

Ontario Invasive Plant Council

Annual Report 2014-2015



Photo courtesy of Ken Towle

Annual Report 2014-15



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
PARTNERSHIPS	4
OIPC COMMITTEES	5
Policy Committee	5
Communications Committee	6
Research and Control Committee.....	6
Horticulture Outreach Collaborative	6
Fundraising Committee.....	6
Website Committee	7
Ontario <i>Phragmites</i> Working Group (OPWG).....	7
PROJECTS	7
LETTERS/RESPONSES.....	21
COMMUNICATIONS	21
Events.....	21
Social media/newsletter	22
OIPC Website	23
THE FUTURE OF THE OIPC.....	25
FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2014-15.....	26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC)

The OIPC was created to facilitate a coordinated and effective response to the threat of invasive plants by providing leadership, expertise and a forum to educate, motivate and empower organizations and citizens.

In the 2014-2015 (2014-15) fiscal year (April 1 2014 - March 31 2015) the OIPC completed a large number of projects supported by our new and long-standing partners: the Invasive Species Centre (ISC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (OMNRF) Canada Ontario Agreement (COA), Environment Canada (EC) through a contract with the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS), and the Biodiversity Education Awareness Network (BEAN). Elections were held for our Board of Director's Members at Large; two for the 2014-2016 term and in January 2015, a third member at large was voted in for the 2015-2017 term. The Executive Committee also gained a new Secretary Treasurer for the 2015-2017 term. The OIPC Board is a coalition of government, non-government, First Nations, academic institutions and up to four members-at-large voted on to the board from the general membership. The OIPC Board in 2014-15 included:

Voting Board of Directors

- Iola Price, **OIPC President & Member at Large**
- Ken Towle, **OIPC Vice-President & Conservation Ontario**
- John Urquhart, **OIPC Secretary Treasurer & Member at Large**
- Owen Williams, **OIPC Past President & Member at Large**
- Dawn Sucee, **Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters**
- John Benham, **Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association/Wellington County**
- Jeanine West, **Landscape Ontario/Verbinnens Nursery**
- David D'entremont & Lindsay Barr, **Royal Botanical Gardens**
- Suzanne Hanna, **Ontario Horticultural Association**
- Mary Gordon, **Hydro One**
- Larry McDermott, **Plenty Canada**
- Dan Kraus & Mhairi McFarlane, **Nature Conservancy of Canada**
- Sandy Smith, **University of Toronto**
- Jennifer Gibb, **City of Toronto**
- *Position available*, **Forests Ontario**
- *Position available*, **Ontario Nature**
- *Position available*, **Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration**

Advisory (non-voting) Directors

- Michael Irvine, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Forest Health and Silviculture)**
- Karen Hartley, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Parks and Protected Areas)**
- David Copplestone, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Biodiversity Policy)**
- Paula Berketo, **Ontario Ministry of Transportation**
- Hugh Berges, **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**
- Diana Mooij, **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**
- Prabir Roy, **Parks Canada**

The OIPC consists of just over 200 members and network contacts. OIPC members are drawn from across the province. Members receive discounts on Council events, as well as a newsletter update and they vote for Members at Large and other important items at the OIPC Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Proposals for the 2014-15 year submitted to the ISC, the OMNRF, EC, and BEAN were funded; those to the TD Friends of the Environment and Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund were not. As well, we received sponsorship for our AGM from Dow AgroSciences, Univar Canada, OMNRF and Green Stream Lawn and Vegetation Management Inc.

PARTNERSHIPS

The OIPC partners with and is housed at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH). In 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OFAH was written. It is anticipated that the MOU will be reviewed and approved by the OIPC Board of Directors in the fall of 2015.

The OIPC accomplishes its varied and extensive tasks through its strong partnerships. Since its inception, the council has worked cooperatively with like-minded organizations as this has proven to be the most effective means to deal with the invasive plant problem.

The OIPC continued to work with partners across the country by contributing as a board member on the CCIS (the national invasive species council). The CCIS works collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries to support actions and information flow to reduce the threat and impacts of invasive species. The national council draws its representation from First Nations, Federal and Provincial Government departments and invasive plant/species councils from each province. The OIPC worked with the CCIS to host the Weeds Across Borders conference in Ottawa. This event has participants from Canada, the US and Mexico come together to discuss invasive plant initiatives and research and management across North America. The OIPC, with the help of our partners in Ottawa, led the field tour portion of the conference.

The OIPC is also a board member of the Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN). The MIPN was formed to reduce the impact of invasive plant species in the Midwest region of Canada and the US. MIPN draws its representation from organizations in the U.S. Great Lake states and Ontario.

In early 2015, OIPC partnered with Voyageur Provincial Park to assist the park in its ongoing efforts to eradicate invasive water chestnut. In addition to removal of the plant in the park, the staff did monitoring and removal of plants outside the park boundaries along the Ottawa River, and worked to clear five bays of water chestnut using a cutting boat and a mechanical harvester. This year, they also started “pull days”, where members of the public or people staying at the park could join in to assist in monitoring and manual removal, as well as seed collection along the beaches. The project will continue into the summer and fall of 2015.

OIPC COMMITTEES

The OIPC accomplishes a number of projects through its various committees that are open to participation by anyone with an interest in committee initiatives. Each committee works towards its goals and objectives by holding regular meetings to establish and discuss committee priorities and assigns tasks to individual committee members to complete. Over the course of the year, committees assess the work that is required of them and work according to their own schedules. During the 2014-15 fiscal year, seven committees were in place. The committees include:

- Policy
- Communications
- Research and Control
- Horticultural Outreach Collaborative
- Fundraising
- Website
- Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee was created to develop council positions, advise board members and identify gaps in provincial invasive species policy. This committee deals with legislative and policy aspects and issues that address invasive plants. During the 2014-15 fiscal year, this committee developed a Board Member Attendance Policy and provided comments on the re-introduced Invasive Species Act (ISA) and the Federal Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee engages the public through education, action and information exchange. In 2014-15, this committee was co-chaired by Francine MacDonald (OMNRF) and Sophie Monfette/Matt Smith (OFAH). During the 2014-15 fiscal year, this committee was mostly inactive.

Research and Control Committee

The Research and Control Committee identifies invasive plant pathways, priority invasive plants and their impacts, coordinates research and monitoring activities, and assists with the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs). In 2014-15 this committee was co-chaired by Sandy Smith (University of Toronto) and Lola Price (Ottawa Invasive Plant Working Group). The committee assisted with the review of a number of projects including existing BMPs that required updates and the “Creating an Invasive Plant Management Strategy: A Framework for Ontario Municipalities” document. The co-chairs also developed a draft matrix of invasive plant control options and a draft table of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) on invasive plants.

Horticulture Outreach Collaborative

The Horticultural Outreach Collaborative works closely with the members of the horticulture industry in order to reduce the sale of invasive plants and inform gardeners and hobby farmers about the impacts of those species. In 2014-15 this committee was chaired by Diana Shermet (Central Lake Ontario Conservation). For this fiscal year, the committee continued to promote the Grow Me Instead (GMI) Guide and the Nursery Recognition Program (NRP). The committee also collaborated with Trent University’s Community Research Centre to undertake a research project. The Trent Community Research Centre connects Trent students with local organizations to undertake research questions posed by the organization. The focus of this research project was to have our student survey participating nurseries in the NRP to gauge their feedback on the success of the program and conduct a literature review of new invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives that could be featured in the GMI guide when it is next updated. The results of the survey of the nurseries will assist us in improving the NRP program. To continue to promote the GMI guide, the HOC also prepared a funding application for TD Friends of the Environment for the 2015-2016 fiscal year to create bookmarks directing the public to the online GMI guide and to produce seed packets with native plant seeds for giveaways at events.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee was formed in February 2011, and works to secure organizational and project funding for the Council's activities. It was inactive in 2014-15.

Website Committee

The Website Committee was formed to update the website. Although the committee as a whole was inactive, individual members spent some time re-organizing information on the website to make it more user-friendly.

Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group (OPWG)

The OPWG was very active during the 2014-15 fiscal year. The main purpose of the OPWG is to facilitate effective, efficient and environmentally responsible management of invasive *Phragmites* in Ontario. Specific goals focus on facilitation of education, information sharing, and investigation and pursuit of effective management tools. The working group finalized their Terms of Reference, completed a Letter of Support for members of the group to use to send to their local MPs and MPPs to garner more provincial support for managing invasive *Phragmites* in Ontario and attended a number of events promoting awareness about this plant and how to prevent and properly manage its spread.

PROJECTS

In 2014-15, the OIPC committees and staff worked on:

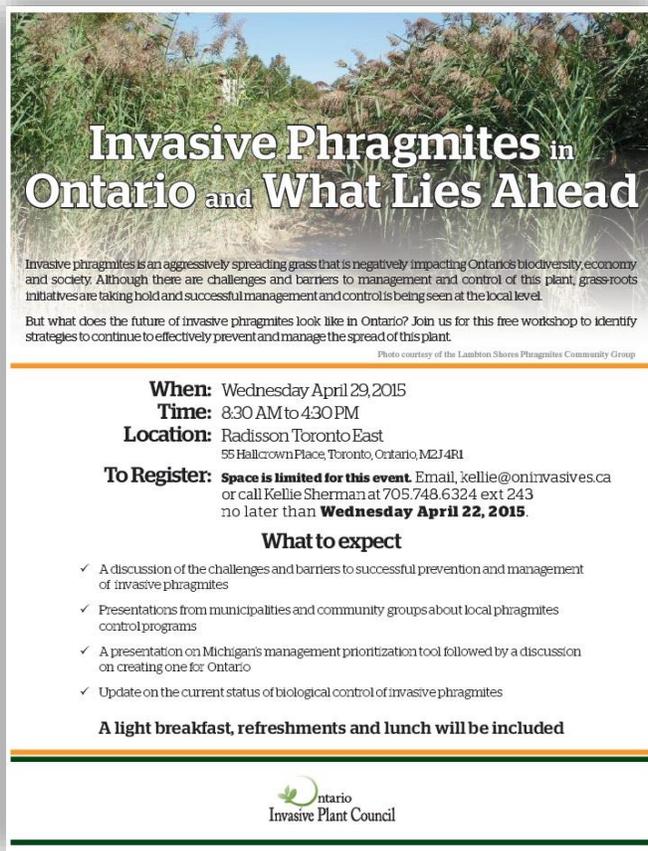
Pull, Plant and Pollinate Event



Each year, BEAN promotes a day of local action and awareness to engage Ontarians in the conservation of biodiversity in honour of International Day for Biological Diversity. In May of 2014, the OIPC received funding from BEAN to host a “Pull, Plant and Pollinate” event whereby volunteers came to the OFAH to remove a patch of invasive goutweed and replant the area with a number of native plants. Fifteen volunteers participated

and the volunteers were provided background information on the issue of invasive plants and why native plants are so important to our local biodiversity. Although small scale, events like these are important for local, on-the ground control of invasive plants and for engaging local residents on the issue of invasive plants.

Planning and delivering an invasive *Phragmites* workshop



Invasive Phragmites in Ontario and What Lies Ahead

Invasive phragmites is an aggressively spreading grass that is negatively impacting Ontario's biodiversity, economy and society. Although there are challenges and barriers to management and control of this plant, grass-roots initiatives are taking hold and successful management and control is being seen at the local level.

But what does the future of invasive phragmites look like in Ontario? Join us for this free workshop to identify strategies to continue to effectively prevent and manage the spread of this plant.

Photo courtesy of the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group

When: Wednesday April 29, 2015
Time: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Location: Radisson Toronto East
 55 Halliwell Place, Toronto, Ontario, M2J4R1

To Register: **Space is limited for this event.** Email, kellie@oninvasives.ca or call Kellie Sherman at 705.748.6324 ext 243 no later than **Wednesday April 22, 2015.**

What to expect

- ✓ A discussion of the challenges and barriers to successful prevention and management of invasive phragmites
- ✓ Presentations from municipalities and community groups about local phragmites control programs
- ✓ A presentation on Michigan's management prioritization tool followed by a discussion on creating one for Ontario
- ✓ Update on the current status of biological control of invasive phragmites

A light breakfast, refreshments and lunch will be included

 Ontario Invasive Plant Council

The OIPC worked with its network of experts including the OPWG and the OMNRF to coordinate a provincial invasive *Phragmites* workshop. The one-day workshop was organized to bring together various agencies and organizations to review the current status of knowledge of invasive *Phragmites*, facilitate greater collaboration, and identify approaches to improve management. The workshop was held in Toronto and included presentations from a number of experts including Janice Gilbert and Elaine Ferrier from the OPWG, Ken Vegh from the Town of Kingsville, Nancy Vidler from the Lambton Shores *Phragmites* Community Group, Kevin Walters from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Robert Bouchier from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The presentations were informative, engaging and provoked much discussion throughout the day. Presentation topics included

outreach initiatives, status of invasive *Phragmites* in Ontario, challenges and barriers to success, municipal drainage issues, a prioritization tool for management in Michigan, and the status of biocontrol for this species.

The day also consisted of breakout sessions in which attendees were called upon to participate in discussions about various topics relating to invasive *Phragmites* in order to identify strategies to effectively prevent and manage the spread of this plant.

There were 49 participants representing a variety of organizations and agencies (see Table 1) including municipal staff, road maintenance workers, non-profit environmental groups, provincial and state governments, conservations authorities, First Nations, private consultants, and industry. The majority of participants had extensive invasive *Phragmites* management experience. Others, while having had less management experience, held expertise in other areas that proved valuable to the discussions. All participants held a keen interest and supported the urgent need for management for invasive *Phragmites* in Ontario.

Table 1. Organizations represented at the invasive *Phragmites* workshop, April 2015.

Type of Organization	Organization
Non-Profit	Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Good Roads Association, Ontario <i>Phragmites</i> Working Group (2), Ontario Invasive Plant Council (2), Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Lambton Shores <i>Phragmites</i> Community Group (2), Ducks Unlimited, Laurel Creek Headwaters
Provincial Government	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (6), Ontario Parks
Municipal Government	City of Kingsville, Region of Peel (2), County of Wellington, Norfolk County (2), Oxford County (2), Grey County, Niagara Region (2), City of Toronto (3), Region of Waterloo
Federal Government	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Conservation Authorities	Central Lake Ontario Conservation (3), Otonabee Region Conservation
First Nation	Walpole Island First Nation (3)
Academia	University of Toronto
Industry	BASF – The Chemical Company (2)
Private	LGL Limited, Green Stream Environmental, Kayanase

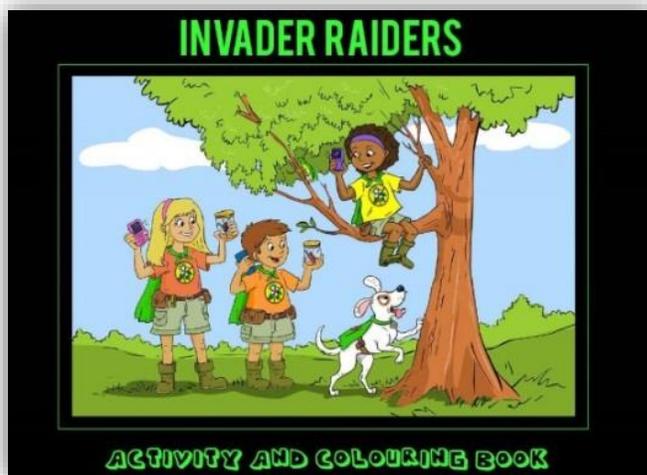
Update to the OIPC website

The OIPC website, initially created in 2009, holds relevant, highly sought after information and is a hub for OIPC resources, including our best management practices (BMP) series. With recent changes to accessibility standards and an increase in the number of smart phone and tablet users, it was time to update the website.



The OIPC worked with Citrus Studios to revamp the design and layout of the website to ensure that those using it will find the information they are looking for quickly and easily. The new site will be more user-friendly and will make it easier for people to participate in discussion forums, learn from the many training modules and easily and intuitively find the information they seek. The OIPC will be launching the new website to coincide with its new logo in the winter of 2015. In order to understand how the website is used, the OIPC will continue to track the usage through Google Analytics.

Partner with Ontario Parks to distribute and stock the Invader Raiders Activity and Colouring Book in Ontario Parks



In 2013, the OIPC Communications Committee worked with renowned artist Maureen Shalleau to develop the Invader Raiders Activity and Colouring book. The idea behind the book was to teach children about invasive plants in a fun and exciting way. Upon completion, it was tested by children in various locations and proved to be a hit with children of many ages. At the time of its creation, the OIPC did not have funding for printing and distribution, therefore

it was posted as a PDF document online for those interested to download and print on their own.

This year, the OIPC received funding from the OMNRF to update and print the book. The OIPC also worked with Ontario Parks to make the OIPC Invader Raiders Activity and Colouring book available in the parks stores. The OIPC printed 4000 copies of the book, of which 3000 copies were delivered to Ontario Parks Natural Heritage Educators and representatives from the Learn to Camp Program at their spring conference. Thirty representatives took the books back to their parks (see Table 2) and distributed them across Ontario during the summer of 2015. Delivering these books through these programs is a cost-effective way to engage children throughout the entire province and promote the importance of healthy ecosystems. The rest of the activity books are being delivered to interested organizations and agencies that engage children in environmental issues.

Table 2: Parks with Invader Raider booklets.

Region of Ontario	Park Name
Northern	Quetico, Aaron, Lake Superior, Killarney, Marten River, Restoule, Blue Lake, Algonquin, Six Mile Lake, Killbear, Marten River, Finlayson, Grundy Lake
South western	Pinery, Rock Point, Rondeau, Inverhuron
Central	Awenda, Emily, Arrowhead, Petroglyphs, Bronte Creek, Wasaga Beach, Frontenac
Eastern	Presqu'ile, Murphy's Point, Charleston Lake, Mississippi Valley, Samuel de Champlain

Ontario Parks also partnered with OIPC to deliver the books and messaging at various Natural Heritage Education events.

Letter of Opinion Online Survey

The OIPC developed and distributed an online survey for the OMNRF to gain a better understanding of experiences in obtaining a Letter of Opinion from the OMNRF for invasive plant management projects involving the use of herbicides. The survey was distributed through OIPC's members, network, e-newsletter and social media outlets. The survey was designed to be completed by anyone who has completed or attempted to complete a request for a Letter of Opinion.

Fifteen people completed the survey, one of which needed more information about the survey before proceeding through the rest of the questions. The OMNRF will use the results of the survey to determine if the Letter of Opinion process needs to be amended.

Aquatic Invasive Plant Watch List – Training Modules



In 2014-15, the OIPC, in collaboration with the OMNRF, developed an Aquatic Invasive Plant Watch List and conducted a survey of aquatic invasive plants experts from Ontario, Canada and neighbouring US states to determine which aquatic invasive plants are the most problematic in Ontario waters; especially in the Great Lakes Basin. The survey was distributed to a variety of aquatic field professionals

including aquatic biologists, lake management unit staff, industry workers and others from various government and non-governmental sectors who work around water and on the Great Lakes. Other participants included invasive species coordinators from neighbouring US States, and academia who specialize in aquatic plant biology. The intent of the survey was to determine which of the species we listed were of high, medium or low priority for prevention and management, which species currently not present in Ontario are of highest risk to being introduced to Ontario and which other plants should be added to the list.

Table 3: Participants in the Watch List Survey

Organization Name	Type of Organization
BC Ministry of Environment	Provincial Government Agency
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations	Provincial Government Agency
Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development	Provincial Government Agency
St. Clair Township	Municipal Government
Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee	Environmental Non-Profit Organization
Ducks Unlimited	Environmental Non-profit Organization
Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society	Environmental Non-Profit Organization
Alberta Invasive Species Council	Environmental Non-Profit Organization
Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council	Environmental Non-Profit Organization
Lower Trent Valley Conservation	Conservation Authority
Upper Thames River Conservation	Conservation Authority
Long Point Region Conservation	Conservation Authority
Lake Simcoe Region Conservation	Conservation Authority
Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation	Conservation Authority
Quinte Conservation	Conservation Authority
Otonabee Conservation	Conservation Authority
Trent University/ Fleming College	Academia
US National Park Service	US Federal Government Agency
US Forest Service	US Federal Government Agency

The OIPC used its Aquatic Invasive Plant Best management Practices document that was created last year (not yet published), to inform aquatic field professionals through an online training module and in-person workshops of 10 aquatic invasive plants that are threatening Ontario’s waters. The workshops were held in two locations in the Great Lakes Basin (Burlington and Belleville) and provided attendees with identification information on the 10 watch list species, along with live samples for them to view. The workshops also included more in-depth presentations from water soldier and water chestnut experts that provided participants with information on understanding the process of managing a species new to the province and why early detection is key to preventing their establishment and spread. The workshop also included a presentation on Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System Ontario (EDDMapS Ontario), to explain the easiest way to report plants if they are found. For a list of the organizations which attended the workshops please see Table 4.

The online training modules include detailed information on plant identification features, likely habitats, and how the plants can spread. Members of the public can now view them in webinar or PowerPoint format on our website.

The final steps to this project were to develop a communications plan to outline how the OIPC will continue to promote the training module to new audiences over the coming years. The communications plan includes various strategies and actions such as social media posts,

reminders about the training modules through our e-newsletters and mention of the module at all of our events.

Table 4: Aquatic Invasive Plant Workshop Registrants.

Workshop	Number of Registrants	Organizations Represented
Burlington	18	Ontario Parks, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Conservation Hamilton, Ducks Unlimited, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters; private consultant
Belleville	13	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Quinte Conservation Region, Ducks Unlimited, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, private consultant

Development of two new online training modules for Wild Parsnip and the Clean Equipment Protocol Best Management Practices (BMP) documents

The OIPC created two new individual online training modules for Wild Parsnip and the Clean Equipment Protocol for public and municipal land managers, Conservation Authorities, OMNRF and vegetation management specialists from the landscape and forestry sectors. The modules were based on the previously developed BMPs and were delivered through a webinar format. The Wild Parsnip webinar included information on the identification, biology, distribution, control measures and reporting tools for the plant, while the Clean Equipment Protocol webinar



Wild parsnip - Photo by David McMurray.

described the importance of cleaning equipment in order to prevent further introduction of invasive plants. Both training webinars were delivered online to a variety of individuals and included a presentation from OIPC staff, and then an opportunity for participants to ask an expert panelist questions. The webinar and PowerPoint format have been posted online allowing anyone to view and download for them for their own use.

To deliver this project the OIPC used the existing information from our BMPs and sent them to a technical review committee to update the subject matter.

The OIPC finished this project by developing a communication plan that outlines the best approaches for promoting the engagement and participation of target audiences for these training modules over the coming years.

Delivery of nine invasive plant management webinars for the “Winter Webinar” series



The OIPC delivered nine invasive plant management webinars during the winter of 2015. Each module was delivered via a lunch-and-learn format and included a presentation with information on the biology of the plant, its life cycle, identification features, habitat, impacts, and regulatory tools, best management practices using integrated pest management principles, permitting requirements and reporting tools. The presentation also included photographs to illustrate key

identification features of the plant and management techniques. Similar to the training modules, the webinars included a presentation from OIPC staff and then an opportunity for an open discussion between attendees and an expert panelist at the end of the presentation. Each webinar presentation was reviewed by a number of experts through the OIPC membership and distribution list, and updated to include the most up to date information on each plant.

Webinars were well attended and participants were asked to test their knowledge through a quiz at the end of the webinar. Those who completed the quiz received a certificate of completion for each module. The webinars were well received and participants came from various organizations and agencies in order to better be able to identify, control and report invasive plants during their spring and summer field season. More information on the number of registered participants and the organizations represented for each webinar is available in Table 5.

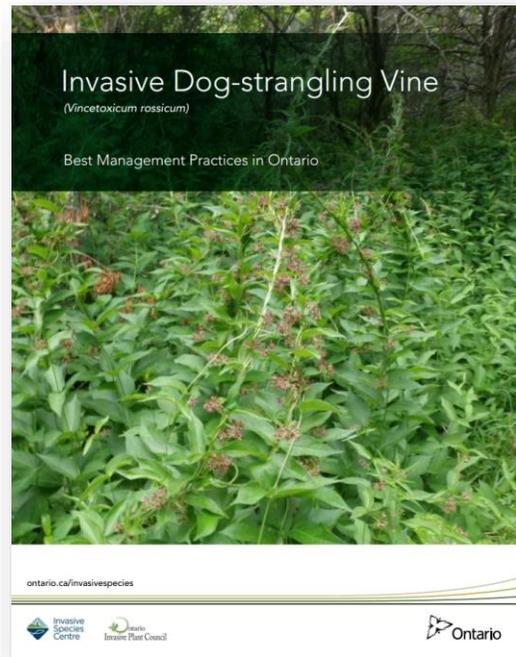
Table 5: Webinar Registrants

Webinar Title	Number of Registrants	Organizations Represented
Giant Hogweed	151 registered through the Canadian institute of forestry, and approximately 679 listening in.	Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Natural Resources Canada, Parks Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Government of Alberta, Dufferin County, City of Ottawa, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, College of Alberta Professional Foresters, University of Waterloo, AECOM, Tembec, Green Stream, Trees Unlimited, Toronto Zoo, the following Conservation Authorities: Central Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe Region, Niagara Peninsula, Nottawasaga Valley, Otonabee Region
Dog-strangling Vine	36	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, City of Newmarket, Municipality of Clarington, , Northumberland County, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Peterborough Utilities, Friends of Lemoine Point, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ontario Vegetation Management Association, Univar Canada, RiverStone Environmental Solutions, RMCG, SFC Inc., Mazinaw-Lanark Forest Inc., Beacon Environmental, Outdoor Educator, Private Consultant
Garlic Mustard	53	Parks Canada, Ontario Parks, City of Hamilton, City of Ottawa, Town of Gravenhurst, Nature Conservancy of Canada, SFC Inc., Univar Canada, MCD Signs, Golder, Canada Lands Company, Urban Forest Associates Inc., TekSavvy Solutions Inc., Toronto Zoo, Dance Environmental Inc., Mazinaw-Lanark Forestry Inc., All Stream, RiverStone Environmental Solutions, Members of the Public, Gardener Outdoor Educator, Private Consultant, the following Conservation Authorities: Central Lake Ontario, Grand River, Kawartha Region, Long Point Region, Niagara Peninsula, Rideau Valley
Buckthorn	58	Parks Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks,; United Counties of Leeds & Grenville, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Muskoka Conservancy, University of Waterloo, Arbex Forest Resources Consultants, Urban Forest Associates Inc., Natureline, Morrison Hershfield, Lambton Wildlife Inc., Univar Canada, Work Cabin, Goldstone, BBMCA, Member of the Public, the following Conservation Authorities: Credit Valley, Essex Region, Ganaraska Region, Grand River, Halton Region, Hamilton Region, Kettle Creek, Lake Simcoe Region, Long Point Region, Raisin Region, Rideau Valley, Toronto and Region, Upper Thames River
Japanese Knotweed	43	Parks Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, Urban Forest Associates Inc., East

		Kootenay Invasive Plant Council, Port Metro Vancouver, Dougan & Associates, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Conservation de la Nature, Norfolk County, Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc., University of Toronto, Lakehead University, City of Toronto, the following Conservation Authorities: Grand River, Kawartha Region, Long Point Region, Niagara Peninsula, Rideau Valley, Conservation Halton
Aquatic Invasive Plants	42	Environment Canada, Parks Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Royal Botanical Gardens, Ontario Streams, Univar Canada, The Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Leuschners' Nursery, Nature Conservancy of Canada, the following Conservation Authorities: Central Lake Ontario, Kawartha Region, Rideau Valley Conservation
Wild Parsnip	24	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, the following Conservation Authorities: Central Lake Ontario, Nottawasaga Valley, Rideau Valley, South Nation River, Univar Canada, Conservation Nature Conservancy of Canada, Dufferin Museum
Invasive <i>Phragmites</i>	30	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario <i>Phragmites</i> Working Group
Clean Equipment Protocol	23	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Parks, Simcoe County, City of London, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Hydro One, Univar Canada, the following Conservation Authorities: Central Lake Ontario, Kawartha Region, Long Point Region Conservation

Updates to three existing BMPs: Invasive *Phragmites*, Dog-strangling Vine (DSV), and Giant Hogweed

In order to continue to deliver the most up-to-date and accurate information, the OIPC has updated three of its existing BMPs in light of new information and regulations. We started the project by convening a network of experts to review the current BMPs and provide comments regarding required updates. Since the initial development of the DSV and Giant Hogweed BMPs, these plants have been added to the provincial Noxious Weed list and this was therefore an area of the BMP that was very important to update. The BMPs are known to provide effective management and control information to those in the field and to the public. The BMPs series have been extremely popular and many people find them very useful to guide their management plans.



Each BMP document includes:

- Description of the plant (including botanical information)
- Distribution in Ontario
- Habitat
- Impacts (including impacts on species-at-risk and at-risk habitats)
- Best management practices to prevent the spread
- Regulatory tools
- Control information from a scientific literature review of best practices for removal and management and best practices from experts
- Information on recent/ongoing research, including biological control
- Information on outreach, monitoring and mapping

The BMPs have been updated, desktop published and have been posted on the OIPC website. The OMNRF will finalize the documents through the Environmental Bill of Registry (EBR), at which point it will become an official provincial document.

Invasive Plant Management Strategy and Framework for Municipalities

The OIPC worked with one of its partners, York Region, to draft an invasive plant management strategy for the York Regional Forest to outline the steps they will take to address and manage invasive species in the forest. The OIPC used existing York Region documents including an

Invasive Plant Inventory and Threat Assessment for the York Regional Forest, York Region Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan and the York Region Invasive Species Program Summary to develop goals and objectives for the strategy to coincide with overall existing York Region goals and objectives. The draft strategy was reviewed and edited by York Region's Invasive Species Specialist and is now in the preliminary stages of implementation.

The OIPC also developed a framework titled "Creating an Invasive Plant Management Strategy: A Framework for Ontario Municipalities" for other municipalities to use in order to create customized invasive plant management strategies. The framework includes information on the importance of an invasive plant inventory, roles and responsibilities of those involved, guiding principles for a strategy, non-regulatory and regulatory strategies, measures of success, funding sources and other resources and links they may need to create an effective plan. The framework takes the user through a step-by-step process on how to create their own strategy, and allows them the flexibility to customize it depending on the resources they have at their disposal and the size and nature of the infestations on their properties. The objectives of the project included educating municipalities on the invasive plant issue, preventing the spread of invasive plants, identifying current and potential invasive plants, prioritizing site and species for control and identifying existing resources to assist municipalities in their invasive plant efforts.

At the end of this project, the OIPC held a workshop in Newmarket for municipal staff in the surrounding area to encourage them to start thinking about creating an invasive plant management strategy for their own municipalities. The workshop provided an overview of the framework and how to use it, a presentation from Kevin Reese from York Region to discuss their strategy and invasive species program and a presentation from Matt Smith from the Invading Species Awareness Program to discuss how EDDMapS Ontario can be utilized by municipalities to support their strategy. The feedback from the workshop was very positive and the need for more workshops to inform municipalities in other regions was emphasized. Also, requests to work with municipalities on an individual basis to help them with their plans were received. We hope to be able to deliver on these suggestions in the future.

8th Annual General Meeting and Invasive Plant Symposium

The OIPC hosted its 8th AGM and Invasive Plant Symposium in partnership with the Society for Ecological Restoration of Ontario (SERO) at the Peterborough Golf and Country Club. The event consisted of 16 speakers who presented on a number of topics ranging from managing invasive plants in order to protect species-at-risk to engaging volunteers in the invasive plant issue. The event also provided a number of networking opportunities and field tours. The field tours included a trip to Orono forest to view a large DSV infestation and a trip to the Peterborough Zoo to learn about a number of restoration projects and participants had the chance to pull some DSV. Over 100 people were in attendance and it was very well received.



Early Detection and Rapid Response Network Ontario (EDRR Network Ontario)

In early March 2014, the Ontario Trillium Foundation generously awarded \$339,200 to the ISC and the OIPC to establish an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Network Ontario project. The initiative aims to systematically create, train and equip EDRR networks to provide eyes on the ground to detect, respond to, and control invasive plants and insects in four pilot areas in Southern and Northern Ontario. Project planning commenced in March between the ISC and OIPC. This two-year pilot project will include a number of open house events and training workshops, as well as a website that will consolidate all existing invasive species information for Ontario.

LETTERS/RESPONSES

In 2014-15, the OIPC responded to several policy changes and advocated for invasive plant issues to receive attention and funding. This included applauding the Government of Ontario on the re-introduction of the *Invasive Species Act* and offering support to the provincial government wherever the OIPC can to support this act. The OIPC also asked for some clarification and provided some suggested changes to some of the components of the act. The OIPC also commended the Government of Canada for introducing new Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations under the *Fisheries Act*. The OIPC was pleased to see a number of very important species listed within the regulations. We proposed that the regulations include species of invasive plants such as hydrilla and water hyacinth, however, our suggestions weren't taken into account and no aquatic invasive plants were listed within the new regulations.

The OIPC also commented on the proposal by OMAFRA to update the Noxious Weed List under the *Weed Control Act*. A number of species, such as wild parsnip, were added to the list. Others, such as milkweed, which is an important food source for monarch butterflies, were removed. The OIPC was in favour of both actions.

COMMUNICATIONS

The OIPC attended and partnered in a variety of events, conducted interviews and distributed radio and print public service announcements, media releases and articles during the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Events

In 2014-15, the OIPC reached over 10,000 people through attendance at events, presentations and workshops. OIPC has become a well-known and respected name in the horticultural world, and we are often invited to provide presentations for Master Gardening and Horticultural Clubs. We also partner with a number of other organizations to provide invasive plant identification and control workshops.

For a full list of events that the OIPC attended, please see Table 6.

Table 6: Events, Presentations and Workshops attended in 2014-15

Name	Date	Attendance	Location
Peterborough Garden Show	April 11-13, 2014	~8000	Peterborough
Algonquin Forestry Association Clean Equipment Presentation	April 2014	30	Ottawa
Garlic Mustard Pull	May 16, 2014	15	Lindsay
Georgina Island Landowners Workshop	May 24, 2014	3	Georgina Island
Pull, Plant and Pollinate (planting event)	May 2, 2014	12	Peterborough
York Region Landowners Workshop	June 14, 2014	10	Aurora
ISAP Hit Squad Training Tour/Presentation	June 5/6 2014	40	Peterborough
Petrie Island River Day (GMI Display)	July 19 2014	150	Ottawa
OIPC AGM	September 15, 2014	150	Peterborough
Ontario Vegetation Management Association (OVMA) Fall Meeting	September 24, 2014	70	Orillia
Highland Creek Salmon Run	September 28, 2014	~600	Scarborough
Weeds Across Borders	October 14-17, 2014	80	Ottawa
Pollinator Day (Otonabee Region CA)	November 1, 2014	n/a	Otonabee CA
Ontario Woodlot Owners (Eastern Ontario)	January 31, 2015	80	Pierce's Corners
Kemptville Woodlot Conference	Feb 25, 2015	240	Kemptville
Seedy Saturday	March 7, 2015	700	Brampton
Bobcaygeon Horticulture Society GMI Presentation	March 19, 2015	25	Bobcaygeon
OVMA Spring Meeting	March 25, 2015	100	Thornton
TOTAL:		~10 305	

Social media/newsletter

The OIPC continues to distribute updates to a network of over 200 individuals, who receive information about invasive plant research, control projects, educational material, job postings, conferences, etc., that are being conducted across the province. The growth in our followers on social media has increased substantially over the last fiscal.

The OIPC provides updates to followers through the OIPC Twitter page www.twitter.com/OIPC1. Our Twitter followers have increased from 784 as of April 1st, 2014 to 1,105 on March 31 2015 - an increase of 321 followers!

OIPC also has a Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/ontarioinvasiveplantcouncil>. On April 1, 2014 the OIPC Facebook account had 596 "likes". On March 31, 2015 we had 836 "likes" - an increase of 240 followers!

OIPC reached a number of Ontarians in 2014-15 through media. Radio and print media staff were interested in talking to OIPC about various invasive plants, such as giant hogweed, and nursery plants. For a list of the media opportunities OIPC was involved in please see Table 7.

Table 7: Media Events 2014-15

Name	Circulation (Approximate)	Date	Featured
Ontario Nature	5,126	April 11	Grow Me Instead
Toronto Star	350,000	April 24	Grow me Instead
Sustainable Severn Sound	~731	October	Grow Me Instead
Ontario Wildlife Federation	34	March	Grow Me Instead
TOTAL :	~355 891		

OIPC Website

Analytics Overview 2014-2015 Fiscal Year

The OIPC website provides users with up-to-date information including downloadable educational materials, strategic documents, an events calendar, links to other invasive plant sites, Board activity notes, and more.

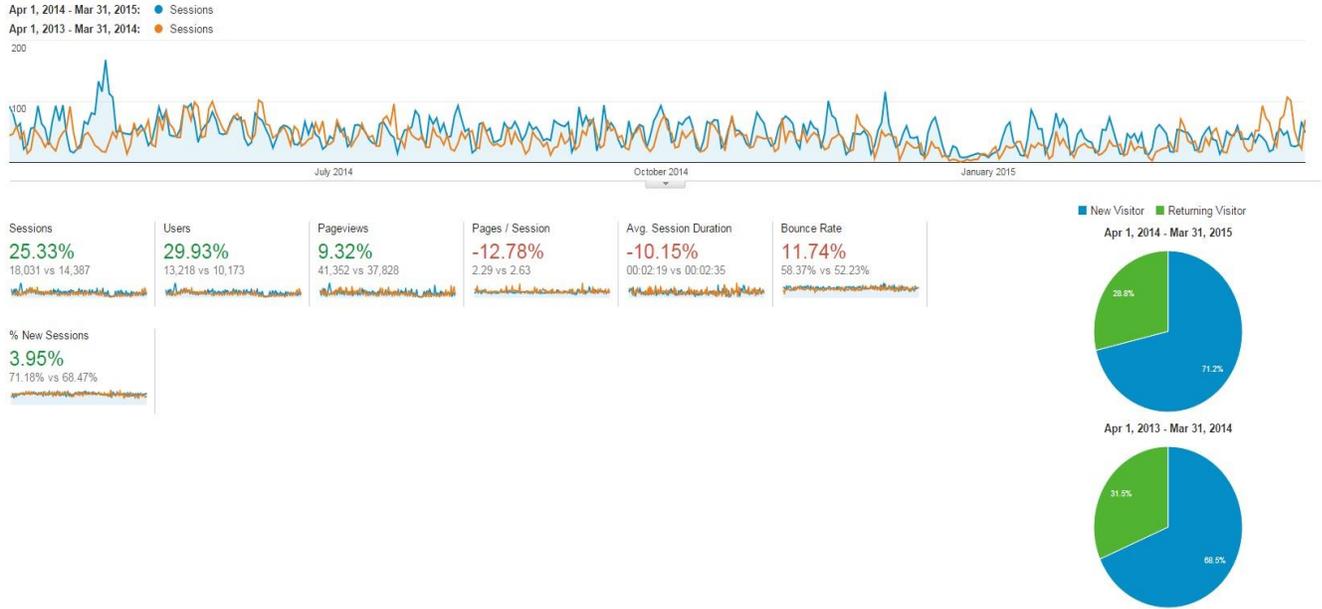
Overview Comparing April 2013 – March 2014 to April 2014 – March 2015

The following is a brief overview of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council’s website statistics for April 1st, 2014 through March 31st, 2015 (comparing them with the same time period the previous year, April 1st, 2013 – March 31st, 2014).

In 2014-15 the OIPC site visits (sessions) were up by 25% (from 14,387 to 18,031). This includes a 30% increase in users (13,218 from 10,173) as well as page views which were up 9% (41,352 from 37,828). This is very encouraging to see and hopefully the updates to the new website will provide even better analytics for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

There was a very minor decrease in time spent on site per visit (2:19 minutes from 2:35 minutes). The Bounce rate went up by 5% (from 53% to 58%). The Bounce rate is the rate at which people visit a single page on our website before exiting. Some suggest that a 50% bounce rate is to be expected. A higher bounce rate means that we are not retaining as many users to the site as previous years. New website updates should assist with keeping this number low.

Lastly, the number of returning visitors was steady, down to 29% from approximately 31%, which means our new visitor’s rate went up to 71% from 69%.



Who is coming to our site?

The geographic location of our audience remains constant with most visits (93%) coming from Canada (16,882 out of 18,031). Countries whose citizens visited the site include United States (506), Brazil (283) and Italy (51). Most of the visitors in Canada are from Ontario (15,834) the next highest number of visitors came from Quebec (553). The top cities in Ontario that send traffic to our site are; Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa, London and Mississauga. This is very similar to previous years.

How are visitors coming to our site?

Over half (55.3% or 8,616) of the visitors to the OIPC website are arriving through a keyword search, using phrases such as “Ontario Invasive Plant Council”, “Grow Me Instead”, “Invasive Plants in Ontario” and “OIPC Ontario”. These search terms (and those we can glean using Adwords) can help determine the key words we use in website titles, content, as well as Meta tags.

Referrals increased from 2, 311 to 4, 127. Referrals came from invadingspecies.com (712 up from 490), evergreen.ca (440), [Twitter](https://twitter.com) (264), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) (193), thestar.com (136), ontarionature.org (113), Ontario.ca (90) and [the natureconservancy.ca](http://thenatureconservancy.ca) (76).

What pages are people viewing?

The top landing pages (pages that visitors enter our site) are:

- The homepage (56% down from 71%)
- Gardeners & Horticulture (9% up from 6%)
- Control Information (3% up from 2%)
- Publications (3% down from 4%)

THE FUTURE OF THE OIPC

The OIPC will continue to grow in 2015-16 and pursue its goals of managing invasive plants in a collaborative and effective manner.

The OIPC will work on a number of projects during the 2015-16 fiscal including the development of an invasive *Phragmites* prioritization tool, the development of a Roadside BMP for invasive *Phragmites*, and the continued pursuit of educating municipalities on the creation of invasive plant management strategies for their jurisdictions. The OIPC will also continue with work on water chestnut control in the Ottawa River and provide more education webinars to land managers across Ontario.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2014-15

Account Balance April 1, 2014	\$185,176.00
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Expenditures

Salaries and benefits	\$98,539.00
Project costs	\$26,089.00
Office and administration	\$21,996.00
Travel and meetings	\$3,773.00
Professional services	\$2,917.00
TOTAL	\$153,314.00

Revenue**Project Revenue**

• Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	\$76,420.00
• Invasive Species Centre	\$19,800.00
• Other	\$4,847.00
Donations	\$1,210.00
Other Revenue	\$9,227.00
TOTAL	\$111,504.00

Account Balance March 31, 2015	\$143,366.00
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The OIPC received financial support in 2014-15 from the following organizations:



Catalyst for research and response



**Thank you to all of our members and
partners!**

**Your continued support is the key to our
success!**

We couldn't do it without you!

