Aquatic Invasive Species Control Grant
Sawyer County AIS Coordination Project
AEPP-065-07

Final Report

December 16, 2009
Prepared by: Kristine Maki

Project Scope

The Sawyer County Land and Water Conservation Department received a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to continue an AIS Coordinator project that was begun in 2006. The primary project goal was to prevent the introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species in Sawyer County waters. Five main objectives were outlined including:

1. Increase Sawyer County knowledge and data base.

2. Involve and educate more landowners and area residents in lake and AIS issues.

3. Educate the public about AIS issues.

4. Ensure lake associations have assistance to properly manage AIS issues on their lakes.

5. Educate visitors to Sawyer County lakes.

Accomplishments

Objective 1: Increase Sawyer County knowledge and data base

a. Maintain data for Sawyer County;
b. Monitor known infested sites once/year;
c. Manage a county-wide reporting, mapping, and monitoring system for prioritizing needs and tracking projects;
d. Survey and map 5-10 high risk lakes per year where no known invasive program is established;
e. Provide GPS units to lake associations for mapping of possible infestations sites.

Lakes in Sawyer County were surveyed and mapped by the AIS Coordinator to increase the knowledge and data base in the county. Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed, and purple loosestrife were the AIS of priority. Lakes in the county were surveyed based on requests by lake associations, lakes with known infestations, and lakes with high risk of infestation but no AIS program actively taking place. The AIS Coordinator closely worked with lake associations to ensure that infestations were being controlled properly, identification was correct, and monitoring was being done throughout the season. Sawyer County LWCD has a good

knowledge of what is going on in the county on lakes with AIS, where AIS are located, and where gaps in information exist. (See table in appendix.)

A database with information on invasive species location, treatment, timing, and effectiveness was maintained in the Sawyer County Land and Water Conservation Department. Information on lakes with AIS was also collected on yearly (sometimes multiple) visits in 2007 and 2008 to determine state of AIS infestation in each lake. Often multiple visits occurred and many discussions happened with the responsible party about control. Known lakes with infestations that were monitored include: Callahan Lake, Mud Lake, Connors Lake, Clear Lake, Osprey Lake, Round Lake, Little Round Lake, Lake Hayward, Smith Lake, Spider Lake, Grindstone Lake, and Lac Courte Oreilles. The lakes were most often monitored qualitatively.

Eleven new lakes were surveyed during the grant period. These lakes include: Lost Land Lake, Teal Lake, Indian Schoolhouse Lake, Smith Lake, Callahan Lake, Mud Lake, Tiger Cat Flowage, Whitefish Lake, Moose Lake, Radisson Flowage, and Windigo Lake. While some of these lakes did have known infestations, no new infestations were found in the surveyed lakes.

GPS units were provided to lake associations for use in mapping invasive species. The Callahan Lake Protective Association borrowed units and mapped all of the Eurasian water milfoil found in the lake. The local Boy Scout chapter borrowed the GPS units to map purple loosestrife on Smith Lake. Other lake associations borrowed the units to try them, but did not do large projects with them.

The Sawyer County AIS Coordinator was also part of the Species Assessment Group (SAG) on aquatic plants. This group made decisions on plants that are affected by NR40. Much research on aquatic plants of concern were done, meetings were attended in Madison, and the knowledge base in Sawyer County was greatly increased.

Objective 2: Involve and educate more landowners and area residents in lake and AIS issues

a. Assist Smith Lake in the implementation of purple loosestrife education, control plans, and lake association development;
b. Work with Callahan and Mud Lakes to develop plan for EWM education and control, and lake association development;
c. Develop a purple loosestrife biocontrol and/or manual control project for Boy Scouts and other interested groups;
d. Work with residents on other lakes where invasives may or may not be located to educate, map, and control.

The AIS Coordinator involved persons in the AIS issue in a few different ways during 2007-2009. New lake associations were formed, new groups were worked with, and presentations were given to a variety of organizations. More people were involved in hands-on projects during the grant period than the previous grant period and a range of ages were involved.

Two new lake associations were formed during this grant cycle with help and encouragement from the AIS Coordinator. Both lakes involved had an AIS infestation. Many letters to all property owners on the lake, meetings, and presentations were given by the AIS Coordinator to initiate talks among lake property owners about forming a lake association. The Smith Lake Association was formed in 2008 and the Callahan Lake Protective Association was formed in 2007. Both associations have been working diligently to educate and control the AIS found in their lakes (purple loosestrife in Smith Lake and EWM in Callahan and Mud Lakes).

Along with initiating the lake association process, the AIS Coordinator educated residents about the AIS problems in the lakes, developed initial control plans and recommendations, and helped initiate control.

In 2007, the AIS Coordinator worked with the DNR and area groups on purple loosestrife biocontrol. The main duties accomplished by Sawyer County were the coordination of groups for raising beetles and root stock collection by an area Boy Scout group. The AIS Coordinator assisted the DNR by collecting and potting rootstock; dispersing plants, materials, and beetles; providing interns to assist with beetle collection; arranging for and assisting volunteers during beetle rearing; dispersal of beetles; and equipment collection and storage.

In 2008, the AIS Coordinator again worked with the DNR and area groups on purple loosestrife biocontrol. An area Boy Scout decided to develop an Eagle Scout project out of purple loosestrife biocontrol rearing. The AIS Coordinator supervised this project which included organizing Boy Scouts to collect rootstock, digging and potting plants, rearing and releasing beetles, and mapping purple loosestrife on Smith Lake. Area lake associations again reared beetles and were assisted with release.

Many lake associations, lake groups, and lakes without formal groups were assisted in 2007 and 2008 to map, control, survey, and educate about AIS. Clear Lake, Lac Courte Oreilles, Grindstone, Spider Chain of Lakes, Callahan/Mud Lakes, Nelson, Lost Land, Teal, Tiger Cat Flowage, Lake Hayward, Round, Little Round, Smith, Connors, Osprey, Schoolhouse, Moose, Chetec, Quiet Lake Tourism Group, Whitefish, Radisson Flowage, Windigo, Sawyer County Lakes Forum, and others were all assisted during the grant period.

In June 2007, the Sawyer County AIS Coordinator held an AIS training day for the Nelson Lake Association. Volunteers were taught how to monitor for invasive species on shoreline and shallow areas. Educational materials were provided and plant specimens from the lake were used to aid in plant identification. Other training days were held for Spider Chain of Lakes Association, and other groups that requested some form of training.

Objective 3: Educate the public about AIS issues

a. Assist in the development of and work with existing Clean Boats, Clean Waters programs;
b. Develop a county-wide map of invasives for educating residents and visitors;
c. Distribute educational material (pamphlets, stickers, maps, posters, watch cards, etc.) to area businesses (including bait dealers), Chamber of Commerce, county fair, lake associations, and other appropriate venues;
d. Work with the Northwest Wisconsin Association of Lakes conference.

Sawyer County visitors and residents were educated about aquatic invasive species in many different ways in 2007-2009. Two radio segments were done on the local radio station WHSM outdoor show; educational materials were provided to the Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce, local bait shops, and many lake associations and other organizations; displays were provide for summer picnics and meetings; assistance was given to the Sawyer County Lakes Forum to distribute permanent signage to lakes around the county; talks were given at lake association meetings, the Northwest WI Lakes Conference, Sawyer County Lakes Forum annual meeting; and many people were assisted that visited the Sawyer County Land and Water Conservation Department.

During 2007-2009 more lake associations became active in Clean Boats, Clean Waters programs. Two trainings were done; one in 2008 at the Sawyer County courthouse, and one in 2009 in Cable with cooperation from Bayfield County. Lake associations were assisted in many different aspects from writing grants to develop Clean Boats, Clean Waters programs; deciding on paid versus volunteer workers; training of personnel; assistance entering information into SWIMS; providing data sheets; and answering any protocol or identification questions. Lake associations in Sawyer County understand the benefit of having this program, but still struggle with getting enough volunteers or dollars to staff boat landings with infrequent activity.

One of the big successes of the 2007-2009 grant cycle is the maps that were created using ArcView (purchased with a different AIS grant). Several different maps were created of Sawyer County showing AIS concerns of specific lake associations or county problems in general. The public was very receptive to the visual provided by the maps and they seemed to drive the point home well that AIS are a concern in the county (see map in appendix).

The Sawyer County AIS Coordinator also led a Natural Resources Foundation field trip in 2008 to educate people on Eurasian water milfoil. The field trip took participants on Callahan and Mud lakes where Eurasian water milfoil is a recent find and little control work had been done and to Clear Lake where control work had been ongoing for eight years (at the time). Participants included local residents and people from all over the state of Wisconsin.

Objective 4: Ensure lake associations have assistance to properly manage AIS issues on lakes

a. Develop inspection, rapid response, and control plans;
b. Identify questionable plants found in lakes;
c. Provide licensed staff for chemical treatments for small isolated rapid response projects;
d. Provide assistance with grant writing.

The Sawyer County Land and Water Conservation Department provides rapid response assistance through the AIS Coordinator. During the 2007-2009 grant period, only one lake in Sawyer County needed such assistance. Eurasian water milfoil was found in Whitefish Lake in 2008 by GLIFWC during a survey in June. An herbicide treatment on a 0.01 acre area was done on July 16 by the Sawyer County LWCD. The area was spot treated to ensure effectiveness on areas where results were not as good as anticipated. The bay that the EWM was found in was hand pulled by SCUBA divers and snorkelers on two occasions. The lake association was very responsive, immediately starting educational programs and control programs with the assistance of the AIS Coordinator. The entire lake was surveyed by the AIS Coordinator and by GLIFWC and no other locations were found in 2008. The AIS Coordinator also assisted in developing plans for the spring of 2009.

Many plants were brought into the Sawyer County LWCD office during the grant period. The majority of the plants were Northern water milfoil (*Myriophyllum sibiricum*). All of the plants identified were native plants. The public in Sawyer County are now very willing to bring in plants in the chance that it is an invasive plant and are not as worried about incorrectly identifying aquatic plants.

Many organizations were assisted with grant writing and reviewing. Given the increased difficulty and competition in the AIS grant program, more lake associations are requesting

assistance in writing grant proposals. Many groups requested review and assistance in project preparation. The AIS Coordinator also made sure all groups applying for grants were working with the correct forms. Town meetings and lake association meetings were attended to help in the request for supporting funds for projects.

Objective 5: Educate visitors to Sawyer County lakes

a. Work with Chamber of Commerce to educate fishing tournament organizers and participants;
b. Determine if web-based information groups would be willing to include invasive information.

The Sawyer County AIS Coordinator supplied the Chamber of Commerce with educational materials to provide to visitors and other interested parties. It was more effective to work with the Sawyer County Lakes Forum to provide signage for the boat landings of tournaments than provide materials through the Chamber of Commerce. The AIS Coordinator provided dates and locations of tournaments and encouraged the lakes forum to place signage at the appropriate landings.

Fishing web sites were explored and asked whether they would be willing or interested in adding invasive species information to specific lakes on the web sites. None of the web sites responded to any of the questions.

Final Outcome

The Sawyer County AIS Coordinator position and program was a successful program that was utilized by many people. Lake Associations and groups throughout the county were helped in surveying, identifying, planning, controlling, grant writing, educating, and other activities related to aquatic invasive species. People in Sawyer County are educated about aquatic invasive species and there is much awareness about the issue.