

Chapter III

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND CRITICAL AIS ISSUES

PART I – INTRODUCTION

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have been threatening waterbodies across the nation for decades but really gained attention on a national and statewide scale in the early 1990's after the inception of the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force which was created at the Federal level by the passage of the federal Nonindigenous Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (NANPCA).

Since 2003, AIS awareness has been amplified through increased educational efforts conducted at local levels. Public outreach, education, and issue identification are vital factors in a successful combat against AIS. Significant efforts are being made across Wisconsin, including Washington County. This chapter explores numerous forms of outreach that have been conducted to educate the public and identify critical issues regarding AIS. The chapter then identifies critical AIS issues specific to Washington County which are addressed in Chapter IV (Recommendations) of this plan.

PART II – PUBLIC OUTREACH IN WASHINGTON COUNTY AND WISCONSIN

Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) Program and Watercraft Inspection Efforts

Recreational boating is commonly linked to the spread of AIS. With more than 610,000 registered watercrafts moving around Wisconsin's 15,081 lakes, AIS are unintentionally transported to new waterbodies. Inspecting watercrafts for invasive species offers a frontline defense at the lake landing to prevent further destruction of lake ecosystems. Watercraft inspections are designed to increase public awareness about invasive species and to assist boaters in taking preventive steps to avoid further spreading of AIS.¹⁸ The program also provides an opportunity to collect important boat usage data through the completion of Watercraft Inspection Report forms.¹⁹ Data

Dialogue Used by an Inspector During a Clean Boats, Clean Waters Watercraft Inspection Process

1. Tell them who you are, whom you represent, and why you are there.
2. Ask if they have a short time to answer some questions.
3. Collect information on the Watercraft Inspection Report form.
4. Ask if they are familiar with aquatic invasive species, such as Eurasian watermilfoil or Zebra mussels. Briefly explain about these invasive species or other invasives found locally.
5. Ask if they will join you in an inspection of their boat and equipment.
6. Talk while inspecting, and point out watercraft checkpoints. If they do not want to assist you in the inspection, continue to talk about invasive species as you inspect.
7. Give your final message, the prevention steps:
 - Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and
 - Remove any attached aquatic plants, animals, and mud.
 - Drain all water from your boat, motor, bilge, live well, bait containers, and equipment.
 - Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash, not in the water or on the land.
 - Rinse your boat and recreational equipment with hot water OR dry for at least five days.
8. Give them the "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" decal and other educational materials.
9. Thank them for their time and cooperation!

Source: Clean Boats, Clean Waters Watercraft Inspection Handbook (2012 Edition).

¹⁸ For more information about starting Clean Boats, Clean Waters program in your community, please see the Clean Boats, Clean Waters Watercraft Inspector Handbook (2012 Edition) on-line at:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/cbcw/handbook&forms.asp>.

¹⁹ A copy of a CBCW Watercraft Inspection Report form can be found in Appendix B of this plan.

collected from boaters in Washington County and throughout Wisconsin is included in the following sections of this chapter.

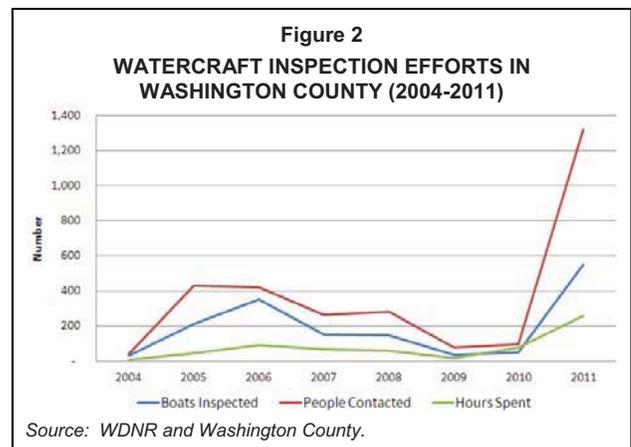
Sponsored by the DNR, UW-Extension, and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes, the Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) program offers training on how to organize a watercraft inspection program, how to inspect boats and equipment, and how to interact with the public. Volunteers are also encouraged to help monitor for AIS. Training workshops are open to adults and youth; adult groups are encouraged to work with local youth partners.²⁰ The CBCW program schedules training workshops each winter, to be conducted the following spring and summer. A complete list of workshops and other resource information is available on the Wisconsin Lake Partnership website: www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/cbcw.

Wisconsin

In 2004, 2,889 boats Statewide were inspected and 6,136 people were contacted by volunteers during watercraft inspection efforts as part of the CBCW program. By 2011, the CBCW program had been enhanced throughout the State, and in 2011 alone, 102,813 watercrafts were inspected and 221,182 boaters were contacted through the program. 2011 CBCW efforts also revealed that 92 percent of boaters were aware of invasive species laws, 95 percent inspect and remove plants, 86 percent dispose of bait, 96 percent drain their equipment, and 93 percent drain their livewell.²¹

Washington County

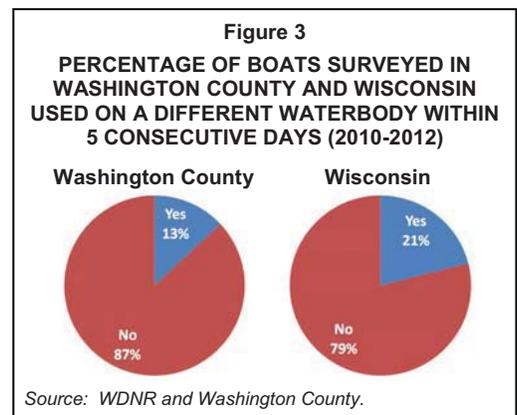
Formal watercraft inspection efforts in Washington County began in 2004. As shown in Figure 2, watercraft inspection efforts experienced a boost in 2005 and 2006 but then declined through 2009. Then in 2010, with the hiring of the County’s AIS Coordinator, inspection efforts increased. As watercrafts are inspected, watercraft owners and users become educated and awareness of AIS increases.



Washington County and Statewide Comparison

Frequency of a Boat Used on Five Consecutive Days on Different Waterbodies

The CBCW program surveyed boat owners or users to determine frequency of boat usage on multiple waterbodies within a five-day period. As shown in Figure 3, Washington County boat users surveyed from 2010 to 2012 during the open-water season tend to use their boats on multiple waterbodies less often in a five-day period than boat users Statewide. This is important because AIS are much more amenable to transfer and establishment if moved to a new waterbody within a five-day period.



²⁰ For more information about Clean Boats, Clean Waters and how the program originated, please visit: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/cbcw/> or consult the WDNR’s Aquatic Invasive Species Handbook on-line at: <http://www.uwex.edu/erc/doc/ai/AquaticInvasivesHandbook.pdf>.

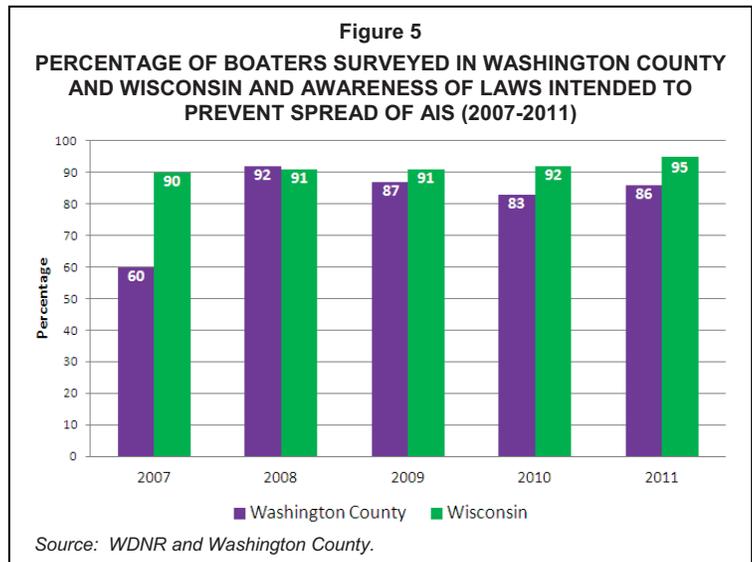
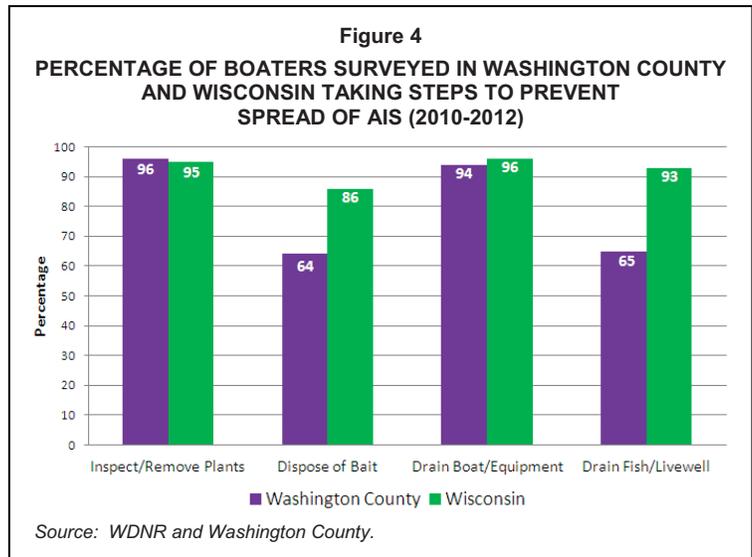
²¹ According to the WDNR website (<http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/cbcw/>).

Steps Taken by Boaters to Prevent Spread of AIS

As shown in Figure 4, the percentages of boaters surveyed from 2010 to 2012 during the open-water season in Washington County who inspect their watercraft and remove plants (96 percent) and drain their boat/equipment (94 percent) was comparable to the percentages of boaters Statewide (95 and 96 percent respectively). However, the percentages of boaters surveyed in Washington County that disposed of bait (64 percent) and drained their livewells (65 percent) was less than boaters surveyed Statewide (86 and 93 percent respectively). This result is important because AIS (especially Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia or VHS) are amenable to spreading if bait or livewell water is transferred among multiple waterbodies.

Awareness of Laws

As shown in Figure 5, in 2007 the percentage of boaters that were aware of AIS-related laws in Washington County (60 percent) trailed the Statewide percentage (90 percent), but the percentages of boaters surveyed from 2008 to 2011 during the open-water season in Washington County and Wisconsin were relatively comparable.



The State of Wisconsin has many regulatory measures in place regarding AIS. For example, as of 2011, NR 40 includes many law provisions addressing possession, transportation and introduction of AIS with substantial maximum penalties. AIS regulation is also addressed through chapters 30.07 and 23.24 of the Wisconsin *State Statutes* and the Administrative Code NR 19.055 and NR 20.08. Current information regarding AIS regulations can be obtained by contacting a local WDNR conservation warden.

AIS Public Informational Workshops

Washington County Planning and Parks Department staff conducted two public informational workshops to inform the public about the planning process and to gather opinions on AIS in Washington County. Postcard invitations were mailed to approximately 4,100 riparian landowners in Washington County as well as all local government officials. The first workshop, intended for residents in the northern



Two public informational workshops were held to gather opinions on AIS.

portion of the County, was held on June 19, 2012 at The Columbian in the City of West Bend. The second workshop, intended for residents in the southern portion of the County, was held on June 20, 2012 at the Hartford Town Hall. Twenty-three people attended the first workshop and 15 attended the second for a total of 38.

Informational displays and handouts were available for the public and a presentation provided an overview of the AIS strategic planning process, descriptions of specific aquatic invasive species found in or threatening Washington County, and described what the term “Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)” means for the County. A survey was also distributed to those in attendance at the workshops. A summary of survey responses is described in the following section.

AIS Survey

A two-page survey was distributed to all attendees at the AIS public information workshops in June of 2012.²² The survey was conducted to gauge resident knowledge and gain a better understanding of community needs and concerns regarding AIS. Survey results were used to guide the recommendations in this plan. In all, 36 surveys (95 percent response rate) were submitted at the workshops. The following is a summary of survey results with “n” indicating the number of people that responded to a given question. Respondents were also able to provide written responses to many questions. Open-ended responses are documented in Appendix D of this plan and are summarized below.

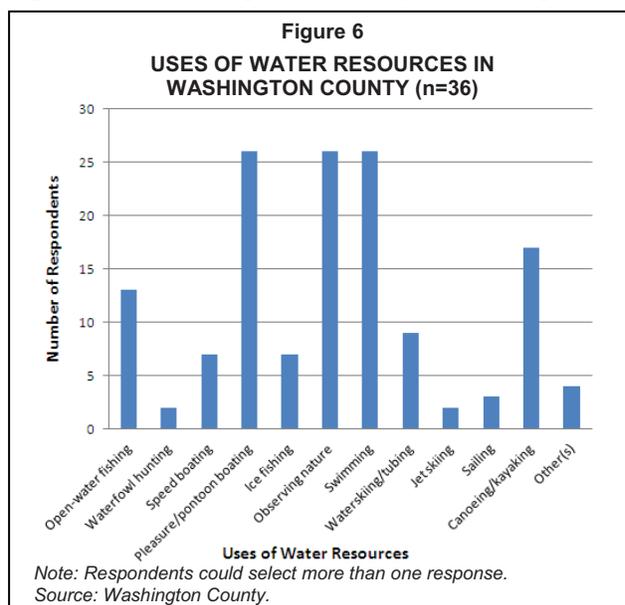
- Of the 36 respondents, 34 (94 percent) were residents of Washington County and 31 (86 percent) indicated that they own property on a lake or river.
- 86 percent of respondents were between the ages of 46 and 75.
- 92 percent of respondents were lake users, and 97 percent of those utilized between one and five different lakes in a one-year period. Far fewer respondents (52 percent) indicated that they utilize rivers; all of which used between one and five different rivers in a one-year period.
- As shown in Table 7 and Figure 6, the most popular activities on waterbodies in Washington County identified were pleasure/pontoon boating, observing nature, and swimming; each of which were selected by 26 respondents (72 percent). The next most popular activities were canoeing/kayaking (selected by 17 or 47 percent of respondents) and open-water fishing (selected by 13 or 36 percent of respondents).

Table 7
USE OF WATER RESOURCES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY (n=36)

| Uses of Water Resources | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|--------|------------|
| Open-water fishing | 13 | 36.1 |
| Waterfowl hunting | 2 | 5.6 |
| Speed boating | 7 | 19.4 |
| Pleasure/pontoon boating | 26 | 72.2 |
| Ice fishing | 7 | 19.4 |
| Observing nature | 26 | 72.2 |
| Swimming | 26 | 72.2 |
| Waterskiing/tubing | 9 | 25.0 |
| Jet skiing | 2 | 5.6 |
| Sailing | 3 | 8.3 |
| Canoeing/kayaking | 17 | 47.2 |
| Other(s) | 4 | 11.1 |

Note: Respondents could select more than one response; therefore the sum of numbers could equal more than 36 and the sum of percentages could equal more than 100.

Source: Washington County.



²² A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix C of this plan.

- Twenty-five respondents (69 percent) use lakes or rivers within Washington County more than ten times during the open water season.
- Of 35 respondents, 20 (57 percent) indicated they use lakes or rivers outside of Washington County during the open water season. Of those, 16 (80 percent) indicated they use lakes or rivers one to five times, one (five percent) used lakes or rivers six to ten times, and three (15 percent) use lakes or rivers more than ten times.



Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents use lakes or rivers within Washington County more than ten times during the open water season.

- When asked if they owned a watercraft of any kind, of the 35 respondents, 100 percent indicated that they did own some kind of watercraft.
- 34 respondents (88 percent) use a public boat launch one to four times a year.
- Of 35 respondents, 66 percent identified that AIS had somehow affected their use of Washington County waterbodies in the past. This may indicate that AIS are having a negative effect on Washington County's waterbodies.
- When asked to rate their level of concern for AIS in Washington County waterbodies, 36 respondents had a mean score of 8.4 (with ten indicating the highest level of concern) indicating that a high level of concern exists.
- Frequent open-ended responses revealed that Zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil are becoming problematic on waterbodies utilized by survey respondents.
- Those in attendance were asked to rate their AIS knowledge on a scale of one to ten (with ten indicating the highest level of knowledge) before and after attending the event. The mean score (of 36 responses) before the event was 5.0 (for 36 respondents) and 7.9 after the event (31 responses), therefore the AIS knowledge of respondents increased by about 2.9 points. This indicates that such events are an effective way to improve attendees' knowledge regarding AIS.

When analyzing results of this survey, it is important to keep in mind that 36 respondents is a small sample size and does not accurately represent the opinion of Washington County's overall population. Also, 86 percent indicated that they own property on a lake or river, and therefore are much more likely to be personally affected by AIS. Regardless, the opinions of those present at the workshops are valuable and their input should be taken into account when identifying critical AIS issues in Washington County.

AIS Advisory Committee Brainstorming Activity

At the first meeting of the AIS Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (AC) on May 31, 2012, a brainstorming exercise was conducted to begin the process of identifying critical AIS issues. The seven-member committee was asked a series of five questions and was given one minute to formulate as many responses for each question as possible. Responses were then shared and discussion ensued regarding each question.



A brainstorming activity was conducted with the AIS Advisory Committee on May 31, 2012.

The AC was asked the following five questions:

How should Washington County and appropriate entities (such as lake protection districts)...

- 1) **Educate** residents and visitors of the County about the existence of AIS?
- 2) **Prevent** the spread of AIS?
- 3) **Monitor** existing AIS populations and maintain an inventory?
- 4) **Control** the spread of AIS?
- 5) **Sustain** the implementation of the AIS Strategic Plan?

Responses to Question 1:

Educating Residents and Visitors of the County about the Existence of AIS

- Target boat launches with appropriate signage (not too wordy – very concise like speed limit signs)
- Mailing/emailing of educational materials
- Airplanes with banners on holiday weekends
- Talk to people while out there
- Personalize the AIS message – how is this going to affect you?
- Lake newsletters
- AIS Coordinator do interviews on the radio – discuss impacts of AIS – especially before holidays
- Info at bait shops – make sure bait isn't an AIS
- Hand out fact sheets at lake association meetings – affect you!
- Marketing program for AIS of the month/year – signs at launches
- Article in the Daily News
- Economic impact – affecting you! (property values, etc)
- Guest speakers at association meetings a few times a year – WDNR reps, etc.



The AIS Advisory Committee would like to see more concise wording on AIS signs at public boat launches.

Responses to Question 2:

Preventing the Spread of AIS

- Make certain baits illegal
- County providing economic help to lake associations (funding)
- Increase launch presence and monitoring
- Informing people with things that catch their eye
- Educate and provide hotline number to report problems
- (Timely) Enforcement of CBCW program
- Add boat cleaning facilities at launch sites
- Coded registration sticker mandating special inspection before entering another lake
- Obtain grants whenever possible
- Business cards/handouts for each lake in Washington County that shows existing AIS in that lake or nearby lakes

Responses to Question 3:

Monitoring Existing AIS Populations and Maintaining an Inventory

- Conduct regular analyses for each of the critical AIS elements and map results
- Long-term continuation of the AIS Coordinator position

- Residents give physical inspections – more volunteers!, every landowner on lake
- Residents report findings
- Plant survey of lake (SEWRPC)
- Chemical analysis of lake to understand nutrients
- Citizen lake monitor program – analyze water samples to see if AIS is effecting water quality
- Long-term funding for lake monitoring
- Get kits from UW-Stevens Point and send in lake water test kits twice a year

Responses to Question 4:

Controlling the Spread of AIS

- Monitoring
- Getting more volunteers
- Each district should make sure all launches are properly signed
- Educate private citizens/landowners
- Go door-to-door and educate neighbors
- Encourage/educate youth in any way possible
- Monitor lawn fertilizers
- Enforce existing laws – more funding – not just with volunteers, but with authority
- DNR issuing NR40 information with boat registrations
- Alternate uses for AIS – food, bait, etc.

Responses to Question 5:

Sustaining the Implementation of the AIS Strategic Plan

- Long-term funding for AIS Coordinator position (launch fees, etc.)
- Gaining formal support of the AIS Strategic Plan from lake associations
- Recruit volunteers to monitor boat launches
- Let the public know that our efforts have been and are making a difference
- Funding – County Board budget money to sustain our resources that drive tourism and economy
- Lake districts have management plans – integrate this plan into those plans
- Get property owners associations to support the AIS Strategic Plan
- Personalize the AIS awareness message (how people may be effected financially, through property values, etc.)
- Countywide association of lakes – a rep from each – have the whole county work as one
- Keep a committee together and keep the strategic plan going
- Keep creating interest – a positive image for our lakes
- Sustaining a point person for County – funded by local governments – find a way to offset fees and fund the position
- County tax to maintain lakes
- Educate the County Board about the economic impact of lakes



The AIS Advisory Committee would like property owner associations in riparian areas to support the AIS Strategic Plan.

PART III – CRITICAL AIS ISSUES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

This section provides a list of critical issues regarding AIS in Washington County that are apparent when analyzing results of various public outreach efforts conducted over recent years.

AIS Issues Identified through CBCW Program and Watercraft Inspection Data

- Many boaters are not fully aware of their potential ability to spread AIS.
- Having an AIS Coordinator is a very effective way to make contact with people, making the public more aware of AIS issues and how to prevent the spread.
- Although efforts are made at boat launches to clean equipment when leaving, equipment is often not cleaned thoroughly enough still leaving the potential to spread AIS.
- Not all boaters are taking steps to prevent the spread of AIS and are not fully aware of related laws.

AIS Issues Identified through the AIS Public Informational Workshops and Survey Data

- Workshop attendees, especially riparian landowners, have experienced negative effects from AIS on Washington County’s waterbodies and are very concerned about AIS in Washington County waterbodies.
- Public informational workshops are an effective means of increasing the AIS knowledge of those who attend.
- Zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil were the two most commonly mentioned AIS cited as being problematic.²³
- In summary, survey respondents would like to see more monitoring at launch sites, more rules and regulations, and more scientifically-based studies and recommended actions intended to prevent the spread of AIS.²⁴

AIS Issues Identified through the AIS Advisory Committee Brainstorming Activity

- Funding is an inhibiting factor in the combat against AIS.
- More resources should be available for those seeking assistance with grant writing when pursuing grant funding for AIS projects.
- Efforts to combat against AIS would be most effective if the public was made more aware of how AIS can affect them personally (reduce property values, preventing aquatic recreation, etc.).
- AIS can make a waterbody unusable for recreational purposes and negatively impact the local economy, with reduced tourism impacting local businesses (hotels, baitshops, sporting good retailers, restaurants, etc.).
- Washington County needs more citizen involvement through volunteer efforts as well as more science and hands-on analysis of AIS.
- There should be more education and volunteer efforts regarding AIS as well as increased authority and regulation.

²³ As mentioned in the written responses to Question 10.

²⁴ As mentioned as written responses under “Additional Comments”.