation. Check the NCWMA website or Facebook page for updates.*

Summer NCWMA Meeting: July 15th, 9:30 am

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland

Fall NCWMA Meeting: October 21st

Bayfield County Annex Building, Washburn

10 am: NCWMA Meeting, 11:30 am: Steering Committee Meeting, potluck at noon

Weed Warriors Virtual Invasive Plant of the Month Series

New monthly series by NCWMA Partners and the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. Send in before and after photos of weed work in your yard!

First program: May 26 at 1 pm: Watch a video of our work hand-pulling garlic mustard this spring. Question and answer session to follow. Details and link coming on the NCWMA Facebook page and website. More dates to follow!

Invasive Species I.D. Days!

June 26th, July 10th, August 14, September 4

Once each month throughout the summer, the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center puts on an Invasive Species Identification Day which includes a speaker at 1 to 2 pm. Each event includes educational booths from 2 to 4 pm on invasive species. People are encouraged to bring in their samples of unknown, problematic plants for identification and treatment advice.

National Public Lands Day, September 26th

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, 29270 County Highway G, Ashland, Wisconsin.

Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference

Online the week of October 12th.

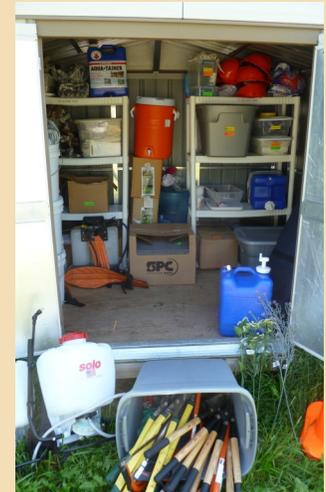
Student Science Research Symposium, October 16th

Seventh grade students from regional schools come to the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center for day of science investigation.



NCWMA Tool Shed

Weed wrenches are now available to borrow for pulling out bushes like buckthorn! Contact Ramona for details. Other equipment shown below can also be checked out.



Report Invasive Species

If you find an invasive species or wonder if a plant is invasive, contact the NCWMA! The most important information to share is the location and a few photos. We welcome a bit of a description of the site and what you think it is. Here are two ways to give the NCWMA that information:

- Email a photo and location information (such as the address of the location or GPS coordinates) to the NCWMA at info@northwoodscwma.org.
- Select "Report an Invasive Species," on the NCWMA website (www.northwoodscwma.org). You can pick the location on a map or you can make a report at the location of the questionable plant and take a photo.

Contact Us!

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Check out the NCWMA website:

www.northwoodscwma.org

