

A wooden ice fishing jig is positioned on a large, rectangular block of clear ice. The jig consists of a long wooden handle with two circular holes, a metal spring mechanism, and a small brass bell. A red flag is attached to the top of the jig. The scene is set in a snowy, open field with a line of bare trees in the background under a cloudy sky.

Frozen Down Under

A 3-Year Assessment of Ice Anglers
and Aquatic Invasive Species

Background

- **Oneida County, WI has over +1100 lakes**
- **Home of the Minocqua Chain of Lakes (6400 acres) and the Three Lakes Chain of Lakes (7000 acres)**
- **Over 31,000 people contacted via the Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) program in 2013**
- **What about winter???**
- **Some lakes/landings receive heavy ice fishing pressure during winter**



Objectives

1. To be visible and increase AIS awareness to ice anglers at heavily ice-fished lakes.



2. To perform AIS outreach at ice fishing tournaments.



3. To create an ice fishing survey that we could both gather data from *and* give us opportunities to discuss AIS with anglers.

Oneida County Ice Fishing Survey

1. In addition to ice fishing do you also do open water fishing?

Yes No

2. How often do you ice fish multiple lakes in one day?

Never Often
 Rarely Always

3. What species of fish do you ice fish for? (check all that apply)

Panfish Northern
 Walleye Some other fish? _____

4. Do you ever refresh your bait bucket with lake water when you ice fish?

Yes No I don't use bait – I only use artificials

5. When ice fishing with bait, once your bait has been in the water, do you *EVER* return the used bait to your bait bucket?

Yes No I don't use bait – I only use artificials

6. During a typical ice fishing day, which time periods do you fish? (check all that apply)

Morning (dawn to 12:00 pm) Evening (5:01 pm to 9 pm)
 Afternoon (12:01 pm to 5:00 pm) Night (9:01 pm to pre-dawn)

7. During a typical winter, how many ice fishing tournaments do you fish? If none, please enter "0".

I typically fish _____ ice fishing tournaments each year

CONTINUED ON REVERSE SIDE → → →

- 9 questions
- Survey was developed with help from Jordan Petchenik, Social Science Research Scientist from WDNR
- Option to fill in name and contact information to be registered for a drawing
- Multiple baitshops throughout county donated prizes

Winter 2012



- Hired Angela Wenninger, *quickly*, in late January after getting the OK on the project from WDNR
- Funding was for mileage and staffing only
- Missed some early tournaments in January
- Total of 172 surveys completed
- Surveys showed some *interesting* results!

Winter 2013



- Awarded a WEEB grant that included mileage, staffing, AIS ice shack, outreach flags, and misc. supplies
- Hired Chris Hamerla in early January
- Added 2 questions to survey to gather data on travel patterns
- Total of 345 surveys completed, with an estimated 1000 people contacted!



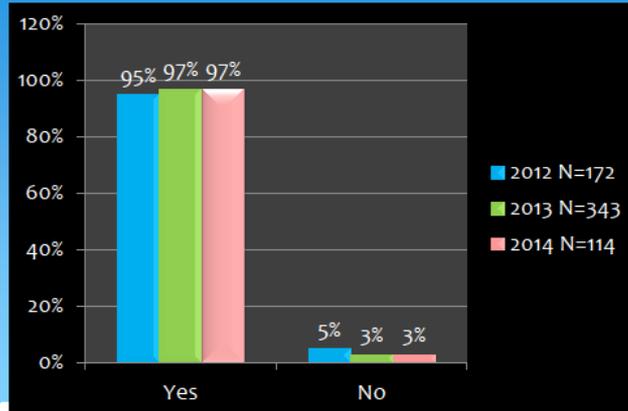
Winter 2014

- **One tough winter**
- **Only 114 anglers surveyed!**
- **Extreme cold, deep snow conditions, and tournament cancellations proved difficult for winter outreach**

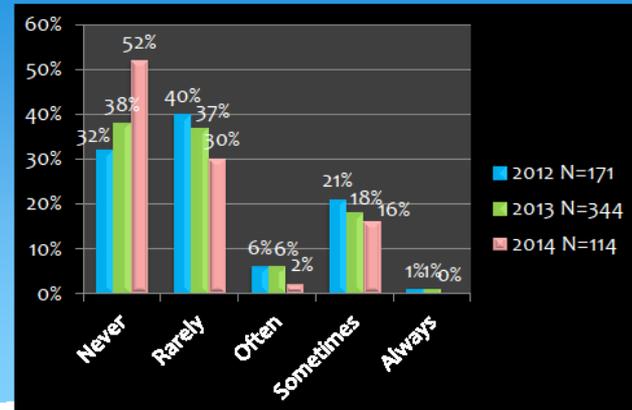


Findings

In addition to ice fishing do you also do open water fishing?

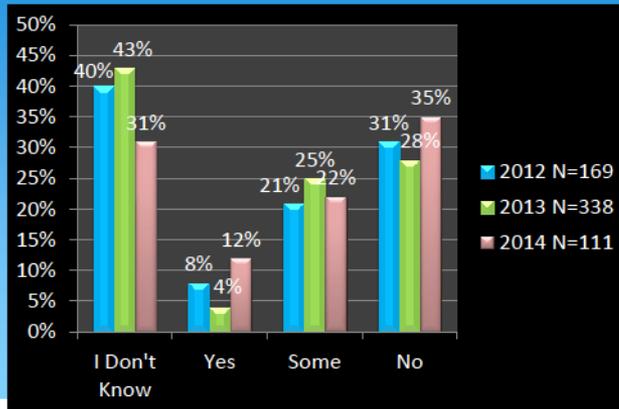


How often do you ice fish multiple lakes in one day?



Findings

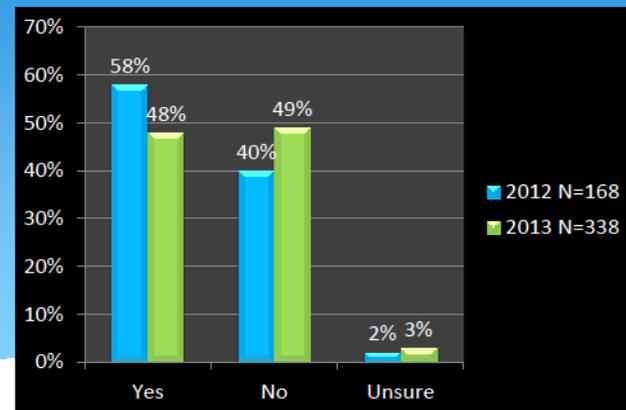
Do you believe aquatic invasive species are dormant (inactive) in winter?



Very interesting and not expected!

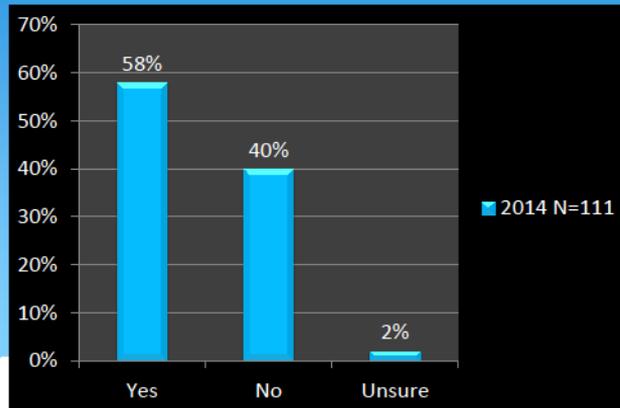


During any fishing (open water or ice fishing) have you ever been approached by a Clean Boats Clean Water volunteer at a boat landing?

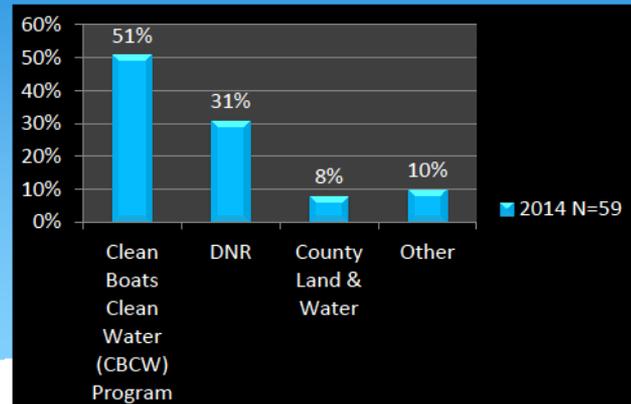


Findings

During any fishing (open water or ice fishing) have you ever been approached by an individual that discussed AIS with you?



If yes (to #9), do you know who that individual was affiliated with?



Lessons Learned



- **Clean Boats Clean Waters inspections *appear* to miss a segment of the population**
- **Not all anglers have boats, so do not frequent boat landings**
- **Anglers may live on a lake, fish smaller lakes without CBCW inspectors, or fish on rivers**

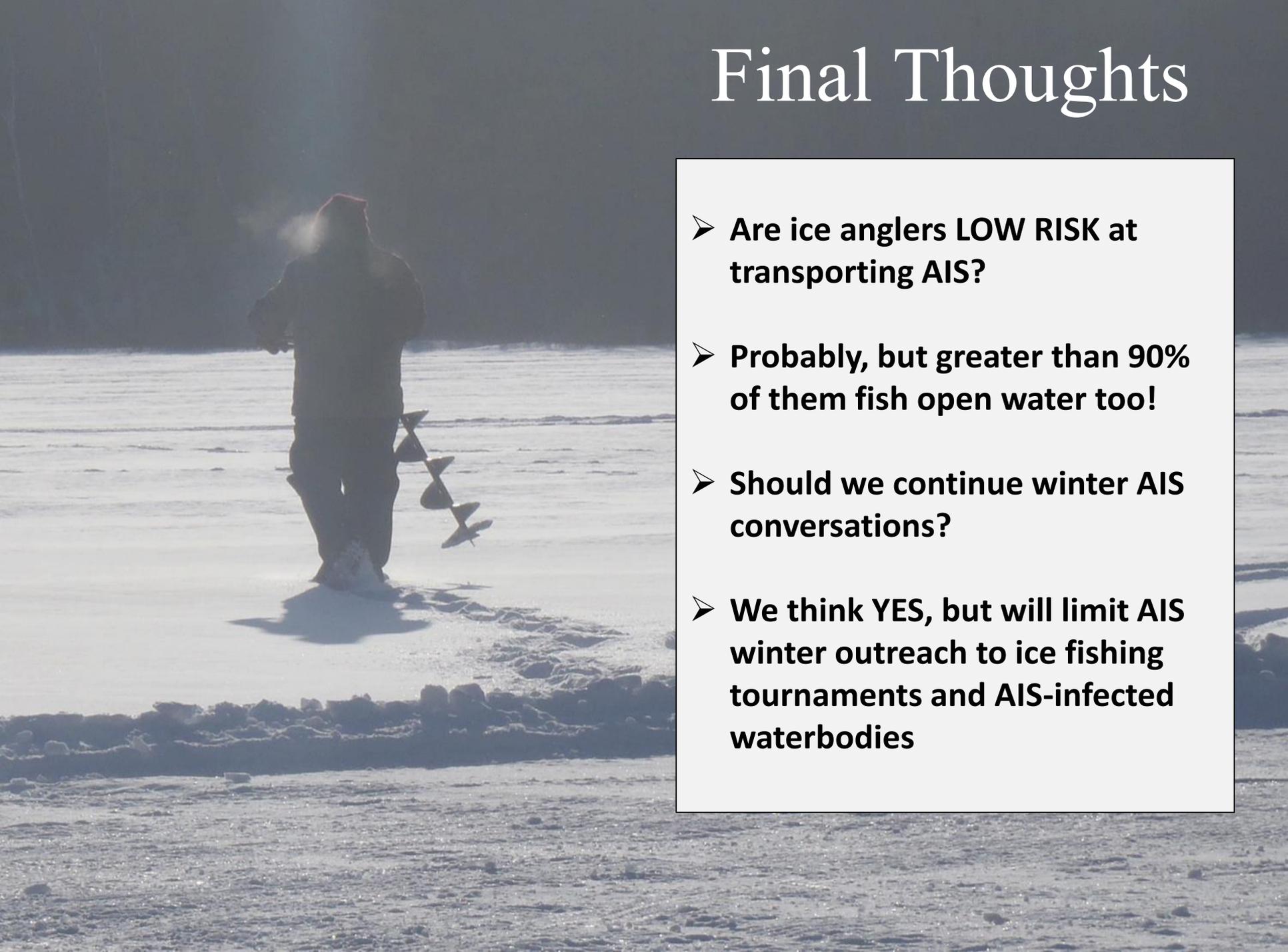
Lessons Learned



Lots of plant discussions!

- **Ice anglers were approachable, laid back, and willing to fill out surveys**
- **Outreach during winter months generated engaging, productive, and positive AIS discussions**
- **AIS Outreach Specialists were able to discuss angler's risky behaviors while that behavior was happening**

Final Thoughts

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- **Are ice anglers LOW RISK at transporting AIS?**
 - **Probably, but greater than 90% of them fish open water too!**
 - **Should we continue winter AIS conversations?**
 - **We think YES, but will limit AIS winter outreach to ice fishing tournaments and AIS-infected waterbodies**



Thank you!

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- Angela Wenninger
- Chris Hamerla
- Stephanie Boismenu
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- Wisconsin Environmental Education Board