

## Final Report for the Pelican Lake AIS Education Project 2010

Sponsor: Town of Schoepke

Project Number: AEPP-227-10

### 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 and this year, 2010. In 2009, the towns and the PLPOA completely supported the landing program with no state aid although the number of hours where the landings 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 2010. The two primary landings on the lake were monitored from the first of May through the end of September on Friday, Saturday and, Sunday.

After not filling the AIS coordinator position for nearly a year, Oneida County has hired an energetic and efficient coordinator in the person of Lawrence Esslinger. He has been very helpful in supporting AIS programs and coordinators throughout the county. He 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. 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 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

## Page 2

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 some monitoring of these landings may be forthcoming.

In 2010, 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 2010, 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.

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. She had just finished working with the census and was a most effective monitor. Jackie Belgnam, recently 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.

As mentioned earlier, there were some difficult times for the monitors. It seemed that local residents offered the most problems somehow thinking that they did not have to be as observant of rules as the "outsiders." Some complained about the dam and water levels early- low water and later-erosion caused by high water. Gary went beyond the call of duty when an elderly gentleman could not get his motor going after launching his boat. Gary took off his shoe, rolled up his pants, and pulled the fellows boat back to the landing.

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; 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 another had a close family member become ill. 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. Maybe that is the way of the future.

Including entering data paid workers accounted for 969 hours at the landings. Volunteer hours at the resorts, campgrounds and two main landings accounted for 227.25 hours. Our new group the “Yackety-Yackers” who were trained to detect invasives while they kayaked accounted for 61.5 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 111 hours. The total of volunteer hours was 399.75 hours. A total of 19 different people worked as volunteers during the 2010 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

In entrance surveys conducted by Pelican Lake monitors during the 2010 season, a number of interesting responses were noted. Ninety-three (93) percent said there were not on another body of water within the last 5 days. One hundred (100 )percent said they inspect their boats/trailers for weeds before launching. Ninety-seven (97) percent said they dispose of bait before leaving the lake. Ninety-nine (99) percent drain their live wells and boats. Ninety-nine percent said they are aware of the various laws related to AIS/VHS.

When asked if they would use a Wash Station if it were at the landings, sixty-two (62) percent said they would use it. This question had our monitors searching for answers. What type of wash station? Would boaters have to pay for it? Would it take up parking spaces especially at a small landing? Would everyone be allowed to use it. The monitors needed some background to reply to these questions.

Finally, when asked to respond to the best way to reach boaters concerning AIS these were the responses TV-261, Newspaper-771, Internet-203, Billboards-151, Signs-938, and In Person- 1642. By far

the best way to educate the public is the Clean Boats/Clean Waters approach with the landing monitors who offer a personal approach.

The WDNR has reported in 2009 that watercraft inspectors have been the main source of AIS information for boaters and anglers since the inspections first began. That has not changed in 2010- at least not on Pelican Lake. In a series of questions asked of boaters during the 2010 season there were many revealing statistics.

Nearly twice as many of those surveyed said that a person is the best way to get information to boaters and fishermen (1,642 to signs-938) with 771 for magazines/newspapers. Television was suggested by only 261 boaters. It is clear that the landing monitor program is vital in continuing the AIS fight.

Other areas of the survey revealed that nearly 100% of boaters practice preventative measures before launching their boats or when leaving the landing. Some of the preventative measures mentioned were – inspecting and removing plants from boats and motors; disposing of bait; draining boat; and draining live well .

Ninety-nine (99%) percent of boaters were aware of the laws regarding AIS.

Sixty-two (62%) would use a wash station- although there was some confusion regarding this question.

Only one percent (1%) had weeds present on their boats/motors or equipment.

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-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 boaters were happy to receive the information and many thanked the monitors for the job they were doing. Unfortunately there were a select few that were disrespectful toward the monitors. Some felt that it infringed on their personal rights; others complained about the water levels or about the lack of fishing success. Some felt that since they were property owners that they should get

special treatment. One of our long time monitors nearly resigned over the treatment. Fortunately, she remained for the entire season.

## **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. 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. 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 ( who some call the Yakety-Yackers) added a new way to canvas the lake for problems. They recorded over 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**

There was one confirmed sample of Eurasian water milfoil detected this season. An incident occurred at the state landing that was a bit curious. It was a busy Saturday. A boat was nearing the landing to leave and three (3) boaters were waiting to be checked and launch. As the boater loaded the trailer the monitor saw weeds hanging from the back trailer area. The guy pulled forward and the monitor asked him to remove the weeds. She took a sample and asked some questions about where he had last boated and he said Mosinee area. She got his boat ID number and then checked in the waiting boats. When she was done, the guy had left.

When the sample was checked it was confirmed to be EWM. The water guard was given the information as follow up and when contacted the owner said he was not in the area on the date and his boat was not as identified by the monitor.

Three PLPOA members searched the area surrounding the landing thoroughly, took samples and had the samples checked by the DNR. No AIS specimens were discovered. The thought was that the person had

the sample on the trailer when he launched and it was not seen by the monitor. When he pulled his boat out, it was discovered.

Hopefully, this was just a close call but the area will be checked closely this spring.

## **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 Kirby Ament lead the team with other board members and PLPOA members willing to help as needed.

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

A help this season (2011) will be the members of the Lake Management Study group who will be mapping the lake and weed populations. The Pelican Lake Community will get a scientific report of the lake and its biomass.

## Public Relations

Once again the PLPOA was recognized by Oneida County and AIS Coordinator Lawrence Esslinger as an organization committed to keeping Pelican Lake AIS free as well as educating the boating public.

The landing monitors (as the surveys once again established) were key representatives of both the community and the DNR. Even though they are not employees of the DNR, their demeanor in dealing with the public reflects well on the organization. Our monitors are cautioned that they are not enforcement people but are educators. The distribution of AIS literature serves as a much needed face to face contact for the community. The monitors establish relationships with the 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.

Again this season monitors reported that a number of boaters expressed their thanks for the program to ensure that this fine water body continued to offer a beautiful place for them to enjoy.

## Statistics

The economy certainly affected boat traffic and recreational users in 2010. Hopefully, the increase in boating activity marks an improvement in the economy that will continue.

A total of three thousand two hundred and three (3,203) boats were inspected from May through September in 2010. This compares with 2,809 in 2009. Six thousand nine hundred and eighty-nine (6,989) people were offered AIS educational materials in 2010. This compares to 6,050 people in 2009. This increase in boater numbers occurred even though the early part of the season saw the lowest water levels in years.

## Volunteer Education and Involvement

2010 proved to be the most challenging year to date in trying to garner volunteers. The PLPOA had a great turnout at the annual meeting and was able to get three new board members but getting landing 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 new Kayak group and the continuing Adopt-a-Shoreline efforts. Also seven (7) people trained in the Clean Boats/Clean Waters Program this year (2010).

In 2010 the efforts to get the resorts and campgrounds involved in helping educate their clients regarding AIS showed continued promise. Eight campgrounds and resorts combined to give over two hundred (200) hours of volunteer time to this cause.

In addition the volunteer from PLPOA spent twenty-two 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 forty (240) 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 seventh 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 2010 were the following:

1. Once again through concerted efforts, Pelican Lake remains free of EWM and curly leafed pondweed. These major AIS players can entirely disrupt the enjoyment of the lake by boaters, swimmers, and fishermen. This remains the main goal and the number one accomplishment of the AIS education efforts.
2. To once again be recognized by the AIS Coordinator and Oneida County is an award that is appreciated by the Pelican Lake community.

3. 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.
4. 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 involvement with the fight to keep Pelican Lake free from AIS. The PLPOA volunteer to work with the resorts is in her second year and has a good working relationship with the businesses.
5. The PLPOA also gained 501(c)3 status this year. With this status the association is prepared to raise additional funds to improve Pelican Lake in the near and distant future.
6. The new 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.
7. Keeping our long time landing monitors and gaining two skilled backups also is a meaningful gain for 2010. All have indicated that they will return in 2010 although Jackie is looking at a job to begin her career in a Western state.
8. Finally, moving to the implementation stage of a Lake Management Study 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.

## 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.

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.

Lawrence Esslinger, the recently retired Oneida County AIS Coordinator did a wonderful job. His dedication, level-headed approach, and personal involvement left a lasting impression on the people who worked with him. His shoes will be hard to fill.

The successes of 2010 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.

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.

