

Final Report for the Pelican Lake AIS Education Project 2011

Sponsor: Town of Schoepke

Project Number: AEPP-281-11

Overview

The Pelican Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA) with the Town of Enterprise and the Town of Schoepke has supported a Clean Boats/Clean Waters program on Pelican Lake since 2005. State grants were received in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010 and this year, 2011. In 2009, the towns and the PLPOA completely supported the landing program with no state aid although the number of hours where the landings were monitored was reduced. The Town of Schoepke has been the grant sponsor and the town clerk has been most helpful in providing payroll services and other clerical work to aid in the administration of the grant. The grant from the State of Wisconsin along with the money from both towns and the PLPOA allowed a thorough monitoring program for Pelican Lake in 2011. The two primary landings on the lake were monitored from the first of May through the end of September on Friday, Saturday and, Sunday.

2011 saw another change in the AIS Oneida County Coordinator position. The former coordinator, Lawrence Esslinger, was replaced on a limited contract hours basis by Michele Suduskus. Continuing in the excellent and personal approach that characterized Lawrence, Michele hit the ground running and has done a wonderful job in the position. She is very open and willing to provide answers to questions as well as excellent leadership in the fight against invasives. She has been very helpful in supporting AIS programs and coordinators throughout the county. As with Lawrence, she has met with nearly all town boards in an effort to get a town lake committee for each town- especially where there is no active lake association or district. On a positive note, the county has made the coordinators job permanent.

The statewide no weed carry on trailers lent support to the Oneida County law that was instituted in 2008. Along with the county wide effort to inform the public about the danger of invasives, the state effort through television, radio, and public advertisements has had a pronounced effect on the public's awareness of the AIS problem.

Our landing monitors are to be commended for their perseverance at the landings. The sentiment in the state is somewhat anti- DNR. These monitors are thought to be a part of the DNR and also seen as responsible for everything from low water levels to poor fishing to too many weeds in the lake. Throughout these unpleasant interludes at the landings, our paid workers and volunteers have seen their monitoring efforts as vital to preserving one of the finest lakes in the northwoods. Although there were unpleasant times, the majority of boaters welcomed the efforts to maintain an excellent lake environment.

Landing Monitors

Pelican Lake is 3600 acre lake is located in south eastern Oneida County and is the largest of the 1100 lakes in the county. As in years past the PLPOA, which coordinates the landing monitoring program, concentrated on the two main landings most utilized by the public, Keelers, located on County Highway Q, and the DNR State Landing, located on County Highway G. The public was offered literature concerning AIS and were educated concerning Eurasian water- milfoil, zebra mussels, curly-leafed pondweed as well as other invasives. Many boaters were from the Fox Valley and Madison areas where milfoil and zebra mussels are an ongoing concern. Many of these boaters expressed their appreciation of the efforts to prevent the spread of invasives and the wonderful condition of Pelican Lake.

There are additional landings at private campgrounds, a public landing in the Town of Pelican Lake, and smaller public landings around the lake. In the future, efforts to do more monitoring of these landings may be forthcoming. Monitoring of the campground and resort landings was a point of emphasis to the owners of these businesses during visits by our volunteer coordinator in 2011. The hours donated informing clients concerning AIS is evident in the number of hours reported by the businesses.

In 2011, there was significant contact made with both the resorts on the lake and the campgrounds. The owners of the resorts and campgrounds were quite cooperative in informing their clients of the threat of AIS and encouraging them to be sure their boats and motors were not carrying invasives into Pelican Lake.

In 2011, the long time monitoring team of Gary Blumreich and his wife, Nancy, were our primary monitors. Gary is a retired firefighter from nearby Rhinelander. He and Nancy are avid fishermen (persons) and treat the lake as if it was their own. Although they are paid monitors, their devotion to the lake is extraordinary. They often question if they should stay when there is little boat traffic or inclement weather as a way to best utilize the money for the program even though they could earn more by staying on the job. Gary enters the data for both landings at the state website. Unfortunately, Gary has developed an illness that may limit his working alone in 2012, but both indicated they want to continue.

We were also able to get two reliable substitutes to handle the landing duties when Gary and Nancy were unable to be present. Kathy Handt is a retired lady who was looking to stay active and has proved to be a most effective monitor. Jackie Belgram, who graduated in environmental sciences from a Minnesota university, had experience in monitoring landings and dealing with the public. She was eager to work until she gained a permanent position. In addition Jackie's mom, Sandy, has provided another personable and efficient monitor. It seems like a family affair at our landings.

This season seemed to be more positive in tone than the 2010 season. There are always a few who don't feel that anyone can tell them what to do or ask questions of them, but those were few in 2011. This may have been due to the increased presence on the waters of a DNR creel census worker, and fish

surveying crews from both the DNR and GLIFWIC. In addition to these groups, the first year of the Pelican Lake Management study was taking place. So representatives from Onterra were on the lake during the summer.

The season's coverage ran from the first week of May- the opening of the inland fishing season- through the end of September. The basic coverage was from three (3) on Friday afternoon through seven (7) pm; from six (6) in the morning on Saturday through six (6) in the evening; and from seven (7) in the morning on Sunday through one (1) in the afternoon. Lunch hours and additional Sunday hours were handled by volunteers.

Holidays were covered with additional hours. For example, if the holiday was Saturday, Friday hours were from noon to 7; Saturday 6 to 6; Sunday 6 to 6 and Monday from 7 to 1. It was felt that these coverages gave the best opportunity to educate the most boaters. After Labor Day, hours were reduced at each landing with monitoring tailored to the number of boaters.

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, and examine the boat, motor, and trailer for evidence of invasives. If any are found, the boater is asked to remove them. The boater is offered literature explaining the way to identify invasives and a sheet explaining clean boating practices. As boaters exit the lake, they are reminded to empty their live wells, remove any weeds present, and dispose of bait.

The head monitor would periodically take accumulated data and enter it into the DNR website. Landing monitor volunteers performed the following duties:

1. Help paid monitors check in boats at fishing tournaments. Volunteers would typically arrive at 5:30 and stay until tournament boats were checked in. This two person approach eased congestion at the landings.
2. Volunteers monitored landings when paid monitors were on lunch break.
3. Volunteers were used when extended coverage was needed.
4. Volunteers were on call when paid monitors were ill or had emergencies arise.

Pelican Lake has a core of dedicated volunteers but like many organizations, there is difficulty in maintaining that core. One of our long time volunteers had health concerns and so was not able to work many hours. Many people seem more interested in paying for the needed monitoring than giving the time. It is understandable. Our paid monitors do an outstanding job, so if it is the wish of the PLPOA members to pay for their services rather than spend their own time, that is how we will proceed.

Volunteer hours at the resorts, campgrounds and two main landings accounted for 247 hours. The second official year for our Kayak Patrol whose members were trained to detect invasives while they kayaked, accounted for 50 hours. Additional hours related to landing assignments, interviews for the landing jobs, volunteer assignments, grant writing, and activities related to Clean Boats/Clean Waters activities were 152 hours. The total of volunteer hours was 449 hours. A total of 21 different people worked as volunteers during the 2011 year working to make the Clean Boat/Clean Waters program successful.

Additional duties of the landing monitors included giving maps of Pelican Lake and the buoyed areas and explaining the VHS regulations. These explanations included asking if live wells were emptied, if they were carrying live fish from the lake (prohibited), and if they were carrying lake water from the lake (also prohibited.) This set of regulations is complicated and some fishermen do not choose to comply with the regulations. Monitors can only suggest and explain as they have no enforcement powers.

Monitors also worked fishing tournaments. The boats at the tournaments present a special problem in that they are in and out of various waters many of which contain AIS. Thankfully, these men and women are aware of the problem and want to protect the waters that they fish so are very compliant. Lakeview, which sponsored a tournament on Pelican, did a very good job this year in explaining the VHS and CB/CW procedures as a reminder to these fishermen by including AIS information in all tourney mailings and having a pre-tournament meeting. There were no incidents related to the tournament boaters.

A Typical Weekend

On Friday there are early arrivals as the weekend or week long vacationers arriving. Many are from the Fox Valley, some from the Madison area, and other areas of the state and some from outside of Wisconsin. Saturdays have locals who are enjoying their weekends and some out of the area people using the landings. There are early morning fisherman and then a lull in boaters. Later in the morning pleasure boaters arrive and usually from 9-11 there is steady traffic. On Sunday it seems that there is a bit later group of boaters probably due to Saturday night enjoyment. The landing hours were extended from noon to one (1) pm and hours were shifted from six (6) starting time until seven (7) am in order to see more boaters.

Much of the boat traffic depended on weather and the landing supervisors were given the option of shortening their hours if it appeared that there would be minimum traffic due to inclement weather.

Public Information

Statewide in 2011, 102,230 watercraft were inspected with 220,230 people contacted. In Oneida County, 10,110 boats were inspected with 22,125 people contacted. At Pelican Lake the state landing had 2,167 watercraft inspected and 4,743 people contacted. These statistics nearly mirror 2010. At Keelers Landing, 851 watercraft were inspected with 2,007 people contacted. There were 507 hours spent at the state landing and 438 hours spent at Keeler landing protecting Pelican Lake.

These statistics show the importance of the Pelican Lake program in both inspections and education of the public concerning AIS. Thirty percent (30%) of the watercraft inspected in Oneida County (3018/10110) and thirty-one percent (31%) of the people contacted in the county (6750/22125) happened at Pelican Lake in 2011. Seeing that Oneida County has over 1100 lakes, our lake community is most proud of that accomplishment.

All boaters were contacted as they arrived at the landings and as they left Pelican Lake. Informational handouts were offered- *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*. The sticker listed reminders on what to do when a boater takes his boat from the water. The reminders include such items as – 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-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 boaters were happy to receive the information and many thanked the monitors for the job they were doing.

Kayak Patrol

One of the up and coming recreations for people – especially ladies- on Pelican Lake is kayaking. There is a group of ladies who spend a great deal of time on the water. In 2010, they were approached to use the kayaking as a means to observe the conditions on the lake. Four of the ladies attend an AIS identification seminar in Three Lakes on July 8, 2010. The three hour session familiarized them with the most common invasives and informed them of the way to record those observations on the web.

These ladies added a new way to canvas the lake for problems. In 2011, they continued the project and recorded nearly fifty hours of observations while enjoying the beauty of the lake and their quiet sport. In the future, it is hoped that more people will join their ranks to protect Pelican Lake.

AIS Interdiction

This year the day that we hoped would not occur did. The Onterra company was doing a plant survey in June and came across a suspected EWM colony in Musky Bay on the west side of Pelican Lake. Samples were taken and sent to Stevens Point for confirmation and the sample was confirmed as Eurasian water milfoil.

In discussing this finding with Onterra, there were many questions. How long had the colony been there? Were there other colonies throughout the lake? What needed to be done? Could there be hand pulling of the weed? Should monitoring continue since Pelican now had EWM?

The proper DNR authorities were contacted as well as Oneida County AIS coordinator Michele Suduskus. Two official trips were made with Michele to survey the area and look for more plants. It was discovered that the two main colonies were concentrated with some scattered plants.

Onterra mapped and GPSed individual plants. Michele did the same when two water searches with PLPOA representatives were made. Finally, an attempt was made to hand remove some plants with limited success. The water was a bit too deep and the bottom so silty that it was not possible to remove plants. The area was marked in an effort to keep boaters from the area and limit the spread of the invasive.

Through consultation with Onterra, the DNR, and Michele a plan was made to chemically treat the colonies in the spring of 2012. A treatment grant was applied for with the help of Onterra and as of this writing, a bid from an application firm has been accepted. Hopefully, treatment can be completed before the water column reaches 65 degrees for the most effective treatment.

Rapid Response Team.

Members of the Rapid Response Team reacted to the above mentioned AIS scare and will continue to do so as needed.

Team members Bob Mott, Larry Hahn, and Ed Erickson lead the team with other board members and PLPOA members willing to help.

The process begins when team members conduct a thorough search of the area where the invasive sample was discovered. The search 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, 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 fresh
3. Take the sample to the DNR within three (3) days
4. Contact the volunteers to do a lake search
5. The volunteers monitor the lake and shoreline for the remainder of the season

Having the Lake Management Study group discover the colony was as good an outcome as could be desired since they have seen countless samples of invasive species as well as being able to give excellent leadership in the steps needed to address the problem.

Public Relations

Once again the PLPOA was recognized by Oneida County and AIS Coordinator Michele Suduskus as an outstanding lake association. In addition to this, Pelican Lake landing monitors Gary and Nancy

Volunteer Education and Involvement

2011 proved to be another challenging year in trying to garner volunteers. The PLPOA had a great turnout at the annual meeting, but getting volunteers was difficult. It seems that many members are willing to pay to have the landings monitored but their "lake time" is too valuable to use at the landings. Thankfully, our core members remain dedicated although some long time volunteers were unable to put in many hours due to physical problems and family responsibilities. Recruitment of workers will continue to be a challenge.

The association is encouraged by the Kayak group and the continuing Adopt-a-Shoreline efforts.

In 2011, the efforts continued to get the resorts and campgrounds involved in helping educate their clients regarding AIS. Seven campgrounds and resorts combined to give 185 hours of volunteer time to this cause.

In addition, the volunteer coordinator from PLPOA spent twenty-four hours working with these businesses to help them with needed paperwork and to answer questions.

Beyond this total of volunteer hours other member spent two hundred and sixty-four (264) hours in patrolling the lake, attending meetings, supervising the landings, and other duties. It is a credit to those people who see the lake as worth protecting.

Gains

This is the eighth year of the AIS Education Program at Pelican Lake. This ongoing commitment shows a resolve of the Towns of Enterprise and Schoepke and the Pelican Lake Property Owners Association to protect this most valuable resource. It is hoped that these groups partnering with Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin will continue in these most important educational and protective efforts. Among the significant gains in 2011 were the following:

1. To once again be recognized by the AIS Coordinator and Oneida County is an award that is appreciated by the Pelican Lake community.

2. Continuing the partnership with the two townships encompassing Pelican Lake is no small accomplishment. There is often talk in these difficult economic times of budget shortfalls yet they continue to offer needed support to the program. Even though Schoepke will no longer do the paperwork and carry the insurance there were assurances from both townships of continued financial support.
3. Additionally, the continued partnership with the resorts and campgrounds has resulted in wider distribution of educational materials and adds more people who have a hands on relationship with lake users. The PLPOA volunteer to work with the resorts is in her third year and has a good working relationship with the businesses
4. The group of Kayakers is another way to observe the lake through trained individuals and to do it in a fun way. These people are right on the water and can see warning signals as they enjoy using the lake. To see this program continue is excellent.
5. Keeping our long time landing monitors and gaining three skilled backups also is a meaningful gain for 2011. All have indicated that they will return in 2012 although Jackie is always looking for a more permanent placement. We do have another college student interested for 2012.
6. Finally, continuing the Lake Management Study for the second year is a wonderful gain for Pelican Lake. This baseline study will allow the lake community to better know the lake and judge changes in the future.
7. As difficult as the discovery of EWM was, the advantage of having the lake management people engaged to help the lake community through the treatment process is a positive.

Areas to Improve

1. Drafting new volunteers. This is an ongoing challenge that remains a top priority the importance of which cannot be understated.

2. Continue the quality of the monitoring at the landings. It is so important to emphasize the idea that each boater can be the one introducing an AIS specimen to the lake. Even though Pelican now has AIS, preventing more from entering and importantly leaving the lake is paramount.
3. Get the PLPOA and lake community to express to county and state officials the need to provide the funds to protect the lakes. It has to be a group process.
4. Improve the perception that we are all in this together- the locals, the visitors, and the lake association owners. The effort is too important to allow the idea of " I'm just using Pelican Lake so I don't need to follow the rules." We don't need an us against them idea to develop.

Conclusion

This has been an exciting and rewarding year. The organization and day to day operation of this monitoring program is not an easy enterprise.

The one thought that is foremost in the minds of all of our volunteers and paid workers is that the effort is worth the outcome.

The successes of 2011 would not be possible without the support of the State of Wisconsin for funding the AIS Grant. Thanks goes to the towns of Enterprise and Schoepke for their continuing financial support. Special thanks go 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.

Administering the program will be a challenge for the PLPOA in 2012. Assuming the Workman's Compensation insurance, the check writing, and related administrative duties will involve more people in a volunteer capacity.

The PLPOA membership and Board of Directors are to be commended for their continuing monetary support and volunteer hours.

Hopefully, all of these partners will pull together to continue the challenge of protecting the lakes and rivers of Wisconsin.

We speak for them since the creatures and waters cannot speak for themselves. That is a trust not to be taken lightly.

Written and submitted -

Bob Mott

March 2012