

Final Report for the Pelican Lake AIS Education Project 2008

Sponsor: Town of Schoepke

Project Number: AEPP-146-08

Overview

The Pelican Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA) in conjunction with the Town of Enterprise and the Town of Schoepke have supported a Clean Boats/Clean Waters program for the past several years. Through the sponsorship of the Town of Schoepke a state AIS Education Grant was obtained. With this financial help as well as money from both towns and the PLPOA, two primary boat landings were monitored from the first of May through the end of September. The Town of Schoepke provided payroll services and other clerical work to aid in the smooth administration of the grant.

Oneida County deserves recognition for its dedication to the protection of its lakes and rivers. For the second year, the county employed an AIS Coordinator, Jennifer Holman, who led the fight for two important county ordinances. The first was to prohibit the transportation of weeds on trailers and boats within the county. A similar law was proposed and nearly passed statewide in 2008. Hopefully this will be the law of the state in 2009. This ordinance served as support for the landing monitors who could cite the law as a reason for removing weeds and will hopefully keep weeds from arriving at the landings.

The second ordinance was the first of its kind in the nation. It prohibits the movement of water from one body of water to another for flushing “dry hydrants” by fire departments as well as water usage by contractors, construction workers, and similar usages. These are there types of laws that if merely suggested through resolutions would not have the “teeth” to convince people of the need. Oneida County is to be commended for its leadership and foresight.

Landing Monitors

Pelican Lake is a 3600 acre lake in Oneida County. The PLPOA concentrated coverage on two primary landings on the lake. In previous years, and for a short time this year, a third landing in the Town of Pelican Lake was monitored. Since very little usage was noted this landing did not receive lengthy coverage. To effectively educate the public regarding AIS and to prevent the introduction of zebra mussels, Eurasian water-milfoil, and other invasives into Pelican Lake, two landings were monitored: Keelers Landing on Oneida County Highway Q and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Landing on Oneida County Highway G. These landings served the most people and boats using Pelican Lake. Note: Other landings were monitored at times in order to see if there was enough boat traffic to justify monitoring.

For 2008, the State landing was monitored by a husband and wife team Gary Blumreich, a retired firefighter from Rhinelander, and his wife, Nancy. Gary worked full time as landing supervisor in 2007 but because he added another job he was not sure he could work all the needed hours for 2008. Since he was not sure of his schedule, Nancy agreed to work when Gary was unable. Gary also entered the data from both landing on the DNR website.

With Gary as a tutor, Nancy did a wonderful job as monitor. Her dedication was shown early in the season. One morning as she was checking a boat about to be launched, she tripped on a raised piece of blacktop. She fell hitting her cheek against the boat. The impact resulted in a cut cheek and injured eye. Her husband was called and he took over monitoring duties. Nancy was taken to the hospital. She suffered blurred vision and a terribly black and blue eye as a result of the fall. But the next weekend she was back on the job even though her eye was swollen shut. Many people would have looked to blame someone else. Nancy blamed herself and continued to perform her job. Outstanding!!

She had three interesting experiences on the job. First was an early morning encounter with a lone man who drove in without a boat, sat in his car and stared at Nancy. Eventually, he drove off. It was one of those strange happenings with no reason to it. When she told the PLPOA officers about this, she was encouraged to call 911 and/or supervisors anytime she felt threatened. Another option was to get in her car, lock the doors and drive off for awhile. (For 2009, a list of emergency numbers will be given to anyone working at the landings.)

The second incident was when Nancy observed what she believed was a drug deal; she reported what she had seen to the sheriff's department. Finally there was a transmission leak near the ramp that was significant. She called 911 and a town fireman responded and cleaned up the site. She was concerned that the fluid would be washed into the lake and pollute. Nancy is both a monitor and a concerned citizen.

The monitor at Kneelers Landing was Patti Gilbert, an area resident who has been a full time monitor since 2006.

The season's coverage ran from the first weekend in May- the opening of the inland fishing season- to the last weekend in September. The basic coverage was provided from noon on Friday until seven (7) pm; from six (6) am Saturday until seven (7) pm with an hour for lunch; and from six (6) am Sunday until noon. Lunch hours and additional hours on Sunday were covered by volunteers and sometimes paid monitors.

Extended hours were tried on a trial basis on some weekdays during the high usage times of June, July, and August to see if there was a way to contact more boaters and thus give better coverage. It was found that there was no way to predict a time or day that would be cost and time effective. So it was decided that for the 2009 season, the basic schedule would be followed except for holiday times that would call for weekday hours.

As a standard procedure, each landing monitor was instructed to approach boaters as they arrived at the landing and explain the Clean Boat/Clean Waters program; fill out the inspection sheet;

examine the boat and trailer for evidence of zebra mussels and weeds (if any were present, the boater was asked to remove them); give the boater information sheets on zebra mussels, Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM), and a sheet on how to prevent infestation through clean boating practices. When the boater left the water, the monitor would explain the VHS rules if needed and look for weeds on the boat and motor

The Head Monitor would periodically take the data accumulated at each landing and enter it into the DNR website.

Landing monitor volunteers performed a number of duties. They included:

1. Help paid monitors check in boats at fishing tournaments. Volunteers typically would arrive at 5:30am and stay until all tournament boats were checked in. This 2 person approach helped ease congestion and got boats in the water quickly.
2. Volunteers monitored landings when paid monitors were on lunch break.
3. Volunteers monitored landings when paid monitors were on vacation.
4. Volunteers were used to extend coverage hours as needed.
5. Volunteers were also on call in case paid monitors became ill or were called away for other reasons.

Pelican Lake is blessed to have volunteers who are devoted to the cause of keeping Pelican Lake free of invasives. Including hours spent entering data, paid workers accumulated one thousand, five hundred, and eighty-seven hours (1,587) from May through September. Volunteers reported one hundred and seventy-one hours (171) at the landing as substitutes, providing lunch relief and extending coverage hours. Thirteen people served as volunteers at the landings. The 1,587 hours in 2008 compared with 1,000 hours for 2007 and the increase was due to the increased weekday coverage.

Once again fishing tournaments were monitored. Teams of two were assigned during the early morning hours to help to quickly and efficiently process the tournament boats. These boats do pose a danger for Pelican Lake as many are used throughout the state including waters infested with AIS. On the positive side, these fishermen are aware of the danger posed by AIS and work hard to prevent the spread of AIS. Information concerning AIS is included in all tournament mailings.

A new job for the monitors was to explain the VHS regulations. While not enforcing the VHS rules, Pelican Lake monitors asked boaters if their live wells were emptied, if they were transporting live fish (prohibited) and if they were carrying lake water from the lake in their bait buckets (prohibited). Most boaters were willing to listen to monitors regarding this problem and were often seeking information in order to conform to the new rules. As the year progressed, most boaters were aware of and cooperated regarding VHS regulations.

A Typical Weekend

The following describes what typically happened on a weekend at the landings. On Friday 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.

There was heavy boat traffic from sunup until 8 am or so. Traffic picked up from 9am-11am. Afternoon traffic was mostly 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 season. Monitors were given the option of leaving if there was inclement weather and it appeared that no significant traffic was evident.

Public Information

In 2009 the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) noted that “watercraft inspectors have been the main source of AIS information for boaters and anglers since the inspections first began. The program has been very successful in raising public awareness.” (*Vilas County News-Record* 1/7/09) Public awareness of AIS increased from 21% in 2004 to 91% in 2007.

All boaters were contacted as they arrived at the landings 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 water-milfoil*, and the *Zebra Mussels Boater’s Guide*, and a sticker for boat trailers- *Stop Aquatic Hitchers*- were offered to boaters. The sticker listed reminders on what to do when a boater took his boat from the 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, Curly-leafed 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 hopeless cause and just a matter of time before invasive entered Pelican Lake. Most, however, were cooperative, and appreciated the effort to provide protection and education.

Adopt-a-Shoreline

The Adopt-a-Shoreline program first instituted in 2006 was ongoing in 2008. PLPOA members again watched shorelines for invasive weeds, boated in assigned lake areas and watched as they sailed and kayaked in Pelican Lake. This program gave individuals in the organization a chance to do a service while enjoying the lake.

A new way of watching for EWM, curly-leafed pondweed and other invasive was developed this year. A group of ladies kayaked on Pelican Lake and were able to look for invasive as they enjoyed their sport and exercise. Another property owner is a sailor and was vigilant, looking for AIS as he sailed. Both

of these groups had a unique vantage point since their use of the lake was slower and closer to the lake surface than speed boaters.

In 2008 there were thirteen (13) volunteers who performed AIS weed monitoring accumulating one hundred and fifty-nine (159) hours in the effort. This is one area that recorded fewer hours and participants than in 2007. The 2007 year saw more large family groups involved accounting for the difference in hours.

AIS Interdiction

Thankfully, there were no AIS specimens found at the landings or in the Adopt-a-Shoreline searches in Pelican Lake during the 2008 season. That result made all of the work worthwhile. The challenge is to continue the effort, to continue the volunteer involvement, and to continue receiving the support of the Towns of Schoepke and Enterprise as well as Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin.

Volunteers did remove a stand of purple loosestrife from the State Landing area and searched the sides of the road near the entrance of the landing. The monitors are encouraged to check for any and all AIS while working the landings and it was the State Landing monitor who first reported the purple loosestrife.

Rapid Response Team

Even though no AIS specimens were found in Pelican Lake, the Rapid Response Team is in place in case an AIS specimen is discovered.

Team members Kirby Ament, Barbara Weaver-Krause, Lucy Nelson, and Bob Mott, along with other members of the PLPOA if needed, make up the Rapid Response Team.

The process begins when team members conduct a thorough search of the area where the invasive specimen was found. The search area is then expanded to adjacent bays and other shallow water areas. If anything suspicious is found, the site is marked with a sample taken and submitted for positive identification. Periodically, these and other members conduct both shoreline and water searches for the rest of the season.

The procedure established if any invasive is found is as follows:

1. Mark the location of the suspected AIS sample
2. Retrieve a sample of an entire intact specimen and bag in water. Refrigerate or put the sample on ice as soon as possible in order to keep the sample fresh
3. Take the sample to the DNR within three(3) days
4. Contact the committee volunteers to conduct a lake search
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 and landing boats, exchange fishing information, discuss wildlife sightings, and talk about the general health of the lake.

Landing monitors reported that a number of boaters, especially those from the Madison area and the Fox River Valley expressed their appreciation for the protection being afforded Pelican Lake. They enjoyed the boating and recreation in such a beautiful area.

The Oneida County AIS Coordinator, Jennifer Holman, instituted an AIS Awards program this year. The awards were given to individuals and groups that had shown special efforts in the battle against AIS. The Pelican Lake Property Owners Association received a plaque and Lucy Nelson, a PLPOA member, received an individual award for her work with the CB/CW program as well as her education sessions with nearby schools concerning AIS. The recognition was much appreciated and is the type of activity that serves to encourage volunteers to continue the much needed work.

Statistics

The 2008 season saw record high gas prices and a great number of windy or rainy days. These conditions led to a perceived drop in landing activity. It is difficult to compare 2007 with 2008 since there was a significant increase in the number of hours spent monitoring due to the increase in weekday monitoring. There were 2,163 boats checked in at the landings. This compared with 3,777 boats checked in 2007. There were 8,883 people contacted in 2008 compared with 7,980 people in 2007. These statistics may indicate that more people were joining together on boating trips as a way of saving money during tight economic times.

Volunteer Education and Involvement

One of the themes that seems to be talked about in meetings around the state is the term "burnout." Volunteer numbers typically start dropping off in the third year of a program. The people directing the CB/CW program at Pelican Lake have noticed a problem recruiting workers this year. Yet, with that problem, there were still forty (40) separate volunteers who turned in volunteer worksheets compared with forty-nine (49) in 2007.

Other comparisons with 2007

Weed Monitoring/ Adopt-a-Shoreline	2008- 127 hours
	2007- 226 hours
Landing Monitoring	2008- 170.75 hours
	2007- 185.00 hours

Other (meetings, seminars, monitor supervision, etc.)

2008- 465 hours

2007- 480 hours

Total Volunteer hours

2008- 763.15 hours

2007- 891 hours

The major difference in hours spent in 2008 versus 2007 was in weed monitoring. Part of that difference was the number of larger family groups reporting weed monitoring hours.

Thirteen people (13) volunteered as landing monitors. They spent one hundred and seventy hours checking boats and trailers as well as educating people who were recreating on Pelican Lake. Nearly six hundred (600) volunteer hours were spent on the activities described above.

It is important to note that the leadership of the PLPOA is aware of the burnout issue and there is a need for a feeling of ownership of Pelican Lake. That ownership is best achieved through hands on work. Even an hour spent volunteering makes people more aware of what it takes to protect Pelican Lake. In order to encourage more volunteers, a form was placed in the newsletter offering property owners a chance to work an hour, several hours, a half day, or a full day as a volunteer. The annual PLPOA meeting held in July where there are typically one hundred or more members present will serve as another forum to emphasize the need for volunteers.

At the annual meeting PLPOA members were reminded of the successes of the AIS program, its costs, and benefits. These people voted overwhelmingly to continue offering their financial support to the program. Kirby Ament, newly elected president of the PLPOA, reported that both the Town of Schoepke and the Town of Enterprise will continue to support the program. Each year it seems that some of the town board members question the value of the program. It was decided at the PLPOA board of directors meeting to develop an A/V presentation to be shown to both town boards to demonstrate the far reaching negative effects of AIS infestation. Included in the presentation will be a demonstration of lowered property values and a corresponding loss of tax base with a weed clogged lake.

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

Weavers Resort and Campground

Pelican Lake Campground

Radtke's Sabinois Point Resort

Williamson's Golden Sands Resort

Dvorak's Resort

Gains

This is the fourth year of the AIS Education Project at Pelican Lake. It is the hope of all associated with Pelican Lake to use the resources of the PLPOA members, the Towns of Schoepke and Enterprise, Oneida County along with the AIS coordinator, and the State of Wisconsin to continue to keep Pelican Lake free of AIS.

Of the many gains or positives for the 2008 program, keeping AIS from the lake is the most outstanding result. It is the primary goal of all the efforts and money invested in the CB/CW program.

Another positive is the recognition gained through the Oneida County AIS Award. The award given to the PLPOA as a group and the separate award to one of the PLPOA members show that the county representatives appreciate the effort that is being expended to protect the resources.

Another positive is the increased activity at the resorts on Pelican Lake. When the resorts check people in, they are given information concerning the AIS information. For the 2009 season, there will be one person who will serve the resorts on Pelican Lake with CBCW information. This will allow a better communication with them.

Other positives for the 2008 season:

1. Contact with 8,883 people even though there was a falling economy
2. The number of people who expressed thanks for the protection efforts being afforded Pelican Lake
3. Although the number of volunteers and volunteer hours were down, there were still over 750 donated hours in 2008
4. More resorts were actively educating their clients about AIS
5. The success of the husband/wife team at the State landing
6. The support of the Oneida County AIS Coordinator
7. The passage of the Oneida County ordinance making weed transport illegal
8. The passage of the dry hydrant ordinance NOTE: Both ordinances were supported in hearings by PLPOA members
9. The PLPOA supported the concept of a Lake Management Study

Areas to Improve

1. Once again communication was a continuing concern within the organization. It is hoped that a clear delineation of duties for 2009 will help address the problem.

2. Address the feeling of perceived apathy- that only a few people are doing all of the work. There is a need to keep those who have been deeply involved in the process to continue to be involved. The goal of an AIS free lake is worth the effort.

3. Need to continue to have people volunteer and to report their volunteer hours.

Conclusion

Another year has passed and through the efforts of our paid monitors, our many volunteers, and good fortune no signs of AIS were detected in Pelican Lake. It was an encouraging year with the two Oneida County ordinances passed to protect Oneida County Lakes and Rivers. The ordinances were advanced by Jennifer Holman, Oneida County AIS Coordinator who has offered leadership and support in the AIS program. She also met with town and city officials as well as lake and river groups to promote the AIS program and its goals.

None of these successes would be possible without the support of the State of Wisconsin for funding the AIS Education Grant. Thanks also goes to the Town of Schoepke and Enterprise for their continued financial support. Special thanks goes to the Town of Schoepke for sponsoring the grant and to Dick Dvorak, town clerk, for the details and paperwork related to the grant administration.

The PLPOA members and board of directors need to be recognized for their continuing monetary support and the hundreds of volunteer hours.

As the Editors Opinion column stated recently in the *Vilas County News Review* (1-7-09), the volunteers who are the foundation of the Clean Boats/Clean Waters program are “the front line of defense in a fight where prevention is the most effective, least costly alternative” in the AIS fight.

Written and submitted by

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