



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management

2023: BUILDING ON MOMENTUM

2023 has been a year of firsts, building on the momentum of the Indiana Invasives Initiative (III) over the last few years. SICIM hosted the first 5K fundraiser in November where we saw over 100 participants. We also welcomed a record 250 participants to Hamilton County for the Indiana Invasive Species Conference in June. In the effort of reaching a wider audience throughout Indiana and to bring more people together to address the invasive species issues statewide, we combined the SICIM Annual Partners Meeting and the Annual CISMA Conference into this single event. As our message travels further, we see a wide range of participants at this conference: CISMA members, conservation professionals, landowners, and engaged citizens.

SICIM staff continued working throughout the

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SICIM CHAIR

When SICIM's board decided in 2017 to start the program that became known as the Indiana Invasives Initiative (III), we recognized that we were long on hope and short on examples. There were only four CISMAs operating in Indiana at the time and attempts to discuss the issue of invasive plants were often met with blank stares. Jane Hardisty, then NRCS State Conservationist, shared our vision and was able to provide funding to get things moving. Within a year, Sam Shine, The Nature Conservancy, the State Soil Conservation Board, Arrow Head RC&D, and the Indiana Association of SWCDS all came alongside to fund and support the effort. Many others have joined the effort over the past six years, too many to list, and the III continues to build steam.

This annual report contains many stories of people and places brought together by the III and I encourage you to read them all, remembering that this is just a piece of all that is happening in Indiana. SICIM's staff are to be commended for their hard work, and the reports and stories herein are a testament to their dedication and passion and to that of our partners. We could not have imagined six years



ago what the III would accomplish, and that gives us great hope for future.

state and have not slowed down. We welcomed a new Regional Specialist, Ronda Spaulding. We continued our work supporting current CISMAs and creating new ones, and conducted outreach events, invasive species trainings for citizens and partners, and invasive species surveys for private landowners.

For more details on all of these activities, please take a look through this report to truly see the impact we are making throughout the state. We are engaging our partners, the public, private landowners, conservation organizations, CISMA members, and everyone in Indiana to work together to address the issues of invasive species and we have much more work to do. Thank you for joining us in this journey. We could not do it without you and truly appreciate your support.

ago what the III would accomplish, and that gives us great hope for future.

The success of the III will be measured by many things: the number of Weed Wrangles held, the number of active CISMAs throughout the state, and cost-shared acres, all of which are necessary. But more importantly, success will be measured by the number of landowners who are engaged and controlling invasives and restoring native habitat on their own land. By the growing number of people who join their local CISMA and remove invasives in their own landscaping. By the partnerships that are formed so that we can work together rather than in our own bubbles, amplifying the work being done. We see all of this happening and we know the message is beginning to get across. We may have friends and neighbors who will never attend an III event or be involved with a CISMA, but they are cutting bush honeysuckle and pulling garlic mustard on their own and, hopefully, encouraging their neighbors to do likewise. People loving their land and giving it the care it deserves. That is our vision of success, and, thanks to you, that vision is being realized. Thank you for all you do.

-Troy Hinkle

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROJECT COORDINATOR



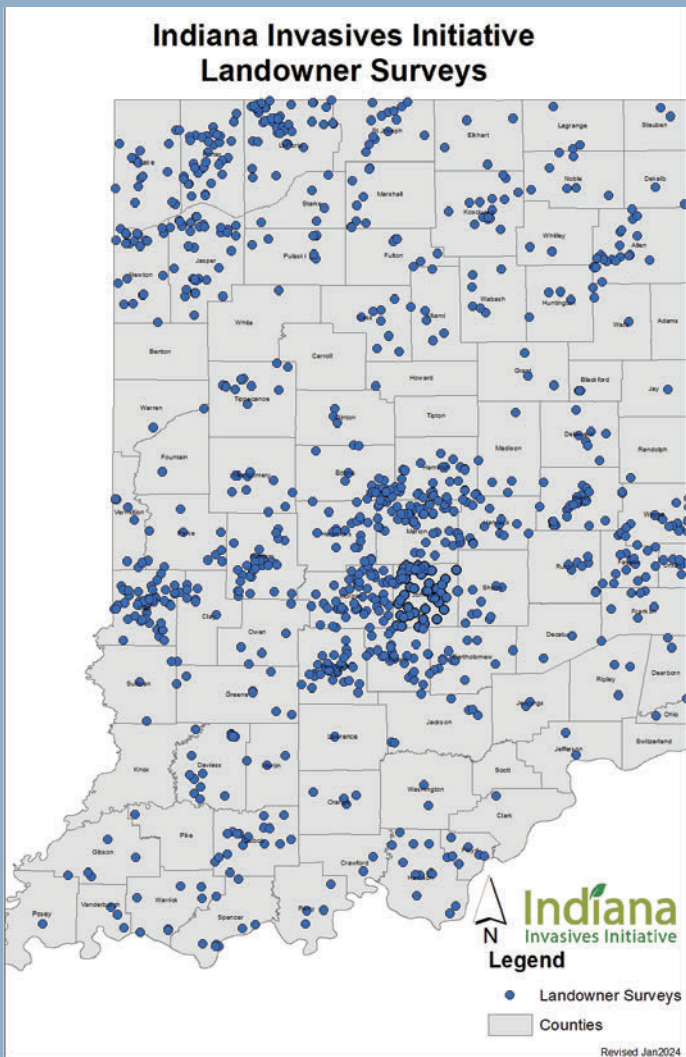
Our Indiana citizens are our greatest assets. Each CISMA is comprised of tenacious members that see opportunities not obstacles. I witness this daily as I hear from other team members or when I get to spend time with you. You see opportunities to reach out to new community members for assistance, to solve a challenge at a local level where impacts can be immediately observed. Local work allows a new community member to be engaged, to feel needed, and to respond to that need. Local work spreads the wealth, discovers quick and tangible solutions, and makes a fundamental move toward

community functionality. It is the method for change in a manner that lets our citizens be empowered, active, and responsible. These local actions are not new, they are as old as the Earth and are a time-honored winner. The desire and need to help and be involved is crucial for our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. When we feel good, we help more. When we help more, we feel even better. It's positive feedback! Take a Weed Wrangle® (WW). People exclaim every time how nice it is to participate and how they felt they did something worthwhile. That feeling motivates people and we need motivation to tackle the invasive species issues we face. We cannot do it with just a few! The first thing we need to move the invasive species mountain is not physical strength (although this is helpful), it is mental and emotional strength. And those strengths grow when we help others, gather with others, and feel like we are part of a team.

Additionally, a huge shout-out to our CISMA strike teams. These dedicated folks volunteered over 1,660 hours in 2023, with a combined value over \$53,000. The volume of their work is impressive, and it is improving habitat! This is a can-do, will-do, get-the-job done attitude and it will make a difference.

I encourage all of us in 2024 to make it a goal to expand the team, reach out, recruit, partner, share the joy of and celebrate "naturally native" (from a dear friend) Indiana. I challenge you to "redefine beautiful" (said another friend) by helping someone chuck the invasive or non-native landscape plant for a native one grown locally by a nursery that loves Indiana as we do. As you leap into 2024, please make concerted efforts to spread the wealth and invite others to your table. Share how cool and fascinating our natural Indiana is with someone daily and watch them light up and ask how they can get involved.









-Dawn Slack

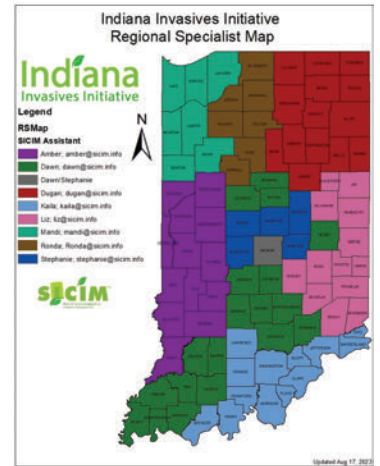




The Indiana Invasives Initiative is a collaboration between the State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to manage invasive species and raise public awareness of the devastation they cause.







MEET THE INDIANA INVASIVES INITIATIVE TEAM

	Stephanie Schuck Executive Director stephanie@sicim.info		Dawn Slack Project Coordinator dawn@sicim.info
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	Amber Slaughterbeck Regional Specialist amber@sicim.info		Kaila Laplace Regional Specialist kaila@sicim.info



INDIANA INVASIVES INITIATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

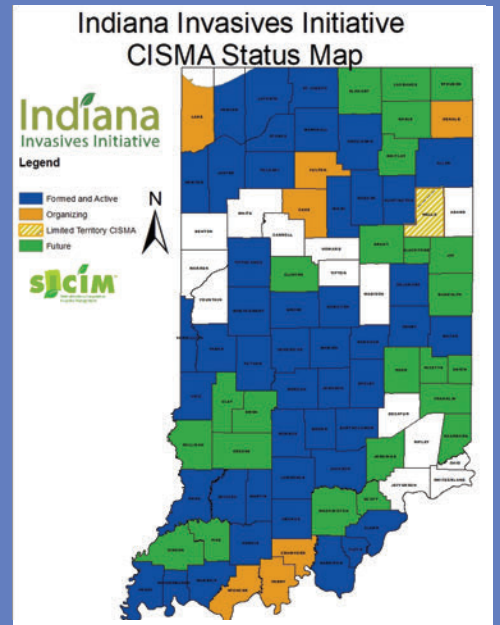
OUR PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS




	1,255 Outreach Events		1,404 Property Assessments
	72 Counties we are actively working in		42,369 Acres with Management Plans
	41 Trainings Conducted		42 Established CISMAs (representing 52 counties)

Totals reflect progress of Indiana Invasives Initiative since launch in 2018 unless otherwise indicated



INDIANA CISMA MAP



-  Established CISMAs
-  Organizing CISMAs
-  Future CISMAs

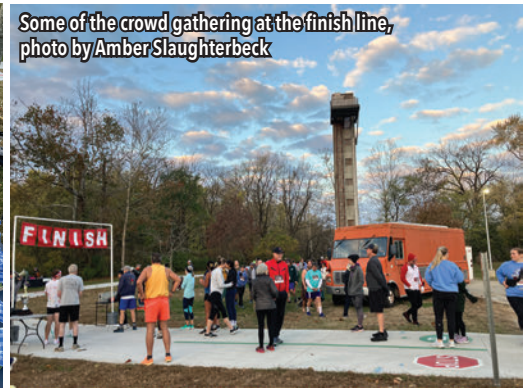
INAUGURAL RUNNIN' AND WRANGLIN' 5K FUNDRAISER



Proud awardees, photo by Stephanie Schuck



Awards given to participants, photo by Stephanie Schuck



Some of the crowd gathering at the finish line, photo by Amber Slaughterbeck

SICIM held their first ever 5K run/walk fundraiser in 2023, aptly named the **Runnin' and Wranglin' 5K!** The race was held on November 4th at Mill Race Park in Columbus, Indiana, and SICIM staff worked with CISMAs in the area (Bartholomew County Blazing Stars CISMA, Brown County Native Woodlands, Johnson County Native Plant Partnership, and Jackson County Invasive Partnership) to plan and put on the event. It truly was an event to remember! The weather delivered a beautiful November morning, and over 100 participants joined the fun. This race was an effort to raise awareness locally and throughout the state on the impact of invasive species, as well as being SICIM's first ever fundraiser to support the Indiana Invasives Initiative. The race was timed for those serious runners, and for those who weren't in such a rush there were information tables, activities, and prizes given away. Some prizes included reusable water bottles, native shrubs, a Weed Wrangle kit that included loppers and gloves, stickers, and more.

Awards were given to those participants that excelled in their age category, as well as those who traveled the farthest,



Run participants could also participate in a Weed Wrangle and learn more about invasives at several tables sponsored by local CISMAs, photo by Stephanie Schuck



All participants got this cool t-shirt! We also welcomed our canine friends at the race.



Some of the prizes given to participants, photo by Stephanie Schuck



who raised the most money, and who wore the best costume. The costumes were outstanding! We had butterflies, kilts, wood nymphs, caterpillars, movie characters, and even invasive species costumes! Volunteers from Cummins led a Weed Wrangle during the race that anyone could join, and food trucks fed all the hungry participants and their families and guests. Everyone received a medal and a long sleeved t-shirt for their participation, along with learning a little more about invasives along the way!

This event truly was a team effort. We are very grateful for our partners who helped to put on the event, Mill Race Park for the location, all of our sponsors who made it possible, and of course everyone who donated to make this a successful fundraising event! We plan to have future 5K fundraisers, so if you are interested keep an eye on the event page on our website, or our Facebook and Instagram pages. Runnin' and Wranglin' may be coming to a park near you! We look forward to seeing you at the race in 2024, and don't forget to wear your costume.

2023 CISMA HIGHLIGHTS AND PROJECTS

There is so much going on throughout Indiana, it is hard to keep track of it all! Here are highlights of just some of the groups SICIM and Indiana CISMAs are working with, where we are working, and what projects have moved the needle to provide more invasive management and awareness in Indiana. Visit our website to see the list of Indiana CISMAs: sicim.info/cismas

INDIANA INVASIVES INITIATIVE ON THE ROAD *Where has our work taken us?*

SICIM staff and CISMAs are always on the road! There are so many ways that we all work hard to get the word out about the negative effects of invasive species. Every presentation, training, workshop, nature walk, event booth, and conversation creates another partnership and engages the citizens of Indiana



Project Coordinator Dawn Slack presenting at a regional invasive species training, photo by Amber Slaughterbeck

in conserving and protecting Indiana's natural areas. The list of places and events we have been to over the last few years is way too long to list here, so take a look at our graphic to the right for some of the events and places we have been, and groups that we have engaged.

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE *Providing training, resources, and supplies to private landowners*

As more private landowners are reaching out to SICIM and CISMAs for assistance and guidance on managing invasives on their property, we have delivered. Some CISMAs are providing one-time or annual invasive management training for landowners and professional partners. Others are working with SWCDs and other partners to provide manual tools and larger mechanical tools to rent for use on their land. A few examples of these CISMAs include Wabash River Invasives Project (WRIP), Tippecanoe Invasive Cooperative Taskforce (TICT), Lawrence County Keep Invasives In Check (KIC), HIP, Upper Wabash Invasives Network (UWIN), Kosciusko Water & Woodland Invasive Partnership (KWWIP), Invasive Species Awareness Coalition of Dubois County (ISAC), and Clark County Harmful Invasives Removal Project.



TICT had a full house for their Partners Meeting! Photo by Amber Slaughterbeck



UWIN hosted their 2nd annual Field Day event in 2023, with over 70 attendees



A young Weed Wrangler at Prairie Border with JCII



Conservation Crafting with DIPP, photo by Liz Yetter



TICT unveiling a new canopy for events, photo by Amber Slaughterbeck



HIP member Shelly Brown with their display at the Indiana Invasive Species Conference

ENGAGING INDIANA YOUTH *The future leaders in conservation*

SICIM and many of our CISMAs are engaging youth throughout the state in meaningful ways. Here are a few examples!



Knox County CISMA at one of their native plant sale locations

ART AND OTHER UNIQUE WAYS TO ENGAGE *These CISMAs get bonus points for creativity*

- Many CISMAs and SICIM staff work with K-12 students and scout groups for invasive work days and Weed Wrangles. The students learn about invasive species, plant ID, and the importance of managing invasive species.
- A Rochester High School student, who is also President of the school's Key Club, attended a Weed Wrangle hosted by Jasper County Invasives Initiative (JCII), and was so excited about the experience she brought some Key Club members to the next one! She then presented at her local Kiwanis Club and has plans to engage her peers in more Weed Wrangles.
- SICIM staff and other partners worked with Blackford County SWCD for a Nature Field Day in Hartford with all 5th graders in the county that included soil health, invasive plants, invasive insects, tree identification, and how drones can help identify invasives.
- SICIM Regional Specialists Mandi, Dugan, and Ronda have participated in the Arrowhead RC&D rafting trips over the years, teaching students from elementary to high school about invasive species.

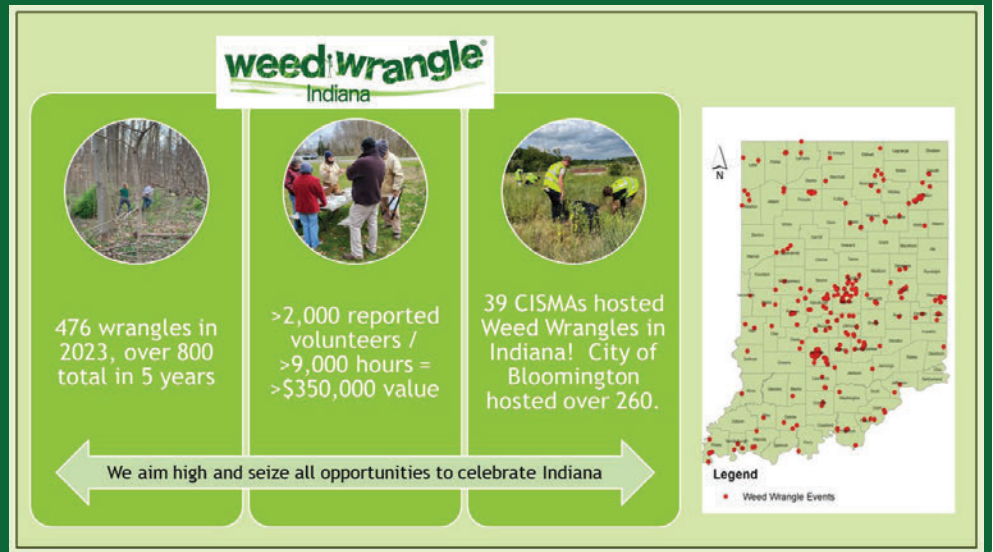
- Delaware County Invasive Plant Project (DIPP) hosted its first Conservation Crafting workshop in partnership with Madjax Maker Force in Muncie. Participants learned how to identify invasive honeysuckle and about the harmful effects of invasive plants. They hope to continue this partnership with an ink pen workshop in 2024.
- Hamilton County Invasive Partnership (HIP) holds an #invasivesbucketchallenge in the spring: they provide buckets (seen in the photo above) to the public to challenge everyone to fill a bucket of garlic mustard, and then share on social media to win a prize!
- Floyd County Native Habitat Restoration Team (FCNHRT) worked with the Floyd County SWCD to apply for (and received) a grant to hire a part-time Secretary for FCNHRT. This person will help to guide and keep the CISMA organized.
- Bartholomew County Blazing Stars CISMA has a program to assist local businesses with Callery Pear tree removal. They were also able to continue the massive amount of bush honeysuckle removal by talking with community members until they found a local company that will chip the debris for free. This partnership was critical for the strike team's work to continue.

WEED WRANGLE UPDATE

Weed Wrangle® Indiana is part of a national movement that highlights the importance of managing invasive species and connects communities to volunteer opportunities in local natural areas. Each event is expert-led, providing hands-on guidance in invasive species identification and management.

Indiana continues to lead the nation in the amount of Weed Wrangles per year and we are not slowing down! These events are key to the education and outreach that our CISMAs provide to their local communities, while also providing a way for citizens to get involved. Weed Wrangles are events that are repeated in the same locations for at least three

years in a row, which gives participants an opportunity to see the impact with their own eyes while bringing everyone together to see the bigger picture. To learn more and view the calendar of all events statewide, visit our website: <https://www.sicim.info/weed-wrangle-indiana>.



SUPPORT FOR CISMAs THROUGHOUT THE STATE

SICIM has provided over \$70,000 to Indiana CISMAs to date, with \$42,000 of that occurring in 2023. This funding has been provided through small grants and reimbursements, as well as in the form of Weed Wrangle supplies and outreach materials. CISMA grants were a funding opportunity we were able to provide because of generous conference sponsors and donors. In 2023, SICIM rolled out the first reimbursement program for Indiana CISMAs. Any CISMA that held Weed Wrangles, completed the reimbursement

form, and used the online Weed Wrangle reporting forms on SICIM's website was eligible to receive a one-time sum of \$2,000. A total of 24 CISMAs took advantage of this reimbursement program in 2023.



The Weed Wrangle reimbursement program will continue until all funds for the program are disbursed. If your CISMA is hosting Weed Wrangles and has not taken advantage of this program, please contact our Indiana Invasives Initiative Project Coordinator, Dawn Slack (dawn@sicim.info).

2023 INDIANA INVASIVE SPECIES CONFERENCE

In the interest of reaching a wider audience throughout Indiana and to bring more people together to address invasive species issues statewide, we combined the SICIM Annual Partners

Meeting and the Annual CISMA Conference into one event: the Indiana Invasive Species Conference! The conference this year was truly inspiring, and it was so wonderful to be able to connect and learn with all the attendees. And

speaking of attendees, we had a record number this year of 250! We are truly thankful for all of our conference sponsors and conference committee. A special shout-out to the Hamilton County Invasives Partnership for working so

closely with the conference committee, helping on conference day, and providing some stellar field trips! It truly was a team effort. Presentations were given throughout the morning, along with

concurrent sessions in 3 tracks: research, CISMA development, and land management. Participants heard from natural resources professionals, land managers, landscape architects, and more. We heard state updates from Eric Bitner, Indiana Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, and Anthony Sipes, Indiana State Parks Natural



Resources Manager, and learned about jumping worms from Bob Bruner with Purdue University Extension. Continuing education credits were offered again as well.

Field trip experiences were diverse, with 7 options including large equipment demonstrations with Stantec, a visit with Central Indiana Land Trust staff at Nonie Werbe Krauss Nature Preserve, visiting a private landowner's property to learn about progress on invasive removal and native plant installation, and more. Our goal every year is to provide relevant content to all: professionals, private landowners, CISMA members, and citizens of Indiana.

All proceeds of the conference go directly to Indiana CISMAs through small grants, reimbursements, and other support. It is always inspiring to hear from everyone on how they are working to manage invasive species, restore and protect habitat, and are working together to increase the efficiency of all of our efforts across the state.



Ray Chattin accepting the President's Award



Conference attendees learning about Asian jumping worms



Equipment and herbicide

SICIM AND WEED WRANGLER AWARDS

At each conference, we like to highlight those CISMAs, partners, and individuals that have gone above and beyond. Here are those that were awarded for their hard work and dedication to SICIM, their CISMAs, and communities throughout Indiana:

SICIM Partner of the Year: Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

SICIM President's Award: Ray Chattin and Les Zimmerman

SICIM Volunteer of the Year: Jake Brinkman

Weed Wrangler Awards: Kim Gauen (Hamilton Invasives Partnership), Ronda Spaulding (landowner), Judi Brown, Diane Mason (Vanderburgh County CISMA), Tracy Gilliland (Kosciusko Water & Woodland Invasive Partnership), NICHES Land Trust, Blue River Alliance for Native Conservation & Habitats, and Morgan County Native & Invasive Plant Partnership

MAIN EVENTS FOR 2024

Indiana Invasive Species Conference

The SICIM Annual Partners Meeting and Indiana Invasive Species Conference will be held concurrently again in 2024. This one-day event will be held on June 13, 2024 at the Abe Martin Lodge in Brown County State Park. We invite all partners: professionals, landowners, CISMA members, and concerned citizens to join us! There will be relevant content for all, and this will be an excellent opportunity to make connections with others working on invasive species in Indiana. Please contact our Executive Director Stephanie Schuck, stephanie@sicim.info, or Indiana Invasives Initiative Project Coordinator Dawn Slack, dawn@sicim.info, with questions. Continuing education credits will be offered. Check our website for details as they emerge: www.sicim.info/invasivespeciesconference

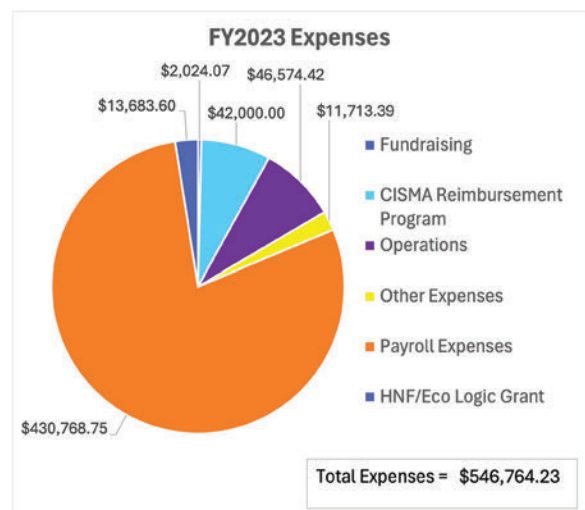
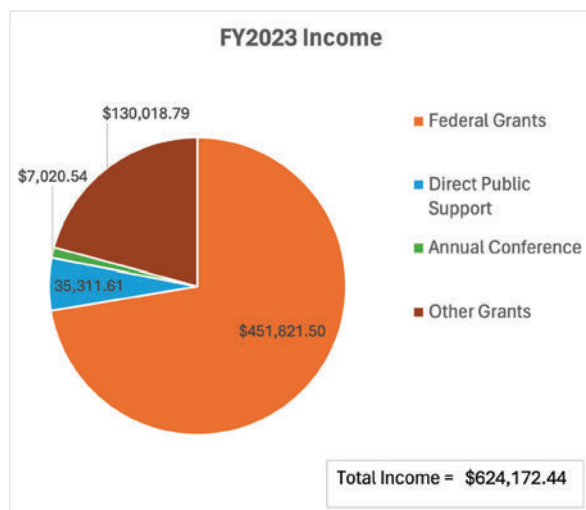
Other events

SICIM and CISMAs around the state host many events, both in-person and virtual, throughout the year. SICIM hosts Quarterly Lunch and Networking meetings for CISMAs on topics related to invasives and CISMA management. Dates for 2024 are: Feb. 15, May 16, Aug. 15, and Nov. 21. Regional invasive species trainings are being planned for spring, check out the events page on our website for details as they emerge.

The National and Indiana Invasive Species Awareness Week is Feb. 25 - Mar. 3. We will be sharing information on invasive species policy in Indiana and nationwide, and how you can get more involved.

Additionally, CISMAs host local Weed Wrangles throughout the state, educational presentations, and workshops on plant identification, invasive species, and more. Check out our website and Facebook page for all the most current events and opportunities to network and learn!

2023 SICIM FINANCIAL REPORT



This Financial Statement Activity was developed by SICIM Executive Director, Stephanie Schuck, and is true to the best of her knowledge and belief.

STATE OF INDIANA COOPERATIVE INVASIVES MANAGEMENT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization led by a volunteer board and committee members with the mission to protect, restore, and enhance Indiana's landscapes by coordinating efforts to identify, prevent, and control invasive species.

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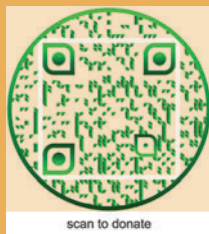
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Thanks also to our generous anonymous sponsors!

ADDITIONAL PHOTO CREDITS: Front cover - (TL) Bartholomew County Blazing Stars CISMA at the Runnin' & Wranglin' 5K, photo by Stephanie Schuck; (TR) Board member Teena Ligman and former board member Cheryl Coon at a Weed Wrangle® with Lawrence County Keep Invasives in Check (KIC); (BL) West Central SICIM Regional Specialist Liz Yetter at a Hayes Arboretum Walk & Talk, photo by Jenilee Braun; (BR) New Lake County CISMA members removing invasives at Hobart Prairie.

Back cover - Spring ephemerals growing after removal of invasive bush honeysuckle on Boone County Invasives Cooperative (BCIC) member and landowner Josh Armstrong's property, photo by Josh Armstrong.



State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management



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