



Washington County Planning and Parks Department Land and Water Conservation Division

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AIS Coordinator Joins Forces with Waukesha County

In the past year, some Washington County residents have experienced a significant shift in the way they view their lakes and rivers. The discovery of starry stonewort startled residents around the entire county. It opened the public's eye to keep a look out for AIS on boats and boat trailers. AIS are spread by people traveling from lake to lake. Known to be in three counties in WI, Starry Stonewort is a newer species threatening Wisconsin.

Threats of the new invasive species can emerge everyday at each lake as boats move in and out of the different bodies of water. Lake Michigan is home to 184 different types of invasive plants and animals. Only a small amount of these species threaten inland waters, so it is important to have strong coordinated efforts in and around Washington County. For this reason, Washington and Waukesha Counties collaborated to write a grant that splits the Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator between the two Counties and fund a summer intern for each county.

A grant was awarded to Waukesha County in February, and Brad Steckart hit the ground running as a joint AIS coordinator between the two counties. He has already trained over 40 volunteers and police how to conduct Clean Boats, Clean Waters efforts, designed an AIS Cleaning Station for Waukesha, assisting with AIS problems for various Lake Associations, continued working with 4H to grow biological control beetles for purple loosestrife, and is ready to respond to new invasions.

“The availability of local AIS dedicated staff in Waukesha and Washington Counties presents an opportunity for the lake communities to increase their protection against the arrival of AIS. The Department of Natural Resources is glad to see these two counties take advantage of this state funding and is excited to see progress toward better protected lakes and river resources.” said Bob Wakeman, Wisconsin Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator.

Waukesha County has over 40 Lake Associations; the AIS Coordinator will be building a report with these Associations the same way he's done in Washington County, the spread of AIS will likely be stunted, and hopefully prevented.