

Lake Owen AIS Control Grant AEPP-102-08 Final Report

Background

Lake Owen is a 1250 acre lake in south central Bayfield County. The lake is about 6 miles long with about 24 miles of shoreline and a maximum depth of 95 feet. It has a surface area of about 2 square miles and about 12 square miles of land drain into the lake. It is spring-fed and drains north into Lake Superior. A large share of the shoreline is held by US Forest Service and is undeveloped. It is a very clean clear lake, with Secchi disk readings of 30 feet or more. Lake Owen property values are among the highest in the state.

Public access is via a US Forest Service landing on the north end of the lake, Twin Lakes campground (US Forest service), Otter Bay Resort and Metros landing on the south end. Metros and Otter Bay have limited parking, and the campground is a fee area, so most non-residents access the lake via the US Forest Service landing, which is free.

A water quality study, funded by the DNR Lake Management Planning Program, was completed in 2004 and 2005. The study found Lake Owen to be free of Eurasian Water Milfoil and other aquatic invasive species. Since then, a consultant has been engaged to inspect the lake at various points 4 times per year to provide early detection of an AIS infestation, should one occur.

Lake Owen Association (LOA) was organized in 2000 principally as a social organization, organizing and publicizing ice cream socials, picnics and float parties on the lake. LOA has 160 dues paying members out of approximately 220 eligible housing units. LOA communicates with its members via Spring and Fall newsletters and with an annual meeting, attended by about 60 members.

LOA became aware of the risks posed by aquatic invasive species in 2005 when several board members attended the NW Lakes Conference at Telemark resort. At the 2006 LOA annual meeting we learned that lakes to our north, south, and west are infested with Eurasian Water Milfoil which is nearly impossible to eradicate once established in a lake. Prevention is by far the best strategy. During the summer of 2007 LOA sent 4 volunteers to a Clean Boats/Clean Water training program and began to monitor at the Forest Service landing. It quickly became clear that a volunteer program could not monitor the landings on a comprehensive basis. The LOA Board began to formulate

a plan to deal with AIS and engaged Vierbicher & Associates to draft a grant proposal to fund an expanded monitoring and education program. The proposal contemplated weekend monitoring combined with an AIS workshop to educate LOA members and the public.

LOA members were briefed on the AIS issue again at the 2007 LOA annual meeting. Members were concerned about property values should an infestation occur and encouraged the board to develop a more comprehensive monitoring program, including weekends in May and September and daily June through August. An informal survey of members also indicated little interest in a half-day workshop on AIS, but rather preferred half-hour briefings at the LOA annual meeting. The LOA Board also concluded that an AIS workshop organized by a paid consultant would be redundant with the NW Wisconsin Lakes conference at Telemark and with the resources of the Bayfield County AIS coordinator. Discussions with DNR staff indicated flexibility in how program funds are spent in achieving program objectives. Accordingly the Board planned an extensive CB/CW monitoring effort for the summers of 2008 and 2009.

AIS Monitoring on Lake Owen

LOA hired three paid monitors at the rate of \$10.00 and \$10.50 for untrained and (CB/CW) trained monitors, respectively. A local accounting firm was engaged to provide payroll services. The US Forest Service landing was staffed weekends May and September and, weather permitting, daily June through August. The campground landing was staffed on peak summer weekends Friday pm and Saturday am. Otter Bay's landing was staffed during fishing contests and 4th of July weekend. Otherwise there was insufficient traffic to justify a monitor. We also learned that nearly all boats at Metro's landing are owned by lake residents and are used exclusively on Lake, Owen, posing no AIS risk. Oversight of monitors was handled by volunteers (Stephanie Kirby and Ron Anderson), who monitored boat traffic and adjusted schedules accordingly. Following review of 2008 activity, hours were reduced at the campground and on weekdays at the Forest Service landing.

No weeds were found on any boats entering or leaving the lake. Generally speaking everyone was knowledgeable and very supportive of the AIS effort. Boaters were very conscientious about keeping their boats and trailers free of weeds. However, especially during 2008, there was confusion about the new VHS-related rules on transporting of live fish and water in live wells. Some fishermen were used to taking fish home in live wells to clean at a later date.

In addition to one-on-one encounters between monitors and boaters, education on AIS issues occurred at each of the LOA annual meetings: in 2007 by Roger Dreher, and in 2008 and 2009 by Stefania Strzalowski, the Bayfield County AIS coordinator. Meetings were held in the Cable Community Center, with about 60 LOA members in attendance. Extensive use was made of DNR reference material and volunteers provided refreshments so costs were negligible. Consequently the only expenses associated with this project were for wages for monitors and for EWM inspections, as shown below.

	2008	2009	Total
Wages – AIS monitors	\$10,189.94	\$7281.76	\$17,471.70
EWM inspections (Bartlett)	\$ 1400.00	\$1400.00	\$ 3400.00
Total cash costs:	\$11,589.94	\$8681.76	\$20,271.70

In addition, a total of 335.5 volunteer hours were recorded in support of this project in 2008 and 2009. (We did not record volunteer hours in 2007.)

Conclusions

LOA members view the CB/CW monitoring program as an insurance policy against the economic costs of an AIS infestation. A boat infested with EWM was discovered by a CB/CW monitor at a Cable Lake landing in 2008, demonstrating the value of the program. LOA plans to continue CB/CW monitoring as well as EWM inspections in the future to the extent funding permits.

This report will be posted on the Lake Owen Association website in PDF format, summarized in our Fall mailing (which goes to all residences, not just members), and presented at our 2010 annual meeting. A copy will also be provided to Bayfield County Land Conservation Dept, Bayfield County AIS Coordinator, and Bayfield County Lakes Forum.

The LOA Board of Directors wishes to thank Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for their funding in support of this project.