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The Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20426
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RE: WVIC P-2113; AIS Plan of Action – Annual Allocation Activities Report 2015

Introduction- In Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company's (WVIC) 2011 *Fish and Wildlife Management Plan* Update Report, WVIC submitted an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan of Action, which was approved by FERC on February 14, 2013. In the Plan, WVIC proposed providing monetary assistance (\$60,000) to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to help further combat AIS issues on WVIC's Project Reservoirs. The funds were to be allocated annually (\$12,000/year) to WDNR over a 5 year period beginning in 2012 and continuing through 2016. Funds contributed by WVIC can be used for a variety of activities and the priorities are determined and agreed upon between WVIC and WDNR in the spring of each year.

2015 Summary- WDNR held a meeting on June 9, 2015 with WVIC and the AIS Limited Term Employee (LTE) to identify priorities and activities to implement during the 2015 season. 2015 priorities outlined at the spring meeting included:

- Fund AIS LTE position.
- Conduct Point Intercept (PI) survey and AIS surveys at Squirrel Reservoir and potentially one additional reservoir if time permits.
- Continue Clean Boats/Clean Waters (CB/CW) inspections on Willow and Rainbow along with additional WVIC reservoirs.
- Assist with a variety of AIS surveying and monitoring projects at other WVIC reservoirs.
- Perform site visits as needed from public inquiries.
- Assist with new discoveries or AIS situations that may arise throughout the year.

The third year of monetary assistance began on October 1, 2014 and ended September 30, 2015. Of the eligible (not to exceed) \$12,000 in costs directly associated with services as defined in the MOU, \$12,000 was dispersed. The following is a summary of the activities performed by the AIS LTE in conjunction with WDNR and WVIC staff when noted.

2015 AIS LTE Activities- (519 Hours)

CB/CW Watercraft Inspections- Rainbow, Willow, Squirrel, Upper Buckatahpon, Big Saint Germain, Pickerel, Sand/Dam, and Lac Vieux Desert- 38% of Time

The AIS LTE conducted boat inspections and provided information and educational materials to recreational boaters and anglers regarding transport of invasive species. Educational efforts included: handouts regarding bait laws, EWM identification cards, AIS trailer stickers, AIS bobbers and surveys at boat landings to assess user knowledge regarding AIS issues.

During the season, the AIS LTE contacted 305 people comprised primarily of fisherman and recreational boaters. Most people were reported as compliant and receptive to AIS information. The majority of users knew to check over their boats, remove any aquatic plants, and drain boat and live wells before leaving the landing. No invasive plants were observed being carried away from landings on boats or trailers during the monitoring period.

Point Intercept (PI) Survey- Buckatahpon & Squirrel Reservoirs- 14% of Time

A PI survey was conducted on Buckatahpon (BUK) and Squirrel (SQL) Reservoirs to determine baseline aquatic macrophyte information and assist with long-term monitoring of aquatic plant populations. Two boats, each with three people were utilized for the BUK survey. The AIS LTE along with staff from WVIC, Vilas County, and WDNR participated in the survey. The SQL survey was completed with one boat and 3 people. The AIS LTE and DNR staff conducted the survey.

Meandering Boat Surveys- Pickerel, Squirrel, Buckatahpon & Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Monitoring- Rice (Nokomis) - 27% of Time

Meandering surveys were conducted as part of the WDNR AIS Early Detection monitoring protocol. The AIS LTE and WDNR staff meandered along shorelines and stopped at targeted sites and boat landings for AIS searches. Methods used included: visual detection, d-pole, throw rake, and spiny water flea/zebra mussel veliger tows. Rice (Nokomis) was randomly chosen as part of 200 lakes surveyed and sampled for AIS under the GLRI project. GLRI funding is being used to collect baseline data on the statewide distribution of AIS at approximately 16% of Wisconsin lakes with public boat ramps from 2011-2015.

Other Additional Field Work, data entry, reports, etc- 21% of Time

The AIS LTE conducted an EWM search after a floating EWM fragment was found on Deerskin Lake by a private consultant conducting a PI survey for the lake association. After canvassing the lake by boat, no rooted plants were found and the fragment was determined to have likely been introduced by a boat and did not represent a newly established population.

The AIS LTE and WDNR staff conducted zebra mussel (ZM) veliger tows after a ZM shell was reportedly found at the Cty N landing on Rice Reservoir (Lake Nokomis). The tows were conducted using DNR protocol and all of the composite samples tested negative for free floating veligers. Previous calcium sampling conducted by WVIC indicate calcium levels are likely too low on Rice Reservoir for ZM establishment even if individual specimens are introduced.

Additional work completed by the AIS LTE includes: assisted WVIC staff with the purple loosestrife monitoring and mapping program on Rice Reservoir, tested coarse woody habitat protocol, answered AIS questions from public, entered CB/CW data into the WDNR Statewide Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System database, pressed plants for identification, compiled spreadsheets, prepared data for reports, and assisted with other field work.

Conclusion- All of the activities and priorities originally outlined in the spring were completed by the AIS LTE in 2015. WVIC and WDNR will meet to determine project priorities in 2016 and anticipate continuing the AIS LTE position throughout the field season. WVIC will submit the 2016 summary report detailing the AIS LTE's activities and any other initiatives that used allocated AIS funds by December 31, 2016.

Sincerely,



Ben Niffenegger
Senior Environmental Specialist