Waterfowl Hunter AIS Outreach Campaign 2016-2018

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Samantha Olsen, Conservation Warden, WI Department of Natural Resources
Jeanne Scherer, AIS Outreach and Monitoring Specialist, UW-Extension & WI Department of Natural Resources
Why duck hunters?

Do Hunters Visit Multiple Waters Within Five Days?

- Yes: 48% (n=443)
- No: 52%

B. Steckart 2016
• Campaign background—Samantha Olsen
• Outreach Tools and evaluation—Jeanne Scherer
• Being the boots on the ground—Chris Hamerla
Looks good, 
BUT 27% were unaware or unsure that NR40 applied to waterfowl hunting. 
Also, 30% were unaware or unsure that their gear could transport AIS.
What are Wisconsin Hunters Willing to do to Prevent the Spread of AIS?

- Inspect & Remove: Gear
- Inspect & Remove: Dog
- Drain: Gear
- Brush: Gear
- Rinse: Gear
- Dry: Gear
- Soak: Hot Water
- Freeze Gear
- Soak Bleach
- Soak: Virkon
- Switch Gear
Waterfowl Hunter AIS Outreach

- A partnership of
  - WDNR Law Enforcement, Water Guards
  - Aquatic Invasive Species Partners – professional and volunteers
  - UW Extension Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach staff
Campaign History

- **2016 and 2017:**
  - Test outreach tools and tactics to increase awareness among waterfowl hunters about their important role in AIS prevention
  - Increase AIS prevention behaviors among waterfowl hunters
  - Led by WDNR Law Enforcement-Water Guards

- **2017**
  - Increase outreach—about 11,500 reached in 2016
  - Test new tools—revamped survey, duck bands
  - Increase awareness by partnering with Office of Communications
  - Encourage more volunteers and staff to assist Water Guards

- **2018**
  - Led by AIS Partnership (UW Extension, WDNR, Statewide AIS Partners)
  - Expand the use of social media to get the word out to hunters
  - Expand statewide coverage
2016 Pilot Campaign Locations
Repeated in 2017

- Crex Meadows
- Green Bay
- Horicon Marsh
- Lake Poygan
- Two Rivers
- Sheboygan Marsh
- Big Lake
- Muskego
- Mississippi River
- Rock Lake
- Mead Wildlife Area
Targeted 37 potential boat launches in these counties.

Statewide opener Sept. 29-30
Outreach Tools

- **Statewide**
  - Articles provided to Lake Tides, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and Ducks Unlimited
  - Statewide Press release: UW Extension and WDNR Office of Communications
  - Social media-Partners and Office of Communications
  - Interviews-Partners’ local news, Media alerts by Office of Communications
  - Two webinars provided for training attended by participants, potential participants and interested MN staff.

- **At access points**
  - Boat Inspection Survey
  - Prompts: bird bands
  - Talking Points
  - Background on duck hunting for the boat inspectors
Media

Aquatic Invasive Species Waterfowl Hunter Outreach

Submitted by Jeannine Scherer, AIS Outreach Specialist, UW Extension

Thank you to the over 700 waterfowl hunters who took the time to speak with Wisconsin DNR Water Guards, Wardens and partners across the state who conducted boat inspections and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) education during the 2017 duck hunting openers. For the second year, AIS outreach was held at access points at the Mead Wildlife Area, Big Muskego Lake, Horicon Marsh, and in the Green Bay and La Crosse areas. This year, AIS partner organizations also spoke with hunters at Crex Meadows, Rock Lake (Jefferson County), Two Rivers, Lake Poygan and Sheboygan Marsh.

The Waterfowl Hunter AIS Outreach Campaign is based on the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program many know from the summer boating season.

Waterfowl Hunters Join Efforts to Help Stop the Spread of AIS

“Healthy wetlands and waterways support strong waterfowl populations,” said Paul Samerdzic, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist stationed at the Horicon Marsh. “We know that Wisconsin waterfowl hunters are committed to conservation, and they’ve been solid partners in restoring and improving wetland habitats. We don’t want these efforts to be diminished by the spread of damaging aquatic invaders.”

Over 200 hours were logged while talking with about 750 hunters. Interestingly, over 50% had never been contacted at a boat landing about checking and cleaning their equipment for AIS. “It is encouraging that we might be reaching a new audience,” said Jeannine Scherer, statewide
Survey

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**Waterfowl Hunter AIS Outreach 2018**

**Watercraft Inspection Report**

Form 3200-1200   (6/18)

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**Inspector Name(s):**

**Waterbody Name(s):**

**County:**

**Date:**

**Start Time:**

**End Time:**

**Total Hours Spent:**

**Paid:**

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**Boat Was...**

- **Entering**
- **Leaving**

**Questions to Ask Boater**

- Have you been contacted by a watercraft inspector this season?
- Are you willing to answer a few questions?

**Was boat used during the past 5 days on a different waterbody?**

- If YES, where?

**Waterbody Name**

**County / State**

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**Discuss Following Prevention Steps with Boater**

- **Steps 1 & 2:** Inspect boat, trailers and equipment and remove any attached plants/animals, including from decoys and dogs. Mud on anchors can hide many AIS.
  - Have you heard about this law before? (see prompt)

- **Step 3:** Drain all water from boats, vehicles and equipment.
  - Do you have any questions? (see prompt)
  - If hunter uses decoys, blinds, dogs, state following steps:

- **Step 4:** Drain water from decoys, check your blinds and dogs for seeds, plant fragments, mud and plants. * Also check under vests on dogs.
  - Were you aware that this is required? (see prompt)

**Do you use real plants for blinds?** (If YES, share message below.)

- **Phragmites Message:** Only dead stems of plants can be used, no seed heads or root material. Ok in Restricted county. No phragmites can be used at all in Prohibited counties. (see Talking Points)
  - Do you have any questions on this law as it can be a little confusing? (If yes, see Prompt. Offer the hunters brochure and watch cards, bird bands)

* Duckweed and watermeal are exempt from NR40.

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**# of people contacted**

**Steps I observed taken to prevent AIS spread**

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**Comments:** (Please note other hunting locations mentioned)
Talking Points

**Waterfowl Hunter AIS Prevention Step Prompts to Assist Inspector**

If hunters are not familiar with the prevention steps or have questions, help them understand the reasons for taking these actions. You can use the prompts below to assist you in your explanation and discussions at the boat landing/hunting access point. **Remember the goal is to make this as relevant as possible to the hunter by localizing the issue and making it relevant to their recreational activities through the conversation.**

**Steps 1 & 2 – INSPECT AND REMOVE**

**Why this is important:** Plants and animals can easily attach to boat/equipment/dogs/decoys or become entangled in boat motors and blinds and then be moved to another lake or wetland. Mud on anchors and other equipment is also a prime hiding place for AIS. This is a concern in this area because - [ADD LOCAL CONCERNS HERE]

**Step 3 – DRAIN BOAT AND EQUIPMENT**

**Why this is important:** Many organisms such as Faucet snails or plant fragments (example: bulbils of starry stonewort) are tiny, even invisible to the naked eye and easily transported in water from one waterbody to the next. We know that many of the hunters that frequent our lake/wetland also spend time at - [ADD LOCAL CONCERNS HERE]

**Step 4 – DRAIN DECOYS AND ANY CONTAINERS**

**IMPORTANT HUNTING GEAR MESSAGES**

**Dogs, decoys and more:**
Dogs, push poles, decoys, decoy bags and decoy anchors can easily be covered by mud, tiny snails, larvae of zebra mussels, seeds and plant fragments. Besides in their fur, AIS can hide under a dog’s vest or collar. Decoys need to be drained. Mud needs to be removed.

**Blinds:** Know what county you are in. Non-native phragmites is restricted in some counties, primarily eastern counties. It is not a violation of NR40 to use dead stems for blinds. No roots/rhizomes or seed heads can be used. This is true for any plant used. If the hunter visits counties where NN phragmites is prohibited, they must use a different material/plant for blinds.
Prompts
-remind water users of the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! message because they are designed with common branding

The bird band prompt honors the hunters’ tradition of collecting duck bands that they save after reporting that have harvested a banded duck.
Making the Outreach
Work-Boots on the Ground

The Mead Wildlife Area Team
Coordinating staff and volunteers

- **Staff:**
  - Law Enforcement
  - Local AIS Partnership and WDNR AIS Staff
- **Volunteers—a potential pool**
  - Schools organizations—ex. UW Stevens Point Law Enforcement Club or wildlife/ecology clubs
  - Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and Ducks Unlimited members and family members who don’t hunt, but know the sport
  - Students in need of volunteer hours
  - Area Friends groups—ex. Friends of Mead
  - Master Naturalists
Volunteers-setting them up for success

- Utilize campaign training materials in our “toolbox”
  - In person training and practice
  - Talking points, survey
  - Duck ID
  - Getting to know waterfowl hunting tools
Volunteers—setting them up for success

- Getting those boots on the ground
  - Determine their comfort level with the tasks and assign access points accordingly
  - Pair experienced with inexperienced people
  - Coordinator should check in during the day
Timing can be everything!

- **Hours:**
  - In general, 8am-2pm and 5pm-closing

- **Weather:**
  - Warm and sunny nice for the beach, not for duck hunting
  - Overcast days mean more hunters and longer days...
  - Unless there’s a Packers game on!
### Results—2017

**Survey results:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterfowl Hunter 2017 AIS Campaign</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch hours</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boats in other waters within last 5 days</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters surveyed</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 300 more hunters heard the message from Law Enforcement and others who did not use the survey.

In addition to the five primary locations, outreach was also conducted at Crex Meadows, Rock Lake (Jefferson Co.), Two Rivers, Lake Poygan and Sheboygan Marsh in 2017.
Results – 2018
Limited outreach will continue during hunting season

Data entered as of 10/8/2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff and volunteers</th>
<th>28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer and staff hours</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters contacted</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers were impacted by:
- Some areas great weather-ducks fly high in a clear, blue sky
- Statewide opening date-greater hunter dispersal
- Heavy rain impacts: wider range of hunting habitat
- Strong woodland food source
- No more Water Guards participation
Going Forward

• 2019
  • Further engagement by AIS Partners throughout the state
  • Find more sources for volunteers
  • Expand the use of social media to get the word out to hunters
  • Find new opportunities, such as special hunts for kids and disabled hunters
  • Outreach to hunting guides
Thank you!