

Final Report for the Pelican Lake Landing AIS Project 2007

Sponsor: Town of Schoepke

Project Number: AEPP-090-07

Overview- Landing Monitors

This is the third season that the Pelican Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA) has spearheaded the effort to protect Pelican Lake (Oneida County) from the ongoing threat of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Generously sponsoring the application for an AIS Education Grant was the Town of Schoepke with monetary cost sharing from the Town of Schoepke, the Town of Enterprise, and the PLPOA. It is with great appreciation that the association acknowledges the support of the State of Wisconsin in awarding the cost sharing grant for 2007.

In 2007, the PLPOA concentrated coverage on the two primary landings on the 3600 acre Pelican Lake. There was occasional coverage of the boat landing in the town of Pelican Lake. This landing was covered as a trial on a few of the busiest weekends and was found to have little boat traffic. At one time a dock was maintained there, but has been taken out. That may account for the low usage in addition to the lack of parking spaces. This lack of parking is true for the other secondary landings as well. To effectively educate the public regarding AIS and to prevent the introduction of zebra mussels, Eurasian water-milfoil, and other invasive into Pelican Lake two landings were selected: Keelers Landing on Oneida County Highway Q and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Landing on Oneida County Highway G. These landings service the most people and boats using Pelican Lake.

A new head landing supervisor was employed this year at the state landing. Gary *Page 2*

Blumreich, a retired firefighter from Rhinelander, coordinated work at the two landings and entered data related to usage of the landings. Mr. Blumreich is a lifelong resident of the area and brings a history of public service. His background as a firefighter developed his ability to interact with people which is necessary in being an effective educator and communicator. He enjoys the outdoors and has an appreciation of Wisconsin's lakes and rivers. He realizes the importance of keeping them safe from invasive. His positive approach was appreciated by the boaters and while establishing a relationship with the boaters and fishermen, he was able to carry the message concerning AIS.

The worker at Keelers Landing, Patti Gilbert, has been with the program since 2005 as a replacement, and fulltime since 2006. Patti is a local resident who has served well in her monitoring position and has a keen appreciation of the beauty of Pelican Lake and continues to work for its protection.

The workers initially monitored the landings from four (4) PM until seven (7) PM on Fridays. As the season moved along and use increased, the PLOPA decided to increase coverage on Friday starting at noon (12) PM instead of four. It was found that many boaters take Fridays off to get a three day weekend and are able to launch earlier in the day. The extra four hours proved to be an effective way to educate more boaters. Saturday hours were from six (6) AM until seven (7) PM with an hour off for lunch. This hour was covered with volunteers. Sundays hours were from six (6) AM until noon (12) PM. At twelve, the Keeler Landing monitor came over to the state landing, and volunteers helped at Keelers. Monitoring continued until boat traffic slowed.

The additional hours spent monitoring the landings was time well spent

Page 3

considering the number of recreational craft contacted as well as the number of people educated increased significantly in 2007.

Fishing tournament days were monitored in a slightly different way. Monitors arrived at the landing at 4:30. They worked in teams with volunteers helping the regular monitors. This got the rush of boats checked efficiently and kept the fishermen happy while still carrying out protection. Fishing tournaments are a bit easier to monitor in that these people are very aware of the dangers that invasive pose.

Gary went a step further in that once the boats were launched, he spoke at the rules meeting before the tourney began. He asked that the participants keep an eye out for invasives and mark and report any found.

Tournament rules helped in that boats were not allowed to leave the lake during the day and were checked upon entering the second day. Live wells were inspected as well as a checking of the trailers. Tournament directors were also helpful in promoting a thorough cleaning of tournament boats before they entered Pelican Lake. Since tourney fishermen often come from the waters of Winnebago, Green Bay, Shawano and other waters afflicted with invasive species, they work especially hard to stop the spread of invasive.

A Typical Weekend

On Friday the weekend travelers began to arrive, part time residents coming to their cottages, people arriving for their stays at resorts, or fishermen preparing to catch that big musky.

Saturday saw weekend travelers and local fishermen enjoying their time off work.

Page 4

There was heavy traffic from sunup until 8 or so. Then traffic picked up from 9-11. With afternoon traffic being steady.

Sunday had a larger number of boats early, a break, and then more action until noon. With the addition of Sunday hours, it was noted that a number of boaters entered the lake on Sunday afternoon. Much of the traffic depended on weather and time of year.

Public Information

All boaters were contacted as they arrived at the landing and as they left Pelican Lake. Their vehicles and boats were recorded on log sheets. Informational handouts- Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers, The Facts on Eurasian - Milfoil, and Zebra Mussel Boater's Guide, and a sticker for boat trailers- Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers- were offered to boaters. The sticker listed reminders on what to do when a boat left a body of water. The reminders included such items as - to remove any mud, plants, fish, or animals before transporting and eliminating all water from live wells and equipment.

Boaters were also offered picture ID cards with information about Rusty Crayfish, Zebra Mussels, Curley-leaved Pondweed, and Eurasian Water-milfoil. These quick reference guides are intended to add additional eyes on Pelican Lake and other Wisconsin waterways to detect and prevent the spread of AIS.

The majority of people was happy to receive the information and was willing to take the time to listen. As in all contact with the public, some were inattentive for a variety of reasons. Some disliked the DNR. Others had no patience in their rush to launch their boats, and with others, it was just apathy. Some even expressed the belief that it was a helpless cause and just a matter of time before invasive entered the lake. Most however,

Page 5

were cooperative, and appreciated the effort to provide protection and education.

Adopt-a-Shoreline Follow-up

In 2006, PLPOA members Barbara Weaver-Krause and Lucy Nelson presented the idea of Adopt-a-Shoreline as a way of increasing surveillance of the lake for AIS and giving more people a chance to be involved in lake protection. As in most programs, it started slowly. The program allowed interested PLOA people to select a portion of the lake, cruise the selected area periodically, and watch for Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM.)

More members became involved this year in both watching for EWM washing up on shorelines and areas near the shoreline. People did their searches as families and as individuals and were enthusiastic in their reports. No samples were discovered by these members but reports of a mass of weeds in Musky Bay was reported. Kirby Ament led a group of boaters who checked the area and the mass was identified as native milfoil. Citizen concern helped prompt the search and the mass served as a good example of what to expect if EWM became established in Pelican Lake.

Hopefully, the program will continue in 2008 in an expanded capacity.

AIS Interdiction

In 2007, two samples of EWM were discovered at Pelican Lake landings. In early June a 3-5" sample was discovered on the ramp at the state landing but above the OHWM (ordinary high water mark.) The sample, still moist, was bagged in water by the landing monitor. He noted the finding on his report sheet and the sample was taken to the DNR. It was then sent to the UW-Extension in Stevens Point where it was confirmed to be EWM. The DNR suggested that since it was found above the OHWM that it probably did not

Page 6

come from the lake. The landing area was searched as was the surrounding waters and no further samples were found.

The second sample was found in early August on a carpeted trailer bunk after a boat had been launched. The sample could not be seen until the boat was off the trailer. It was a dry sample, but when put in a bag with water, it resumed a "live" look. This hydration lent support to an argument used by the landing monitor.

Boaters occasionally say that their boats don't need to be checked since their rigs haven't been in the water for a week or more. Weeds that appear dry and dead regain a "live" look. At a training session that Gary attended, there was disagreement about how long weeds can be out of water before losing their ability to root. So even if boats have not been in the water for some time, there is no way of knowing how long is enough.

When the boaters returned on whose trailer the sample was found, Gary learned that the boat had last been in an Eagle River area lake. He told them about the sample and said that the DNR may be contacting them about the sample as a follow-up to the finding. After determining that the lake that the couple had been fishing was identified as having EWM, Gary bagged the sample and delivered it to the DNR. It was confirmed as a sample of EWM. Again a search of the area turned up no further samples.

Rapid Response Team

The plan that is to be implemented if an AIS sample is found in Pelican Lake follows this format:

Team members Kirby Ament, Barbara Weaver-Krause, Lucy Nelson, and other PLPOA members conduct a thorough search of the area where the invasive was

Page 7

discovered. The search area is then expanded to adjacent bays and other shallow water areas. If anything suspicious is found, the site is marked and a sample taken and submitted. Periodically, these and other members conduct both shoreline and water searched for the remainder of the season.

The procedure established if any samples are found is as follows:

1. Mark the location of the suspected sample
2. Retrieve a sample and bag it in water

3. Take the sample to a WDNR authority for verification
4. Contact the committee volunteers to search the lake
5. Finally, the volunteers monitor the lake and shorelines for the remainder of the season

Public Relations

The landing monitors and the way they approach their jobs, serve as an important informational and educational link between the DNR and the public. The distribution of AIS information serves as positive public relations for Pelican Lake and the surrounding area. The monitors establish relationships with boaters who frequent the landings. They answer questions about the lake, help, if needed, with launching or landing boats, exchange fishing information, discuss wildlife sightings, and talk about the general health of the lake.

One of the landing monitors talked about a group representing three generations of a family - grandfather, father, and son- who were going fishing on Pelican Lake. As the monitor explained the program, checked boat and trailer, and distributed information, the

Page 8

10-year-old was running around excited for the upcoming fishing trip. The grandfather stopped him, called him over and told him to listen since "it is your future that he is talking about."

By offering this program of protection, the PLPOA the lake community, and the DNR are working to ensure that families such as the one just mentioned, have a quality outdoor experience now and in the future.

Statistics

During the 2007 project lasting from May to early October, Pelican Lake had many visitors. The totals are up in all categories from 2006. Increased hours spent monitoring, early water warm up, hot summer weather, as well as water quality issues in various parts of the state that makes the near north look more attractive and all could have contributed to the increase in use of Pelican Lake.

There was a total of 3,770 vehicles which used the monitored landings. Of these 124 were from out-of-state. There were 3,777 boats checked and 7,980 people given Clean Boat Clean Waters materials and educated concerning AIS.

These numbers certainly lend support to the value of maintaining representatives at the landings and shows that the money being spent is not going to waste.

Volunteer Education and Involvement

In all forty-one different volunteers performed various duties to aid the Pelican Lake community. These people worked as individuals and family groups to patrol landings, search shorelines and bays for AIS, attended lake conferences, took water samples, gathered and recorded data related to the project, set and checked zebra mussel

Page 9

traps, and took secchi disc readings.

Seventeen different people volunteered more than more than two hundred and twenty (220) hours checking boats and trailers as well as educating people about to use Pelican Lake. Along with these hours, over five hundred (500)more volunteer hours were expended in the activities mentioned above.

It is important to note that eleven more volunteers officially reported volunteer activities over the 2006 numbers. It is one of the goals of the PLPOA to increase the number of volunteers each year. It is felt that by volunteering, members can feel an ownership of the lake. These volunteers also can tell their family and friends about the volunteer activities and possibly enlist them in future activities. The PLPOA Annual Meeting serves as a venue to gain volunteers and explain the lake activities that can benefit from volunteers.

In 2007, over one hundred (100) people attended the annual meeting held in July. At that meeting, an hour of discussion was devoted to the AIS concern while samples of EWM and identification cards were shown to the gathering. The Adopt-a-Shoreline was discussed as well. The membership voted unanimously to continue both programs. Board member Kirby Ament visited with representatives of the Towns of Schoepke and Enterprise to gain their continued support for the AIS Education Program for 2008. Both town representatives expressed their willingness to continue supporting the program with the Town of Schoepke sponsoring the grant application for 2008.

Informational signs were maintained at all lake landings. The following resorts received AIS information and were encouraged to discuss the AIS problem with their clients:

Page 10

Weavers Resort and Campground

Pelican Lake Campground

Radtke's Sabinois Point Resort

Willemson's Golden Sands Resort

Gains and Areas to Improve

In the third year of the AIS Project, there were successes and as in any project, areas to improve. We hope to learn and improve each year so as to better protect Pelican

Lake and other Wisconsin waters from invasive- the overall goal of the program- through education and inspection.

Positives

1. The number one positive is that no invasives were discovered in Pelican Lake in 2007.
2. There was a large number of people contacted and educated at the landings.
3. There was a significant increase in the number of people who volunteered for other activities related to the intervention of AIS.
4. There was a significant increase in the number of people who volunteered as landing monitors.
5. The continuation of the Adopt-a-Shoreline Program begun in 2006
6. The interdiction of two (2) specimens of EWM
7. The introduction of a new head monitor at the State Landing
8. The cooperation between the monitors and the public
9. The cooperation between the monitors and the DNR

Page 11

Areas to improve

1. Communication between members involved in various aspects of the program
2. Coordination of the Rapid Response Team
3. Improved contact with the resort owners of Pelican Lake

Conclusion

Pelican Lake has established a solid program to educate boaters using Pelican Lake and to inspect boats and trailers entering the lake in order to prevent introduction of AIS. To this point the program has been successful. Through the efforts of an increasing number of volunteers and the dedication of the hired landing monitors, the program has run smoothly. The Adopt-a-Shoreline Program was expanded in 2007 and will continue in 2008.

This continuing success story would not be possible without the support from the State of Wisconsin. Thanks also goes to the Towns of Schoepke and Enterprise for financial support. Special thanks to the Town of Schoepke and Dick Dvorak for the time he spends to make the program run smoothly.

Finally the members of the PLPOA need to be recognized for their financial support and especially for the hundreds of volunteer hours devoted to protecting Pelican Lake.

As in the story related earlier where the grandfather speaks to his grandson, this is our future that is being protected.

Written and submitted by

Bob Mott January 23, 2008