

# **Final Report, AIS Grant (AEPP-226-10)**

## **Project Summary**

The project officially began on Friday, April 16th, 2010 with the attendance of the project coordinator at the DNR-AIS Workshop held in Iron River, Wisconsin. DNR official, Stefania Strzalkowski, conducted the workshop from 5:30-9:30 at the Iron River Community Center. Following the workshop, recruitment of student workers for the project began at Solon Springs High School. Initial recruitment efforts produced 20 students who expressed an interest in working as paid inspectors at landing sites. All students and 16 adult volunteers attended an hour and a half training workshop the evening of April 25th, 2010 at the Solon Springs Community Center. Boat landing inspections began with the fishing opener on May 1st and extended through Labor Day weekend for a total of 19 weekends. During that period three landing sites were monitored each weekend for a total of 57 hours. For the 19 week-period inspection teams were present at landing sites a total of 843 hours, or a total of 1373 student worker and adult volunteer hours. During this period monitors inspected a total of 1351 boats entering and/or leaving the Upper Lake St. Croix. Along with inspecting the boats for plants before launching, the inspection teams also checked boats coming out of the water to make sure they left the landing sites free of plant materials. The teams also handed out educational materials such as water transport laws and purple loosestrife informational packets. They talked with over 3100 boaters about the problems associated with invasive species. While informing boaters about the threat posed by the introduction of Eurasian Watermilfoil and other aquatic invasive species into our lake, the monitors demonstrated proper inspection procedures boaters can employ on their own to ensure their boats and trailers don't transport invasive species to other lakes.

## **Achievement of Project Goals**

### **1.) Monitoring boat landings:**

Student workers for the project were recruited from the local high school in late April. Adult volunteers were solicited from the Upper St. Croix Lake Association and the broader Solon Springs Community beginning in late April and continually throughout the summer. A training session was held for the student workers and the adult volunteers before monitoring began on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in the local Community Center from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. The training session was attended by a total of 36 students and adults.

Three boat launches were monitored each weekend by trained boat inspectors between May 1st and Labor Day. The three boat launches were located at the end of Main Street in Solon Springs, a.k.a. the St. Croix Inn Site, along County Road A at Palmer's Landing, a.k.a. the St. Croix Canoe Launch or DNR launch, and also along County Road A, a private launch site at Lakeview Lodge. Initially, two sites were monitored from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm Saturday and Sunday, the Lakeview Lodge site and the St. Croix Inn site and the landing at Palmer's was monitored from 7:00 am - 10:00 am only on those days. The St. Croix Inn site was also monitored from 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm on Fridays. After week 10 of the project, due to significant rainfall, the dock at

Palmer's Landing was underwater and not useable. Boaters for the remainder of the project could not utilize this dock. Therefore, the DNR launch site was abandoned so that our resources could be put to better use. Obviously, due to the sad state of one dock increased the flow of traffic on the other launch sites. At each site, one trained student and at least one adult volunteer inspected the watercrafts. The launch sites were monitored only by adult volunteers the first two and the last two weekends of the project, May 1-3, and May 8-10, and August 27-29 and September 3-5 respectively as students were unavailable because of school sports and other activities revolving around school. During the 19 weeks of the project inspectors were present at the launch sites a total of 843 hours or a total of 1373 student worker plus adult volunteer hours.

## **2.) Education of boaters regarding AIS and prevention:**

During the 19 weeks of the project, monitors inspected a total of 1351 boats entering and/or leaving Upper Lake St. Croix. Along with inspecting the boats for plants before launching, the inspection teams also checked boats coming out of the water to make sure that they left the landing site free of plant materials. The inspection teams also handed out educational materials, placed Stop Hitchhikers stickers on boater's trailers and talked with over 3100 boaters about the problems associated with aquatic invasive species. In addition to informing the boaters about the threat posed by the introduction of Eurasian Watermilfoil and other aquatic invasive species into our lake, the monitors demonstrated proper inspection procedures that boaters could employ on their own to ensure their boats and trailers arrive at landing sites free of plant materials in the future. They also informed boaters of the new no transport law and the 100-foot no wake zone regulation. While carrying out the watercraft inspections, students asked boaters questions about their boating practices and knowledge about AIS and they in turn used this information to fill out daily Watercraft Inspection Reports. These reports were completed for each launch site during each 3-hour monitoring session and then all of this survey data was entered into the Wisconsin DNR CB/CW database.

During the busiest weekends of the summer, July 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> and July 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>, over 100 boats were inspected at the three launch sites (147 boats and 111 boats respectively). During each of these weekends alone, inspectors talked with more than 687 boaters about AIS. The landing site at the end of Main Street in Solon Springs, a.k.a. St. Croix Inn Site, was routinely the busiest launch site throughout the boating season. During all boat inspections, inspectors asked boaters questions about their boating practices and used this information to fill out Watercraft Inspection Reports. The reports were completed for each launch site during each 3-hour monitoring session and all of the survey data was entered into the CB/CW database.

## **3.) Public Education about AIS:**

Public education of Lake Association members and the broader Solon Springs community was achieved through the publication of articles in newsletters and local newspapers and the distribution of brochures at public events and places. Student monitors marched in two local parades with their Clean Boats/Clean Waters Tee-shirts in an effort to raise public awareness of this vital program. Adult volunteers were often personally trained by the coordinator on what to look for in the case of Eurasian Water Milfoil. There were many false "reports" of spotting Milfoil. These usually resulted in a

lesson of leaflet numbers or structure and they turned out to be either Northern Water Milfoil or Coontail, both of which are native in Upper Lake St. Croix. This also prompted the procurement of DNR publication WT-783. This two-sided manila handout became essential to include in our packets of “boater information”. An Upper Lake St. Croix Advisory Committee, which includes personnel from both the Town and the Village Boards, the St. Croix Lake Association, Douglas County Forestry Department, Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters and the local high school, as well as community members at large, has been particularly interested in the volume of watercraft using the lake. Together, we are trying to sort out a solution that will hopefully satisfy most of these patrons. The major driving force is the protection and preservation of Upper Lake St. Croix of which exotic species would render less than pristine. An initial announcement of the AIS grant along with a description of the proposed project and an invitation to attend the CB/CW boat-landing inspector training workshop went out to all members of the lake association, lake property owners, and residents within a mile radius of the lake in early May. A total of 16 community members, plus 20 students, attended this workshop. As this was the third, non-consecutive year of this type of grant, several lake association members were already on board and ready to participate again as launch site volunteers. This fact, and an extensive calling effort on the part of the project coordinator culminated in the participation of 78 community members in the project, 20 students and 58 adults.

During the monitoring segment of the project, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 to September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 the AIS project coordinator wrote an article for the local newspaper, an article for the lake association’s newsletter, participated in an Open House for Park Creek which runs into Upper Lake St. Croix, planted a rain garden to help mitigate soil erosion and harmful chemicals from reaching Park Creek, sent reminders to adult and student volunteers, as well as sat on the Board of Directors of Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters and the Upper St. Croix Lake Association. The coordinator and several student workers also dug purple loosestrife and bagged this invasive species from the entire perimeter of Park Pond located in downtown Solon Springs as well as cut buds from blooming purple loosestrife in ditches and along the roadway from the village of Solon Springs all along County Road A. Among other things, these efforts enabled the public to become more aware of the CB/CW monitoring program, solicited more volunteers, recognized the participation of local high school students as inspectors and community leaders, thanked community members who had volunteered, emphasized the importance of keeping the lake free of Eurasian Water milfoil, and solicited partnerships for continued lake vigilance. Along with these efforts, the Lake Association Members contracted the construction of three new 3’ X 5’ lunch board type signs to place at the landings when a monitoring crew was present. Although these efforts may not be viewed as spectacular, they clearly represent a successful third year effort at educating local anglers, boaters, lake property owners, and Solon Springs community members about AIS. Most importantly, lets hope it prevented the invasion of AIS into Upper Lake St. Croix!