

# **SuAsCo CISMA Annual Report: 2024**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the accomplishments of the SuAsCo CISMA for FY2024. These accomplishments reflect the Annual Priority Actions taken by the CISMA's subcommittees, which are guided by the priorities outlined in the SuAsCo CISMA Invasive Species Management Plan.

## **General Highlights of 2024**

Steering Committee Officers – Terms expire in January 2025

- Chair- Gerald DiBello
- Vice Chair – Delia Kaye
- Secretary – Emma Lord
- Treasurer – Gerald DiBello

The representative from the Town of Acton was elected to the Steering Committee for a three - year term ending in 2026.

## **Spring Meeting**

The Spring meeting was held in person on March 19, 2024 at a Concord Public Works meeting room with 15 attendees. The majority of the meeting comprised a presentation by Kristin O'Brien, SVT's Conservation Restriction Manager, and Jane Maloney, SVT's Land Steward, regarding SVT's volunteer program. Topics included: posting job descriptions, recruitment, advertising, and other ways to promote and maintain a volunteer program. The presentation was followed by a group discussion regarding challenges in recruiting volunteers and learning about participants' volunteer successes.

## **Update 2024 SuAsCo CISMA MOU**

In 2024 the Coordinator distributed to Steering Committee members an updated MOU based on the original version that was created in 2009. She asked Steering Committee members to comment on changes. The Steering Committee approved an updated 2024 SuAsCo CISMA Memorandum of Understanding in October. The MOU has not been sent to SuAsCo CISMA members for formal signatures as there were some last-minute edits made that the Steering Committee wants to review at the January 2025 meeting.

## **Fall Meeting**

- Twenty-eight in-person and ten online participants attended the meeting at the Acton Memorial Library on November 12, 2024.
- A new Strategic Plan was introduced that will be in effect until 2029. The main goals of the plan are:
  - Maintain communication and knowledge sharing amongst CISMA members.
  - Encourage a culture of volunteerism – our Weed Warrior Program is one example of our progress for this goal.
  - Maintain a functional and flexible organizational and financial structure to the SuAsCo CISMA
  - Early detection and prioritization
  - Stay current with the science
- Three CISMA Subcommittee Chairs provided updates on their 2024 meetings.
  - Weed Warriors – Kristin O'Brian
  - Aquatic Invasives Management – Heather Conkerton

## SuAsCo CISMA Annual Report: 2024

- Early Detection and Control – Erik Sechler
- CISMA Coordinator Kristin O’Brian announced that \$7000 is available for the 2025 Small Grant Program.
- Kristin reported that she is working on updates for the CISMA website and requested volunteers to help with that effort.
- Small grant recipients presented summaries of their projects:
  - Acton Conservation Department - Work included restoring an old meadow by managing invasive species and planting native plants. Their presentation was prior to the meeting and on the site where the work took place (adjacent to Acton Town Hall).
  - Hudson Land Trust - Offering a program to train participants on how to identify and manage invasive species along the Assabet River.
  - Friends of Minuteman National Park – The Friends hired an intern and, with the help of volunteers, managed invasive plants in the North Bridge Unit of Minute Man NP.
  - After each presentation audience members asked questions about the projects.
- Steering committee member elections were held. New organization members are:
  - Mass Audubon
  - Native Plant Trust
  - National Park Service
  - OARS
- Julia Flanary, Maynard Conservation Agent, presented and their project contractor talked about the invasive plant work they’ve been doing at Maynard Crossing.
- The meeting ended with participants sharing the invasive control project work they’ve been working on in 2024 and fielding questions about the projects.

### **Small Grant Program 2024**

The following projects were completed and organizations reimbursed:

- **Acton Conservation Division** - \$3,100 was fully reimbursed for work that included:
  - Restoring a former meadow by managing invasive species on the property and planting native plants.
- **Friends of Minuteman National Park** - \$1,760 was fully reimbursed for:
  - Hiring a worker to manage invasive plants at the North Bridge unit of Minuteman National Park.
- **Hudson Land Trust** - Reimbursed \$1,213.63 of the \$1,250 awarded (not used- \$36.37) for:
  - Administering a program that trained participants how to identify and manage invasive species along the Assabet River.
- Available funds not granted: \$890

# SuAsCo CISMA Annual Report: 2024

## Annual Priority Actions 2024

As defined in the SuAsCo CISMA MOU, Annual Priority Actions (APAs) are the prioritized list of action items created in the prior year for the upcoming year. APAs for each subcommittee are provided below, with status appearing in bold type.

- Aquatic Invasives Management Subcommittee (AIM) Objectives
  - 1) Establish a watershed-wide water chestnut task force.
  - 2) The AIM Subcommittee serves in this role. Recruit interested members from other watershed towns. -- **Ongoing.**
  - 3) Establish watershed-wide monitoring and reporting.
  - 4) Advertise and encourage use of OARS' water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) reporting app. Recruit volunteers in each town to do basic assessment (presence/absence) of water chestnut in surface waters July through August. Ask conservation agents to report areas being worked on and to suggest active volunteers to be trained. -- **Ongoing.**
  - 5) Outreach and local participation.
    - 6) Facilitate communication with towns and stakeholder groups. Organize meetings that focus on securing support for town-based monitoring, encourage direct assistance with transport and disposal of harvested plant materials, and discuss consistent permitting of control efforts. Promote volunteer training, pulls, and reporting through the Weed Warrior program. **Ongoing.**
  - 7) Consistent wetlands permitting of control efforts.
    - 8) Continue working with the LAPS Subcommittee and DCR to push for efficient and effective watershed-wide permitting and allowing volunteer management. -- **Ongoing.**
  - 9) Prevent and control new infestations.
    - 10) Encourage information sharing within and between municipalities to identify new infestations. Educate the public on identification and removal techniques through Weed Warriors and OARS' App. Share information about emerging and successional aquatic invasives. -- **Ongoing.**
  - 11) Contribute to research on effective controls.
    - 12) Keep track of effectiveness and impacts of herbicide-based aquatic invasives control efforts. Share information on new/different weed control technologies and contractors. Keep track of approval for use of *Galerucella birmanica* beetle as a biocontrol for water chestnut. -- **Ongoing.**
  - 13) Support ongoing water chestnut control efforts.
    - 14) Encourage municipalities to provide annual support to water chestnut management and education efforts. OARS has a TerraCorps member managing our volunteer programs, including Weed Warriors. They will train volunteers to do watershed-wide water chestnut management. The AIMS bi-annual meetings will continue to facilitate sharing of

## SuAsCo CISMA Annual Report: 2024

experience, information, and advice among municipalities and non-profits working on aquatic invasives management. -- **Ongoing.**

15) Update water chestnut management plan.

16) The updated management plan was released in 2024, with plans to update again in 2029. – **Ongoing.**

17) Continuing Education

- Hold workshops led by DCR Lakes & Pond staff to educate organizations on current and emerging aquatic invasive species, with plans to hold broader community-wide workshops for the public. -- **Planning Stages.**

- **Early Detection and Control Subcommittee (EDC) Objectives**

1) Recruitment of new subcommittee members – **Ongoing.**

Jordan McCarron from the town of Weston and Gerald DiBello from the Town of Westford joined the EDC subcommittee in 2024. We will hold more subcommittee meetings and brainstorm on recruiting more members in 2025.

2) Support small grant applicants by hosting a meeting to discuss projects and provide management recommendations/identification/etc. – **Achieved.**

The EDC subcommittee held a small grant information session on November 18th with about 20 participants, who reviewed the small grant application, requirements for submission, general recommendations and keys to making a solid and clear application for grant funding.

3) During late summer/early fall, two tours were proposed of invasive plant projects that have had success and/or experimenting with new invasive plant control techniques. – **Not Achieved.**

No tours were conducted in 2024, but will hopefully begin in 2025 following discussion at our spring meeting. Need to brainstorm two examples of invasive plant management projects for tours.

4) Conduct early detection invasive plant training and MIPAG updates to SUASCO CISMA members at the fall meeting in November. – **Deferred until 2025.**

The EDC subcommittee tabled the proposed training for spring 2025. It would be beneficial to get a list of early detection invasive plants to be on the lookout for the 2025 field season.

- **Education and Outreach Subcommittee (EO) Objectives**

- The Education and Outreach Subcommittee did not meet in 2024.

- **Legislative and Permitting Subcommittee (LAP) Objectives**

## SuAsCo CISMA Annual Report: 2024

- o The Legislative and Outreach Subcommittee did not meet in 2024.
- Weed Warrior (WW) Subcommittee Objectives
  - 1) Educational Resources
    - 2) Create and/or compile educational resources for volunteers and trainers including videos, guides, and brochures. – **Ongoing.**
    - 3) Organize advertising time sensitive pulls across the region, e.g. water chestnut and garlic mustard. Resource documentation samples were created but not distributed. The documentation will be finalized in 2025 and shared with member organizations.
  - 4) Use the CISMA website “New Events” calendar – **Achieved.**  
Partners have been using the calendar with more than 130 posts since it went live in 2022.
  - 5) Promote mapping protocol – **Achieved.**  
SVT has hosted several training events and four partner organizations have participated.
  - 6) Research grant funding for a contractor to develop a local invasive plant disposal plan - **No progress was made on this priority item in 2024**
    - 7) Disposal options: Chipping desiccated plants vs composting vs burning.
  - 8) Publish One Sheet Flyers – **Ongoing.**  
Flyers have been created and will advertise them to Partners for the 2025 season.
  - 9) Provide guidance on trainings -- **Ongoing.**  
We provided support to Northborough and Bolton.
  - 10) Create MOU for Host Organizations to sign – **Achieved.**  
Drafted and completed in November 2024 and sent to host organizations for signature.
- Steering Committee Administrative Duties
  - 1) Generate annual report for 2024 -- **Achieved.**
  - 2) Refine metrics of evaluating the accomplishments of the CISMA -- **Ongoing.**
    - a. Administered membership survey to gauge the helpfulness of CISMA and services provided. Overall respondents reported that the CISMA website is helpful and informative, but they were unaware of certain resources like “Raising the Bar on Volunteerism.”
    - b. Coordinator began tracking the number of attendees at various CISMA meetings and events as suggested by the River Stewardship Council.
  - 3) Schedule and coordinate the Annual Meeting open to all members -- **Achieved.**
  - 4) Administer 2024 small grant program -- **Achieved.**
  - 5) Pursue additional funding through grants -- **Achieved.**
    - 6) The CISMA Coordinator applied for River Stewardship Council grant for 2025.
  - 7) Coordinate the CISMA Fall Meeting election. -- **Achieved.**