



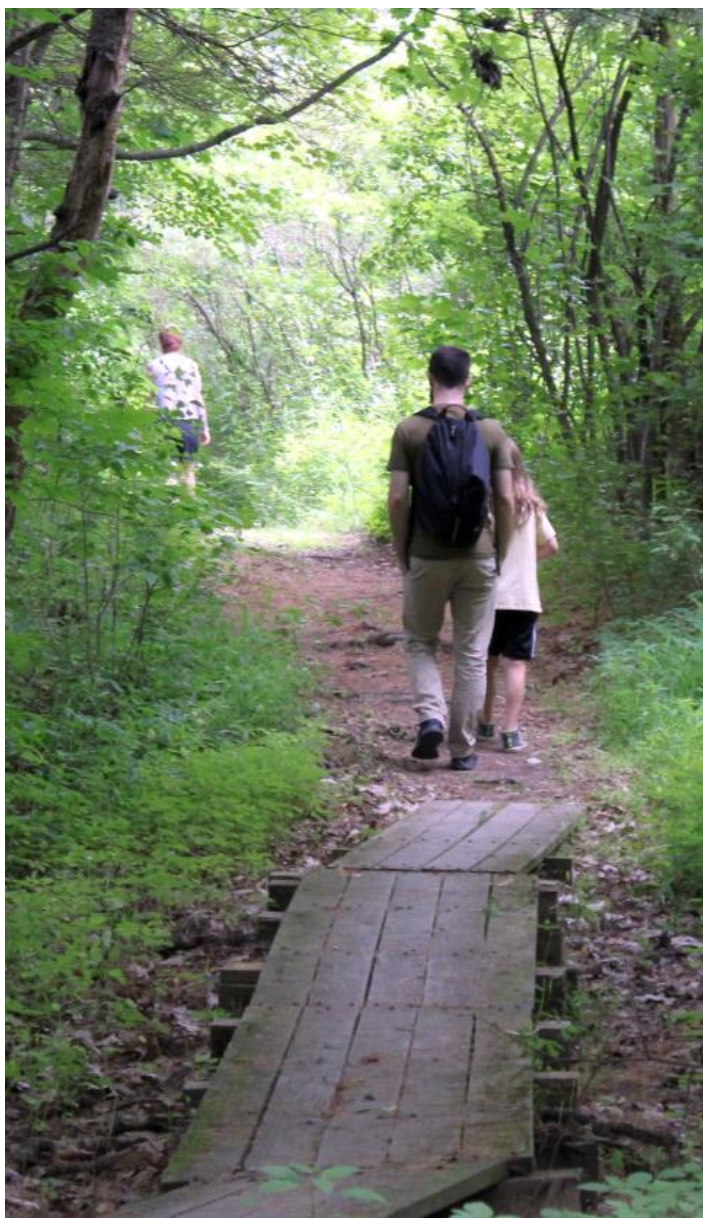
Working to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations.

Thousand Island Land Trust SLELO Invasive Species Final Report

Author: LJ White

Reviewed & Revised by Garrett Konet

06/29/2026



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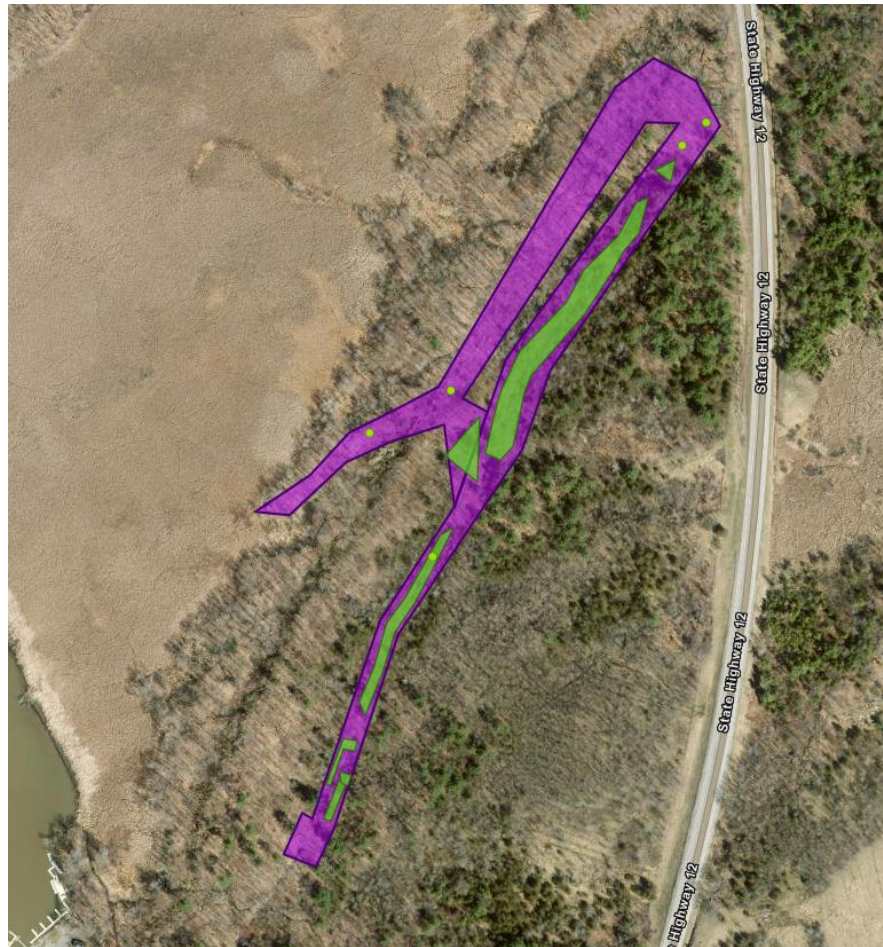
Overview:

TILT staff completed invasive species surveys on 19.86 miles of trails at all of TILT's public access preserves including: Chippewa Bay Preserve, Crooked Creek (Macsherry Trail) Preserve, Otter Creek Preserve, Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail, S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve, Zenda Farms Preserve, Foster-Blake Preserve, Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve, Mid-River Farm Preserve, and the Grindstone Island Nature Trail. We started the survey effort with known detections of pale swallow-wort and Japanese stilt grass on our Rivergate Trail and Macsherry Trail respectively. Each trail was surveyed on foot, or assisted by an ATV, using direct first-person observations and without remote sensing. The survey was conducted toward the end of the growing season in September, 2025, following a very dry summer. Many of the species were beginning to senesce and actual abundance may not have been entirely represented. My qualifications to conduct this survey include a degree in environmental science, training in the iMap invasive species app and species identification, and experience performing other vegetation surveys.

2026 Update:

In early spring of 2026 trails were surveyed on foot, or assisted by a vehicle, and used first person observation. With a known population of yellow iris was Chippewa Bay Preserve's trails were resurveyed post a follow up physical treatment in early spring Around the Turcotte House on the Zenda Farms' South Preserve was surveyed in addition to all of TILT's public access preserves. Upon surveying pockets of pale swallow-wort were detected and mapped. An additional 5.4 miles of trails at TILT's Picton Island CE were surveyed for invasive species before chemical treatment of known pale swallow-wort population. Applications used during these invasive species surveys are the following: iMapMobileApp, iMapInvasives Survey123, and the iMap Mobile App Advanced (iMMA). My qualifications to conduct this survey/revision include a Master's in Environmental Management with an emphasis on Integrative & Public Land Management, Bachelors of science in biology, training in the iMap applications, experience in creating invasive species management plans, identifying and performing vegetation/habitat surveys.

Chippewa Bay Preserve:



The Chippewa Bay Preserve is a mostly forested trail with an observation deck that overlooks a marsh and a trail that loops back to the parking area. The invasive species detected here include honeysuckle, buckthorn, yellow iris, and garlic mustard.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Garlic mustard (Tier 4): Underrepresented due to time of year and conditions. Nevertheless, garlic mustard is abundant and not seen as a species worth treating. Potentially a revisit during peak growing season would be required to assess this species.

Yellow iris (Tier 4): Not abundant. One stand of yellow iris was identified in a vernal pool region toward the beginning of the trail. Recommended hand removal followed by observation of natural seed bank succession over the following 3-5 years.

2026 Update

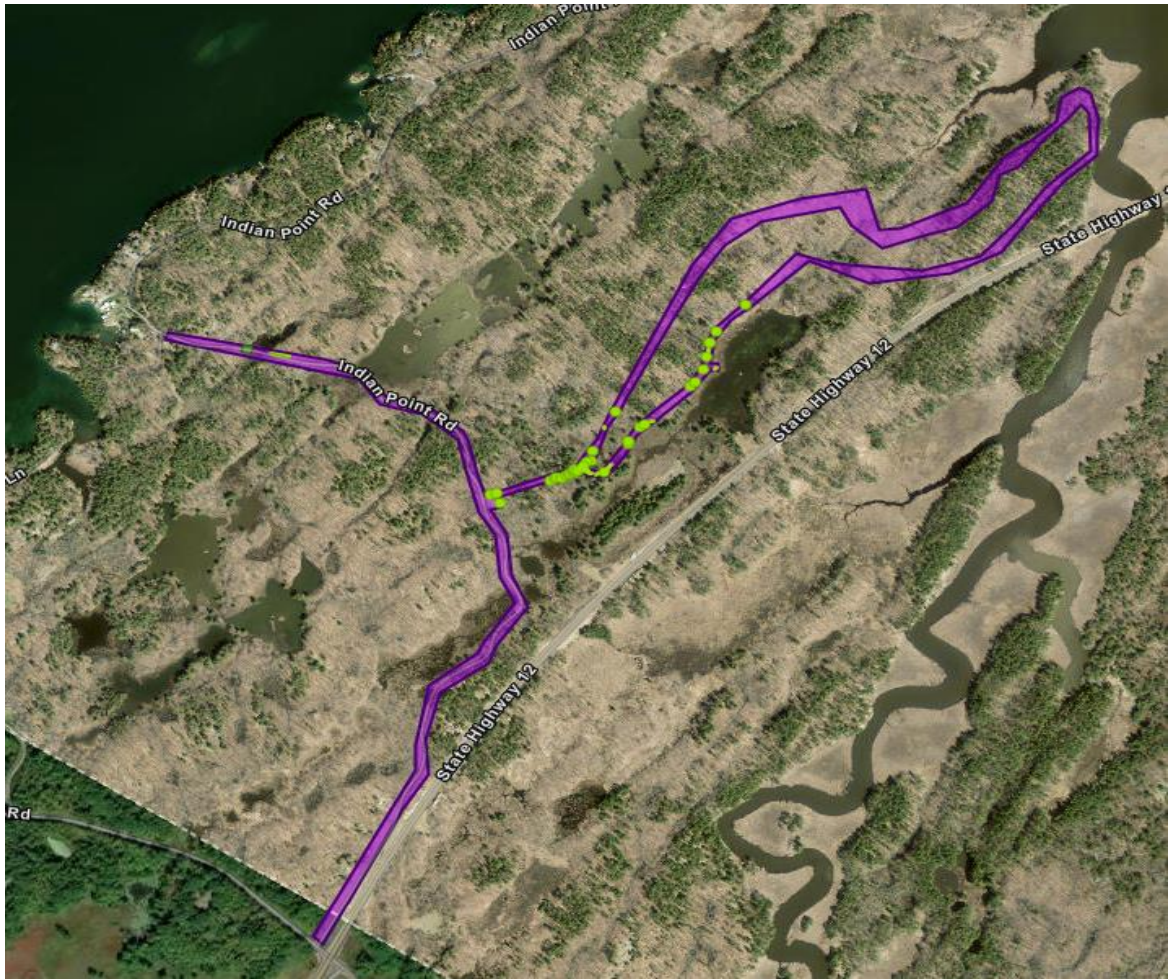


Yellow Iris was removed from a vernal pool near the beginning of the trail that had an initial treatment in 2025 during a coordinated volunteer Yellow Iris Pull Event. A follow up treatment took place in early June of 2026 during another volunteer event removing the any yellow iris remnants from the vernal pool and on both side of the first foot bridge on the lower half of trail upon detection during the event. Around 12 black trash bags of yellow iris were removed during this event and later disposed of. A small infestation of yellow iris was detected on the trail towards the observation tower during the volunteer event and a follow treatment was planned. A week after the first yellow iris pull event in June, TILT's stewardship crew returned to pull out the remaining yellow iris that had been detected towards the observation tower. Another 5 black trash bags of yellow iris removed and later disposed of.

Yellow iris (Tier 4): Sparse abundance. One stand of yellow iris was identified in a vernal pool region toward the beginning of the trail. Trace populations were found on both sides of the first foot bridge. An addition population found near the second bridge going towards the observation tower. Recommended hand removal followed by observation of natural seed bank succession over the following 3-5 years.

Japanese Barberry: Single individual was found growing near the first foot bridge and physically removed.

Crooked Creek Preserve/ Macsherry Trail:



The Macsherry Trail has a hiking trail with varied habitats including, forested, wetland, and some small successional grassland to shrubland areas. The disturbance impacts here are from the hiking trail, some small observation decks and kiosks, and the gravel access road into the trail head. With a known detection of Japanese stilt grass here that was reported by a local hiker on the trail. We first verified the identification was accurate and then survey the remainder of the trail for other species and to see if there was any more Japanese stilt grass. Fortunately, only one area of Japanese stilt grass was detected. Additionally, large swaths of buckthorn and honeysuckle cohabitating the flanks of the trail were found.

Japanese stilt grass (Tier 3): Found in one (1) location. Treatment of this species is recommended. Handpicking before the month of August and before the seeds have been produced on the plant. Additionally, grass selective herbicide would be helpful here. Repeating these efforts annually to deplete seed bank is highly recommended. Observe natural succession over the following 3-5 years.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Otter Creek Preserve:



The Otter Creek Preserve is a multi-habitat trail that winds through, forested, grassland, and wetland habitats. Disturbance here is caused by the hiking trail, kiosks, observation decks, and bridges. The invasive species detected here include common buckthorn, honeysuckle, and some purple loosestrife in the wetland areas.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Purple loosestrife (Tier 4): Not found in high density. Located near wetland habitats. Hand pulling/cutting can be used here as there are far less than 100 individual plants. It is vital that all root and plant fragments are removed and properly disposed of. In areas of higher density invasions, biological control is considered the best option.

S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve/ Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail:



The Rivergate Trail is a long trail that stretches from Clayton NY to La Fargeville NY. The trail follows the path of an old train track. The habitat here is mostly grassland/shrubland along with some stretches of forested habitat. Disturbance here is caused by the trail/railbed, some kiosks and parking areas, and an old train trestle bridge that has been repurposed into a foot bridge for the hiking trail. The trail spans for nearly 7 miles one way and was a location with known detections of pale swallow wort. After verifying and documenting the swallow wort invasion, the entire trail was surveyed for additional stands of swallow wort along with other species. More swallow wort was found dotting along the trail for miles. A patch of common reed grass was identified. Additionally, as expected, buckthorn and honey suckle lined a majority of the trail.

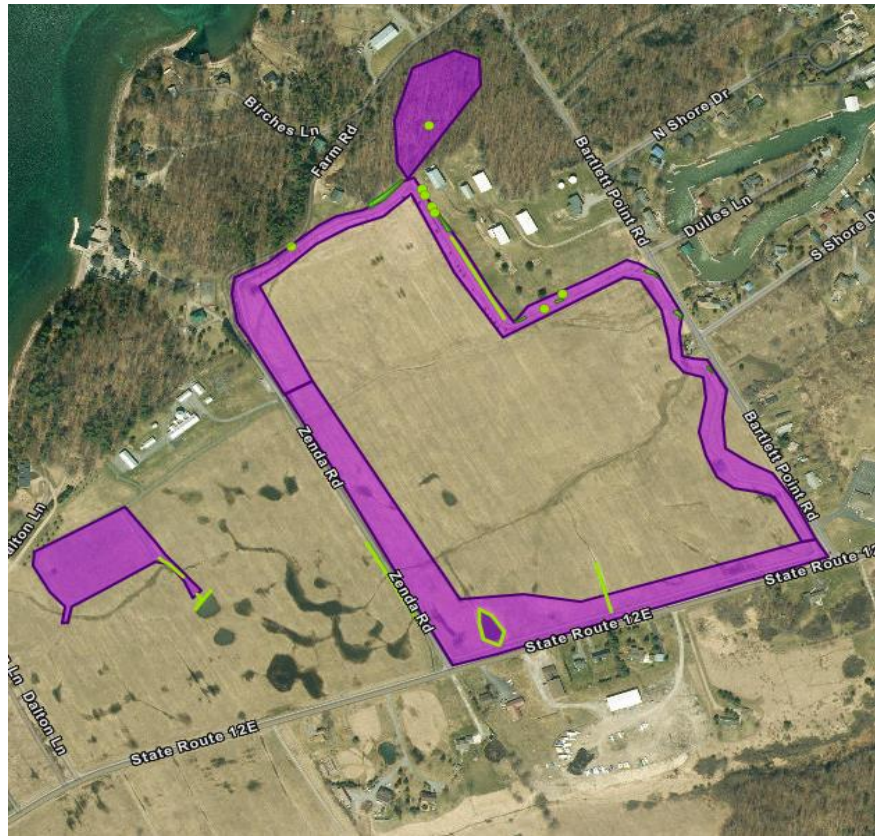
Swallow wort (Tier 3): Numerous stretches of pale swallow wort were found along the Rivergate trail. The density was low and they seemed to be strewn along the trail. Specimen were identified during late September when the leaves were yellow and seed pods were present. This trail experiences heavy traffic and swallow wort is likely to be spread inadvertently by the public. For these reasons immediate response is recommended. Being that many of the patches are not in high density a combined effort of early season hand pulling and later season cut-stem glyphosate treatments is recommended. Cut-stem treatment is labor intensive and may not be the best option. In this case, foliar herbicide is recommended.

Common reed grass (Tier 3): Not abundant but found in high density in the areas it was identified. Most control options depend on the severity of the infestation. In small stands that are not too dense, the spading technique can be used where the stem is cut below the soil line. Additionally, solarization could be feasible on the trail, as the invasion is not too vast. Chemical control is most effective on stands with smaller root and rhizome systems. I am unaware of the age of this stand so further investigation would be necessary to determine if the root system is not overly complex. When root systems are old and dense, even chemical control will fail to end the regrowth of the phragmites stand.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Zenda Farms Preserve:



The Zenda Farms preserve is a grassland preserve on the grounds of an old dairy farm. The trail encircles the old farm land that has been preserved as grassland habitat. The species found here include reed canary grass, honey suckle, creeping thistle, and phragmites.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Abundant, located near trail. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Reed canary grass: Abundant and found in high density. Repeated mowing would be our most likely management technique as the area is too vast and the plant grows too densely for other options to be feasible.

Canada thistle (Tier 4): Dense in areas where identified but not overly abundant. Management strategies include consistent mowing, hand removal, or herbicide application.

Common reed grass (Tier 3): Not abundant but found in high density in the areas it was identified. Most control options depend on the severity of the infestation. In small stands that are not too dense, the spading technique can be used where the stem is cut below the soil line. Additionally, solarization could be feasible on the trail, as the invasion is not too vast. Chemical control is most effective on stands with smaller root and rhizome systems. I am unaware of the age of this stand so further investigation would be necessary to determine if the root system is not overly complex. When root systems are old and dense, even chemical control will fail to end the regrowth of the phragmites stand.

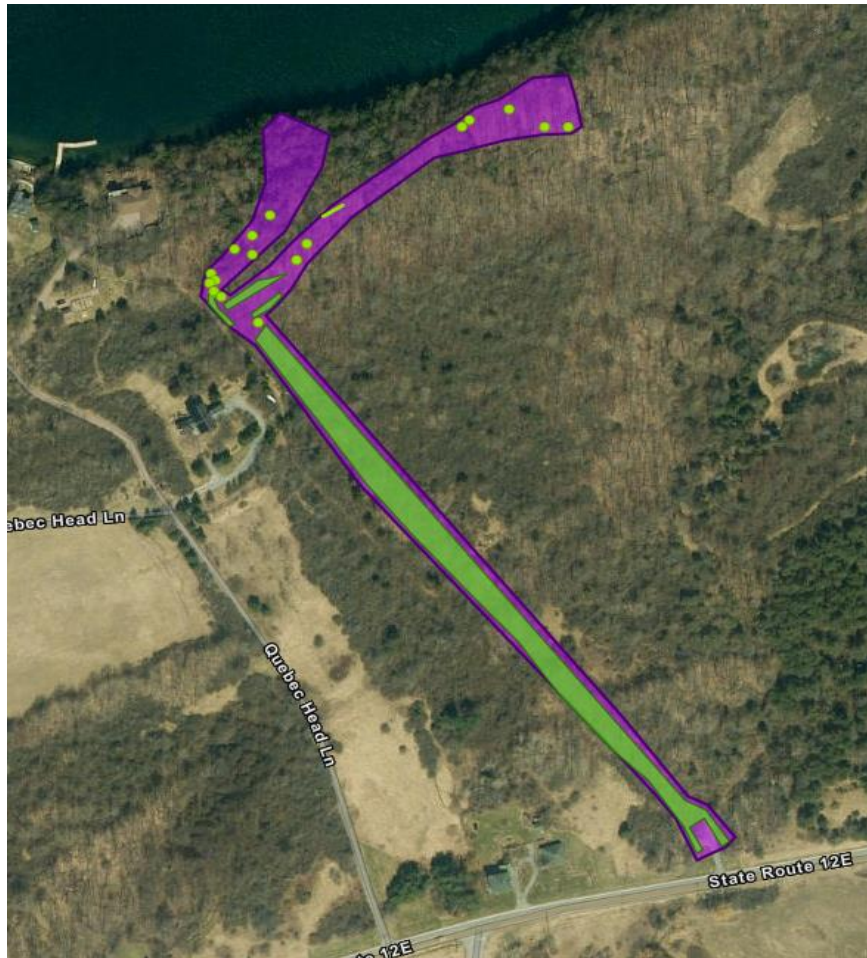
Zenda Farms South:



The Zenda Farms South Preserve or known as the Turcotte House is part of the original Zenda Farms property. Originally sold off separately from the farm and reunited with the rest of Zenda Farms years later by TILT. After recent survey of the premises, pale swallow-wort was found in abundance along the of property near the house and two barns. The population has been mapped on iMapMobileApp. The population has currently has had a follow up physical treatment and has been mowed before flowering. A follow up chemical treatment will be schedule for later this year.

Pale Swallow-wort (Tier 3): Abundant, located just adjacent to the surrounding house and barns. Population will be monitored yearly. Initial physical treatment and follow up chemical treatment to be scheduled.

Foster-Blake Preserve:



The Foster-Blake preserve is a forested trail that leads to shoreline habitat on the St. Lawrence River. The disturbance here is minimal and caused by the hiking trail, parking area, and kiosks. Running parallel to the trail is an electric/telephone pole line leading to neighboring residences. The trail is lined with buckthorn and honeysuckle, and some stands of garlic mustard were detected.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Garlic mustard (Tier 4): Underrepresented due to time of year and conditions. Nevertheless, garlic mustard is abundant and not seen as a species worth treating. Potentially a revisit during peak growing season would be required to assess this species.

Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve:



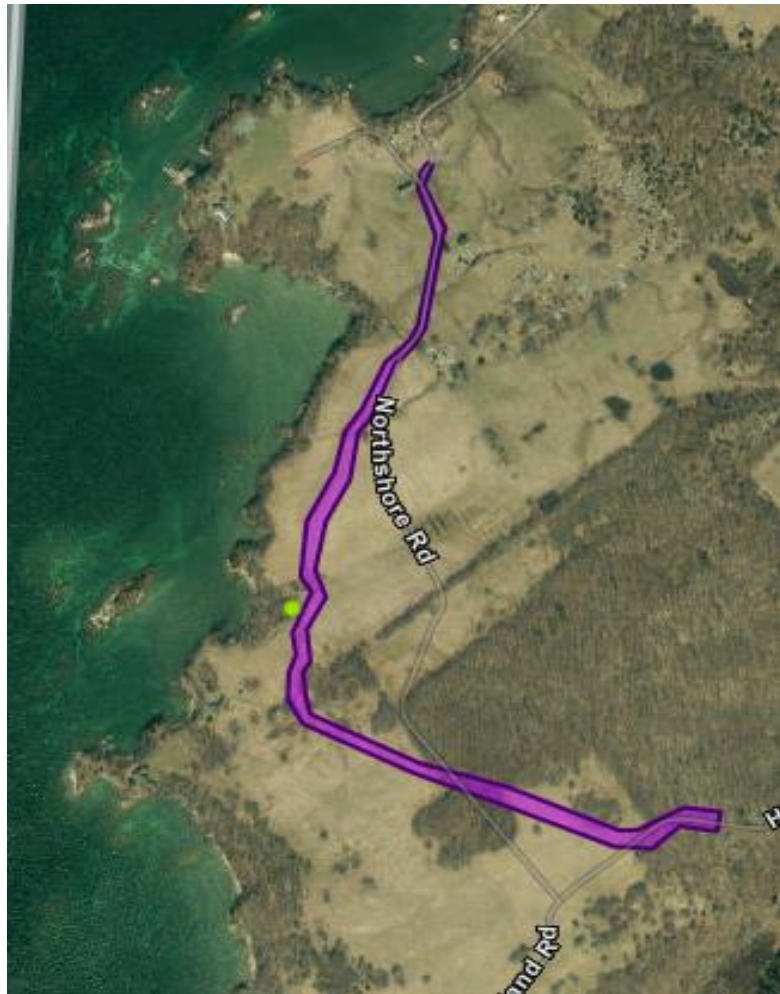
The Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve is our newest Preserve that is being set up with hiking trails for public access. The habitat here is mostly grassland and shrubland. One of our employees had previously detected pale swallow wort here. After verifying the pale swallow wort presence, the rest of the proposed hiking trails were surveyed. More swallow wort was found dotting along the trail and in the grasslands surrounding. Honeysuckle and buckthorn were detected here dotted in the grasslands and running parallel to the trail.

Pale swallow-wort (Tier 3): Abundant, and well dispersed in the grasslands. Survey was done when leaves were yellow and seed pods were present. While density is not high, dispersal is and specimen were found in most reaches of this preserve. For this reason, I do not believe hand picking to be a feasible mitigation technique and instead recommend herbicide treatment be applied to all specimen found. Additionally, annual repetition of this treatment will be needed to monitor the success of the suppression efforts.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout Preserve. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout preserve. Treatment of this species is impractical.

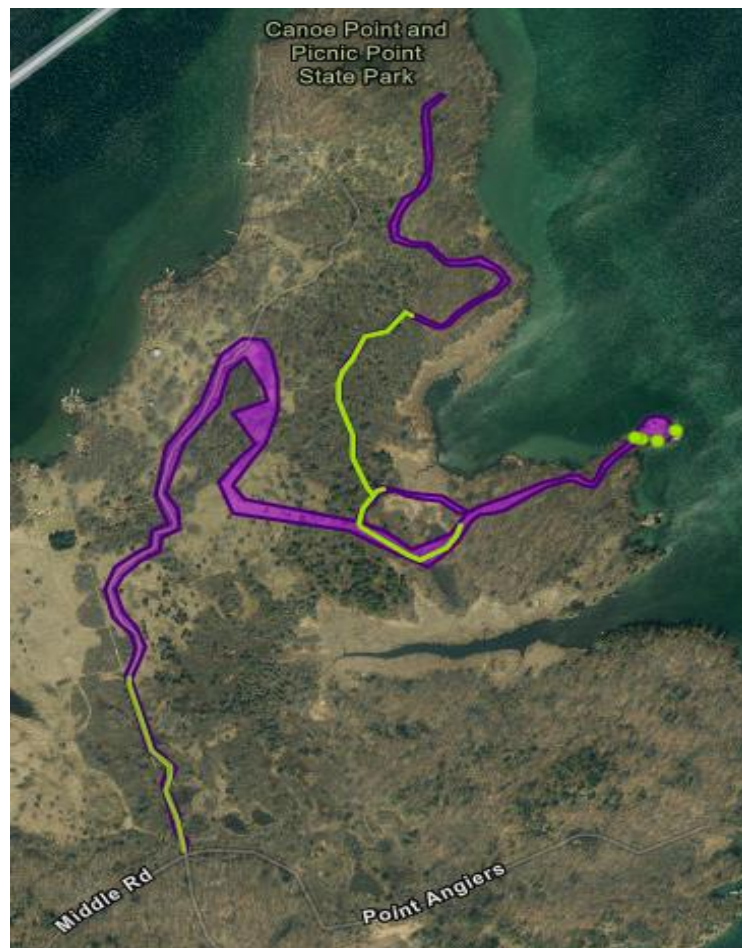
Mid-River Farms Preserve (Grindstone Island):



The Mid-River Farms preserve is on Grindstone Island on the St Lawrence River. The preserve is mostly grassland with a forested area on one end of the trail. The habitat here is suitable for swallow wort invasion but none was detected. Fortunately, only honey suckle was detected here.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Not abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread neighboring properties. Treatment of this individual stand is recommended and could be manually removed.

Grindstone Island Nature Trail:



The Grindstone Island Nature trail is on Grindstone Island and spans between Canoe Point State Park and Picnic Point State Park. Habitats include grassland, forested, and wetland. The usual shrub tunnel of honeysuckle and buckthorn line large sections of the trail, and purple loose strife was detected on the shoreline surrounding Picnic Point State Park.

Honeysuckle (Tier 4): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Buckthorn (Tier 3): Highly abundant, located near trail/parking area, and widespread throughout forest understory. Treatment of this species is impractical.

Purple loosestrife (Tier 4): Not abundant or densely invaded. Hand removal, or cut-stem treatment with glyphosate is best recommended management method if desired.

Picton Island CE:



Picton Island CE is one of TILT's conservation easements neighboring Grindstone Island. Picton Island has around 5.4 miles of trail that were surveyed for known population of pale swallow-wort being assessed before chemical treatment. Chemical treatment was administered by Millers' Turf using Garlon 4 Ultra (triclopyr) mixed with Lesco Spreader-sticker to reduce spread and maximize application. Both detection and treatment were mapped on iMMA.

Pale Swallow-wort (Tier 3): Abundant, found in dense groups around the island in manageable area. Initial up chemical treatment completed. Monitoring will continue over the course of the conservation easement.

Conclusions:

Many of our trails and preserves face similar invasive species. The most prominent being pale swallow-wort, common buckthorn, and honeysuckle species. While buckthorn is listed as a Tier 3 species in the SLELO tiered species list honeysuckle is listed as a Tier 4 species. Both are too widespread to eradicate and with the sheer volume of both that were detected I would tend to agree with this assessment. Pale swallow-wort being listed as Tier 3 is too widespread for eradication from the surrounding areas but the population found are manageable. Some species of lesser concern were detected, such as garlic mustard, reed canary grass, and thistle spp. Our primary species of concern are purple loosestrife (Tier 4), pale swallow wort (Tier 3), Japanese stilt grass (Tier 3), and Japanese knotweed (Tier 3). These species do not seem to be too widespread to be able to have an impact on their spread within our preserves. Although, I do believe these species would need to continue to be monitored following any mitigation or eradication efforts as many of the neighboring properties host these species and re-invasion is highly possible.

Summary:

A variety of invasive species were found during our roughly 20-mile survey of Thousand Island Land Trust's preserves and nature trails plus the additional 5.4 mile of conservation easement trails. Below is a list of the top five (5) locations and species that are best suited for management and mitigation practices.

- 1.) Japanese stilt grass on the Macsherry trail to be hand pulled/cut. Handpicking before the month of August and before the seeds have been produced on the plant. Followed by grass selective herbicide application. Repeating these efforts annually to deplete seed bank is highly recommended. Observe natural succession over the following 3-5 years.
- 2.) Pale swallow-wort on the Rivergate Trail, Schmeer Preserve, Zenda Farms' South Preserve, and Picton Island CE. Invasion is very widespread making handpicking/pulling a potentially fruitless endeavor. Combining herbicide application with manual removal may yield the best results. But impact on the invading species will need to be monitored over the following 7+ years. Will continue with follow up physical and chemical treatments as needed.
- 3.) Yellow iris on the Chippewa Bay Preserve trail. Given that this population seems low and limited to a small area hand removal will likely be the best effort to control this species. Continued monitoring over the following 3-5 years.
- 4.) Common reed grass on the Rivergate Trail and at Zenda Farms Preserve. The age and maturity of the root/rhizome system can affect how successful mitigation efforts can be. Being that these stands are small and somewhat contained to two (2) areas an assessment could be done to determine the density of the root system. The best technique when root complexity is unknown is solarization or continued herbicide treatment, although common reed grass is notorious for returning after it seems like the invasion has been taken care of. Because of this, no matter what technique is selected, continued monitoring and likely annual efforts will need to be made.
- 5.) Honeysuckle on the Mid-River Farm trail. Some individual stands of honeysuckle (and buckthorn) may be worth manually removing to help suppress the spread of the species. While honeysuckle (and buckthorn) is so well established that removal of the species all together would be impossible, manual removal of this bush would help to reduce the spread of the species along other segments of the trail via wildlife or users of the trail system.

Appendix

I. SLELO Trail Management Project Update 2026

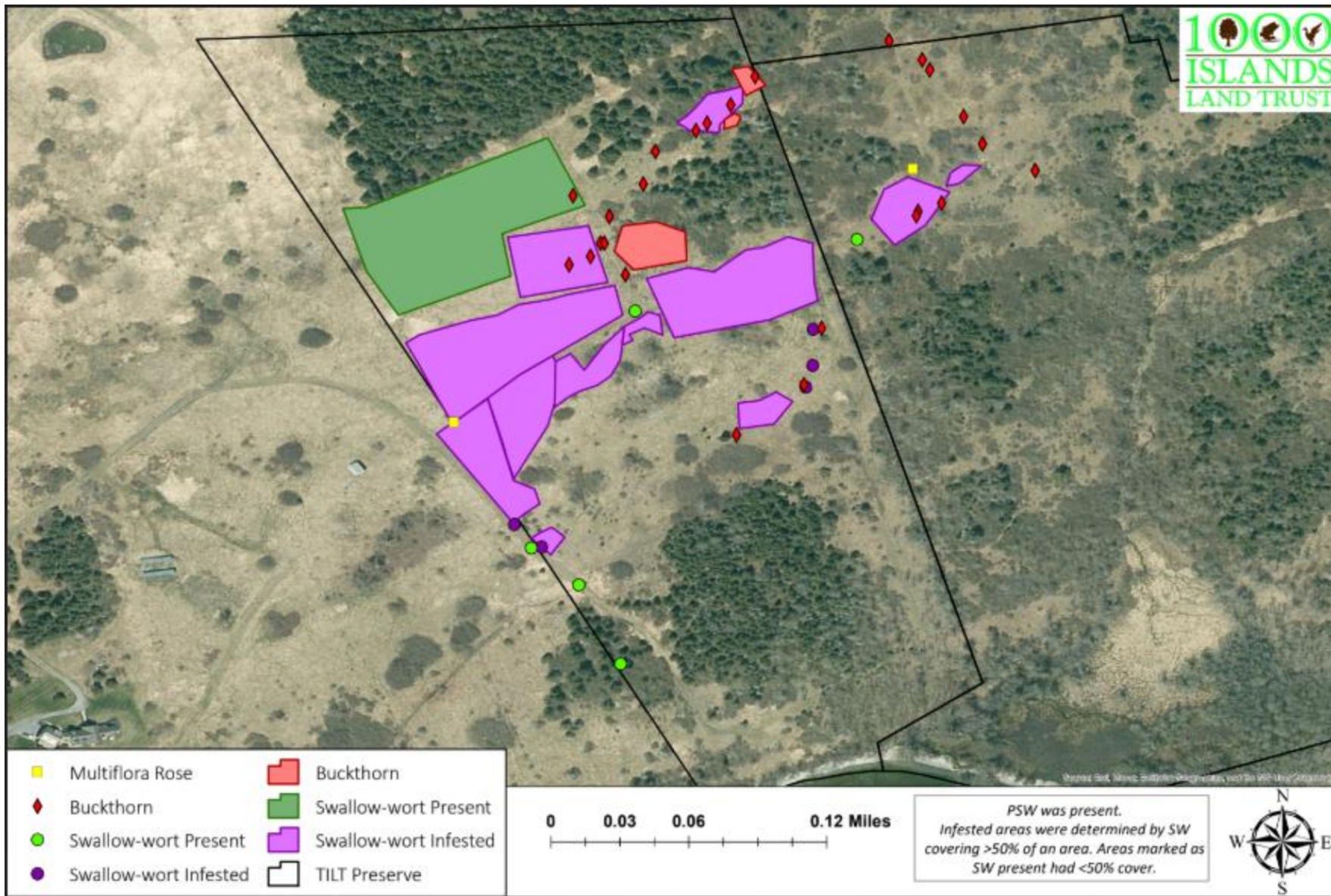


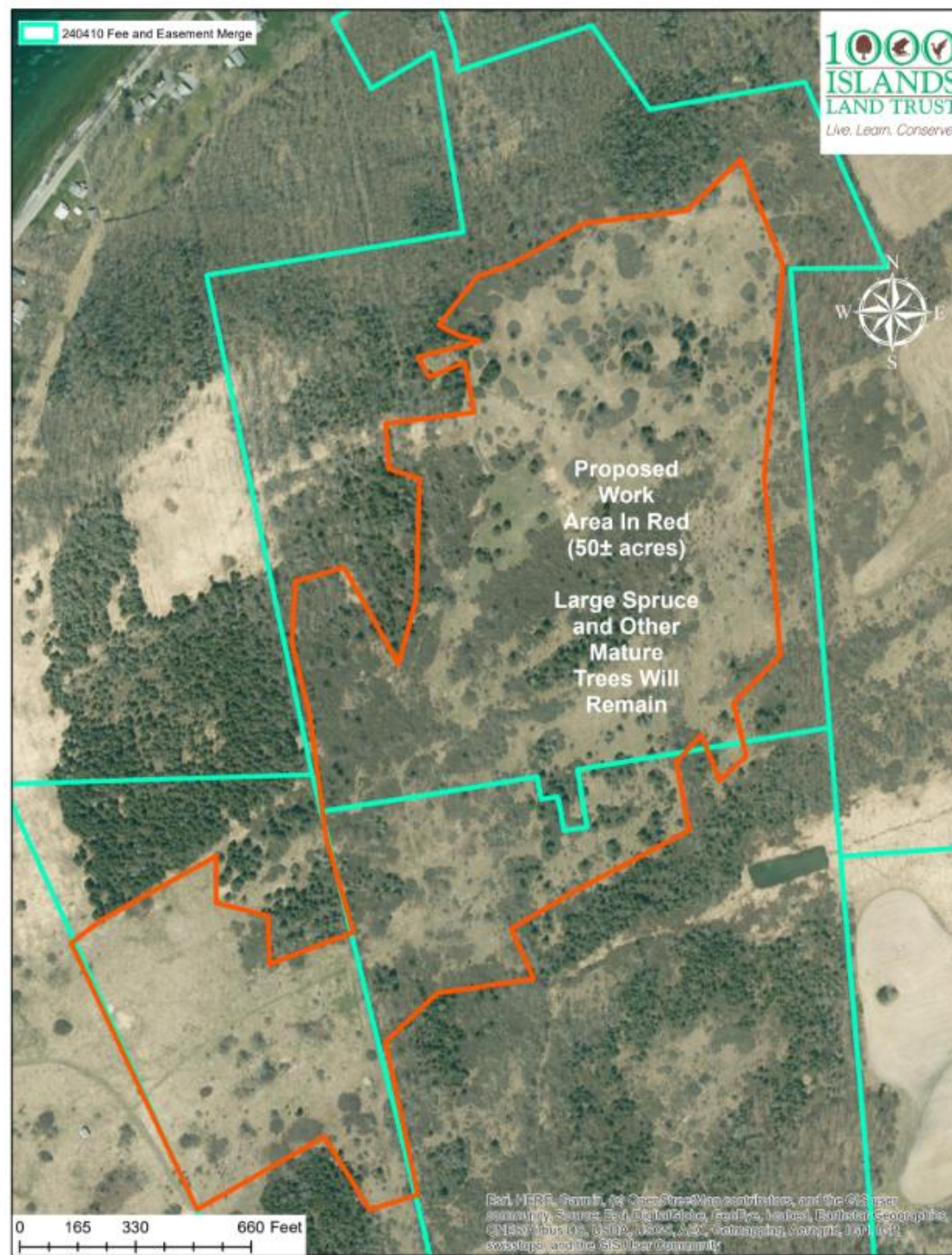
Invasive Species Detection and Management on TILT's Signature Preserves



Chris Murray Photography









Treatment / Response

Too late in Season for herbicide treatments.

Targets for Mechanical Removal in Nov. 2025:

Yellow Iris Pull: 1,600 sq. ft and 15 contractor bags removed

Next Stop: Schmeer Preserve for PSW root crown removal

Then: Spring '26 begin chemical treatments on stiltgrass as well as PSW on Rivergate and Schmeer

**MAY 19TH @ 10AM –
CHIPPEWA BAY PRESERVE**



