

## **Pelican Lake AEPP-455-15 Commentary**

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In 2015, Pelican Lake in Oneida County was once again able to continue a protection strategy dating back to 2005. The monitoring of Pelican Lake boat landings has been a successful and ongoing program using the Clean Boats/Clean Waters format as the model. Thanks to the support of the state of Wisconsin and the cooperation of the two townships of Schoepke and Enterprise, the Pelican Lake Property Owners (PLPOA) have worked to protect the lake and educate boaters to the threat of invasive species for a decade.

In this cooperative approach, the state provided a \$ 10,000 grant and the three entities mentioned paid equally the costs of the program surpassing the grant amount. The PLPOA administers the program through grant writing, administering landing workers, and developing a payroll system for those workers. This partnership has brought together two communities that don't always see eye-to-eye but do recognize the value of the lake to the citizens of this area and the visitors to the lake.

In 2014 there was a significant blue green algae event that brought negative publicity to this tourist area. It was a public health concern and caused many people to become educated about the problems associated with this algae. Thankfully 2015, showed only a minor occurrence of blue green algae. Hopefully the 2014 event was only caused by the heavy rains and winds that buffeted Pelican Lake that year.

### **Clean Boats/Clean Waters**

The Clean Boats/Clean Waters program continued at Keeler's Landing and the State Landing in the same form as the past. Resort and Campground owners on the lake cooperated with the program by distributing Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) materials to their clients and discussing the threat of invasives to all Wisconsin waters. They also checked boats and recorded the time that was spent in the AIS activities. This program furthers the reach of the CB/CW program being conducted at the landings.

Additionally there was some monitoring done at the public landing in the town of Pelican Lake. In the past few years a couple that lives on the lake renovated the old hotel and family groups use the hotel for week long family events. The landing is near the hotel and many of the guest utilizes it to access the lake for boating and jet skiing. This has been aided by a new dock next to the gas station in town. This dock was purchased by the Town of Schoepke and has seen increased usage of this landing.

### **Treatment of Invasives**

2015 was the second year that no chemical treatment of Eurasian Water milfoil was needed on Pelican Lake. As in 2014, the invasive was controlled by hand harvesting. This treatment method is preferred by the lake association and will continue to be used as long as no major colonies develop. Onterra, Inc. continues to partner with the PLPOA to give pre and post monitoring reports as well as advise the PLPOA to the presence and amount of EWM found in their surveys along with the best treatment methods.

Hand pulling has produced a result that limits the spread of EWM and produces no side effects from chemical dispersal. This treatment has been used to handle small areas of new EWM as well as treating plants that have recurred in past areas. Onterra's surveys have shown that EWM has been contained and in fact reduced in some areas.

### **Monitoring**

As in the past, the main landings monitored were Keeler's Landing and the State Landing. Limited monitoring also took place in the town of Pelican Lake. Monitoring took place for four (4) hours on Friday; eleven (11) hours on Saturday; and four (4) hours on Sunday. Holidays started with a one day to catch early vacationers followed by two (2) full days of monitoring and ended with another half day. The monitoring ran from the season fishing opener in the first week of May until Labor Day for Keeler's Landing and later in September for the State Landing.

In 2013 and 2014 there was a dense growth of native weeds in Musky Bay. That growth discouraged boaters from using Keeler's Landing later in the season and monitoring efforts were cut back there as boaters switched to the State Landing. This event continued in 2015 as evidenced by the number of boaters using Keeler's compared with the State Landing.

In addition, a new event happened this year at Pelican Lake. There was a day long powerboat race event. All of the boats were inspected on the eve of the race and a sticker attached showing that the boat had been inspected. There was excellent compliance. A Minnesota racer paid a compliment to the monitors who said they were friendly yet professional and appreciated their attitude toward this important job.

Oneida County has an excellent AIS Coordinator in Michele Sadauskas and an active staff servicing its 1100 lakes and hundred miles of streams. Michele has come to Pelican Lake to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Clean Boats/Clean Waters program. Stephanie, an LTE in the AIS program, shared with our monitors a new tool to pull weeds from jet skis. These

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contacts supported the team concept in Oneida County's AIS program and were appreciated by local monitors.

### **Monitors End of the Year Report**

By interviewing two of our primary landing monitors, I was able to hear success stories that reflect the positive outlook of both the people using the landings and the monitors themselves. The monitors look to keep Pelican Lake from additional invasives and to prevent invasives from being transported to other lakes. It is for them a personal challenge. The key to these ambassadors is to present a "we are in this together" approach. The approach is not confrontational but rather is educational. The key to this approach is to enlist the cooperation of the public to prevent the spread of AIS. The long term CB/CW program in Oneida County is reaping rewards as there is a slowing of the spread of invasive species that goes along with a more educated boating public.

When asked to describe the negatives the first monitor interviewed could think of none, but was able to list several positives. The first positive mentioned was the overwhelming majority of boaters who were aware of the threat of invasives. Additionally, 99% of the boats inspected were clean and boaters knowledgeable which is far different from a few years ago. The work of the monitors is to offer friendly reminders through conversations, inspections, and updated educational material.

This same monitor believes his job not just to educate and inspect, but also to act as a representative of the Pelican Lake area. By answering questions about area restaurants, bait shops, shopping, property for sale as well as giving fishing tips, the monitors educational efforts and inspections are better received. This approach led many of the boaters contacted to express their appreciation for our efforts to protect the beautiful lakes of Northern Wisconsin.

In a truly proactive activity this monitor has turned away boats that displayed possible AIS samples carried from other lakes to the landing. The boater is asked to power wash the boat at a car wash four miles from the landing. The owner of the car wash has agreed to offer a one-half fee boat wash when the boater explains the purpose for cleaning the boat and trailer. This represents a great community effort.

Another long time landing monitor related a series of stories. Here are a few.

Three boaters landed their boat at the state landing. Two got out of the boat and staggered ashore. The third fell out of the boat into the shallow water. He screamed for help

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and thrashed about in the water. The monitor told him to just stand up and he would not drown. She told the other two boaters that if they attempted to drive away that she would call the sheriff. At that point one of the men called a friend to pick them up. Twenty minutes later the friend arrived and carried them away.

In another story, the monitor was speaking with a friend and watching two young girls in a canoe. The girls were on the other side of the large bay and suddenly disappeared from sight. The monitor grabbed her binoculars and saw that the canoe had capsized and the girls were struggling in the water. She called 911 but help was 40 minutes away. She and her friend screamed for help. Finally, a man from a nearby cottage went to the girls rescue in his boat. He took the girls and their dog to their cottage. The deputy arrived and checked on the girls and found them shaken but fine. He gave sincere thanks to the monitor.

Another young man who was putting in his boat at Pelican Lake told the monitor that he saw a man about to pull away from Shawano Lake which is a hundred miles away. He asked the man if he was going to check for weeds and rain his live well. The boater had no idea of the reason behind the question. So the young man took him through the protocol. So the knowledge is being passed on which is the whole point of the program. Perhaps that newly educated boater will do the same.

These dedicated individuals are much more than “dock Nazis” as one local described them. They help people, inform people, and when necessary provide a form of discipline. The majority of lake users appreciate these efforts with some even thanking them for preserving the lake for them and the future generations. In return, one of our monitors referred to being a Clean Boats/Clean Waters monitor as a “Terrific Job.”

#### **Statistics**

3,128 boats were contacted at three landings in 2015. 7,417 people were educated. 858 hours were spent in the monitoring effort.

Keeler’s Landing monitors inspected 510 boats compared with 556 in 2014 and 517 in 2013. 1,132 people were educated in 2015; 1,184 in 2014; and 1,170 in 2013.

At the State Landing, 2,567 boats were inspected in 2015 compared with 2,189 in 2014; and 1,745 in 2013. 5,338 people were educated in 2015; 4,725 in 2014; and 3,592 in 2013.

The landing in town accounted for 51 boats inspected and 135 people educated. Weather, weed growth, the economy, and the price of gas are all factors that influence these numbers.

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The 3,128 boats inspected and the 7,417 people educated amount to nearly 18% of all boats inspected and people educated in the CB/CW program in Oneida County in 2015.

### **Volunteers**

The group of volunteers for the Clean Boats/Clean Waters program is stable. In the last two years, a husband and wife team has taken over the week to week scheduling of our paid landing monitors. As with most volunteers organizations, the same people do the work at the polls, work with community wide fund raisers, serve on boards and committees, and other jobs that keep a community functioning. It's the same with CB/CW monitors. Initially there were a number of monitors who were volunteers but that number diminished and so now most of our monitors are paid. The monitors all approach their work as if the lake was their own. That is hard to put in the form of pay and is much appreciated. As seen in the reports in this summary, they see monitoring as much more than a paid activity.

The Kayak Patrol had another year of enjoying their activity while being vigilant for aquatic invasive species. They kept careful record of hours spent on this activity. Riding close to the water on a leisurely trip across the lake provides a wonderful way to get close to the lake. The ladies have been trained in AIS identification and are offered refresher courses.

Once again the Sokaogon Chippewa community gave a cash donation to the PLPOA to be used for projects that protect and enhance Pelican Lake. Much of this money will be used to offset the costs associated with the CB/CW program since no grant was awarded in 2016.

### **Future Plans**

I feel that the decision to not award a grant for the CB/CW program in 2016 is shortsighted. Considering the large number of boats and people contacted, the state has been getting a bargain for the \$ 10,000 invested through the grant. While the lake community appreciates the funds invested in the past, I believe that continuing the CB/CW program is just a wise use of those dollars to insure continued protection against invasives. **In addition, it has created jobs and the workers spend their money in the local area. Thus it provides an economic boost as well as performing a service, two good things for the price of one.**

The PLPOA has decided to run its own program in 2016 along with help from the lakeside towns. That being said funds may dictate a reduced monitoring program.

Onterra will once again do a weed survey to identify and quantify invasives in Pelican Lake. Any invasives found will be treated by nonchemical means unless the volume proves unmanageable by hand pulling. Large colonies may necessitate chemical treatment.

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The PLPOA will use all of its resources to continue to protect and enhance the resources offered by Pelican Lake so that today's citizens and future generations will be able to enjoy this wonderful lake.