

Updated Waterfowl Hunter AIS Outreach Proposal

This project is intended to provide invasive species awareness targeting waterfowl hunters using both the Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas. Together, the properties encompass approximately 40,000 acres of which over 15,000 acres are wetlands. These two properties are located in Central WI and are two of the most heavily hunted waterfowl properties in the state. In addition to traditional access both properties are accessible via the Little Eau Pleine River and the Mead Wildlife Area has boundaries adjacent the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir. The Mead Wildlife Area is also the home of the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center. The facility offers a wide array of environmental education programs and sees over 10,000 visitors annually.

It is our goal to bring attention to the threat and spread of aquatic invasive species to a group of users that often are over-looked. Waterfowl hunters spend numerous hours in our state's rivers, lakes and wetlands. They travel around WI as well as other states. The equipment they use is almost entirely aquatic, from decoys, blinds, boats, and waders – to the water loving Labrador. The possibility of spreading invasive species is plentiful.

In an effort to create an effective AIS outreach campaign targeting waterfowl hunters we first need to gather audience information on behaviors, movement, existing knowledge of AIS laws, willingness to take the prevention steps, motivators, and preferred outreach methods. This proposal includes the development of an AIS Waterfowl Survey that will be distributed to waterfowl hunters at conferences, meetings, and as part of existing opening weekend activities near access points already planned at Mead Wildlife area. In addition, we will create an on-line electronic survey to share with the WI Waterfowl Hunters Association. Several partners who have already started targeting this audience with AIS messages will assist in survey development and distribution.

Signage near water access areas has proven a successful way to reach boaters with the AIS message (DNR AIS Survey 2013) and AIS boat landing signs have already been installed on the main landings within the property. Although this signage does a good job describing steps hunters are required to take to clean their boat, it does not address the variety of equipment waterfowl hunters use and which could be a vector to spreading AIS to other waters. In addition, many waterfowl hunters do not use the primary launches, rather they cart their personal watercraft down wetland impoundment dikes to small flowages located within the interior of the property and therefore miss the sign completely. To try and better communicate the impacts of invasive species and encouraged cleaning methods specific to waterfowl hunter equipment (decoys, blinds, waders, dogs, etc.) this project proposes design and construction of five removable interpretive signs to be stationed at the main parking lots that serve as arteries to property. These signs will use attractive photos taken by waterfowl hunters that use the area in an attempt to draw hunters in. The signs will also include a brochure holder to distribute additional information targeted at this audience. Use and effectiveness of these signs will be evaluated through the daily waterfowl surveys already being conducted by staff and surveys on opening weekend.

It is our goal to share information and tools developed as part of this project with partners and other wildlife areas across the state. A summary of the data gathered and outreach tools developed will be made available for partners to replicate or customize in their efforts to reach waterfowl hunters with the AIS message in their area.

Timeline and Budget (April- March 2014)

-Survey Development (April- June 2014)

-Print survey -**\$100** (June 2014)

-Distribute surveys – (June-October 2014) will work with partners to distribute

-Design interpretative signage and modify Wildlife Forever brochure to meet WI laws (June-July 2014)

-Five interpretive signs (BSI) **\$2500** (July- early August 2014)

-Print brochures- **\$1000** (July 2014)

-Purchase 400 boot brushes to hand out as incentive for hunters to take survey at conferences/meetings- \$400 (July 2014)

-Place interpretative signage on Mead and McMillan Wildlife areas (August 2014)

-Analyze survey results (November- December 2014)

-Use results of survey to work with partners and other wildlife area staff (Horicon Marsh, etc.) to develop a model AIS Outreach Plan targeting waterfowl hunters on state wildlife properties. Include tools such as media templates, PSAs, publications, and outreach tool designs (signs, etc.) others can customize and replicate on state/local properties. (December-March 2014)

-Seek funding to implement outreach plan at Mead and McMillan Wildlife area (and others) if needed. (December-March 2014)

Budget

Survey printing - \$100

5 Interpretative Signs for Mead/McMillan Wildlife areas- \$2500

Printing of Waterfowl Hunter Brochure (4000)- \$1000

Boot brushes (400)- \$400

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$4,000