



Get Involved in Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week! June 1-8, 2008

The Department of Environmental Quality's Office of the Great Lakes (OGL) is sponsoring the third annual Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Awareness Week on June 1-8, 2008, with collaborative efforts from other state and federal agencies as well as private and nonprofit organizations. The purpose of AIS Awareness Week is to raise awareness about AIS prevention and control of AIS, such as the zebra mussel, Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife, round goby, and ruffe in Michigan and Great Lakes waters. Local entities are encouraged to recruit volunteers and host activities or events to educate the public about AIS prevention and control particularly at boat launch sites. These locations can be effective in promotion of AIS awareness and preventative measures such as watercraft inspection.

An AIS is defined as a waterborne, non-native organism that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species, the ecological stability of impacted waters, or threatens commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities.

It is important to prevent the spread and further introductions of AIS because they:

- Reduce game fish populations
- Ruin boat engines and jam steering equipment
- Make lakes/rivers unusable by boaters and swimmers
- Dramatically increase the operating costs of drinking water plants, power plants, dam maintenance, and industrial processes
- Reduce native species
- Degrade ecosystems
- Affect human health
- Reduce property values
- Affect local economies of water-dependent communities

Planning for AIS Awareness Week can be as easy as publicizing efforts that are already ongoing throughout the state at various levels in your community and/or organization. Start with program efforts that you currently have and try to schedule them for AIS Awareness Week.

This is also a great time to launch new programs or activities that educate the public regarding AIS control and prevention. You may also want to pool resources with other organizations – not only will this further your outreach efforts, but it will help you plan activities that you may not have the resources to do alone. This week is a great opportunity for government to join forces with business, industry, environmental groups, community organizations, and citizenry at large to spread awareness about actions that can be taken towards preventing the spread and introduction of AIS. It is important for your community to be involved in AIS Awareness Week efforts. The type of activity is limited only by your imagination and energy. Check out our website for more information at: www.michigan.gov/dequaticinvasives.

STATE/LOCAL AGENCIES:

Coordinate volunteers at local boat launch sites to educate boaters about AIS, provide preventative measures and watercraft inspection techniques.

Formally proclaim Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Awareness Week – get officials or agency heads to sign formal declarations for the week and use local newspapers and local cable television to print/announce the declarations.

Circulate educational materials – mention AIS Awareness Week in newspapers, posters, and any other printed materials from your office.

Hold brown bag lunch seminars – this activity may be coordinated with universities, federal agencies, organizations or industries. Try to spark interest, but be sure to get management’s support when organizing such an activity.

Organize slide and video presentations – this low-cost activity can educate community groups.

Hold facility tours of fish hatcheries – provide tours emphasizing the various sources of introductions and the steps one can take to prevent the spread and minimize the impacts of AIS.

Host an AIS training seminar – this activity is an excellent way to educate people about the steps they can take to prevent the spread and minimize the impacts of AIS.

BUSINESSES:

Include an article on AIS in your newsletter during AIS Awareness Week.

Distribute informational materials through tourism related industries.

Post a sign at all pet shops to advise consumers not to dump aquarium contents in any waters of the state.

Host a conference or workshop on prevention and cost savings – Tailor the workshop to meet the needs of your business/community. Point out the benefits and cost effectiveness of preventing the spread of AIS, minimizing the impacts on our resources, and increasing value to the resource.

COMMUNITIES/ALL TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS:

Organize a lake monitoring activity on your lake, river or stream for AIS during AIS Awareness Week.

Perform a boat inspection demonstration.

Distribute AIS informational materials at your city park or lake.

Perform a beach cleanup for zebra mussel shells.

Post signs at the local boat launches that warn boaters and anglers of AIS and the ability to spread them through boating and fishing equipment.

Have a scavenger hunt for AIS in your local park, wetland, or lake.

SCHOOLS:

Have a student write and present a play, puppet show, or musical performance about AIS.

Have a student write an essay or poem about the impacts of AIS on the Great Lakes, Michigan waters, or their local community. Have students discuss the impacts on fisheries, shoreline, recreational, sport and commercial fishing.

Have students identify all of the sources of introductions of AIS into the Great Lakes.

Organize a field trip to visit a lake or river to observe the impacts of AIS on Michigan waters.

Have a resource manager speak to your students about AIS.

Sponsor a purple loosestrife biological control program in a local wetland or lake.

Teach a lesson on the disruption of the Great Lakes food web by AIS.

Have students make a personal pledge to do one thing during AIS Awareness Week that will help prevent the spread or minimize the impact of AIS.

Develop a bulletin board that emphasizes things people can do to prevent the spread of AIS and actions they can take to minimize their impacts.

Have students develop a poster to convey a message about the importance of preventing the introduction and spread of AIS.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS:

Educate the public through fairs, boat shows, or outdoor events.

Have a guest speaker give a presentation on prevention and control activities.

Hold panel discussions on AIS.

Send electronic messages to all staff members in your agency/organization announcing AIS Awareness Week.

Plan environmental conferences during this week that focus on AIS awareness, monitoring, prevention and control.

Develop and distribute AIS fact sheets.

Have a Clean-up Day for local lakes, rivers, and beaches to remove any AIS such as zebra mussel shells.

Provide an article for newsletters or local newspapers focusing on a particular AIS prevention or control measure.

Get involved in the “Hydrilla Hunt,” a search for a new invasive aquatic plant.

Remember that the purpose of AIS Awareness Week is to raise awareness for AIS prevention and control. AIS Awareness Week is a great opportunity to start or continue taking action to prevent the spread of AIS and future introductions of new species.

For more information or to obtain informational materials about aquatic invasive species, check out www.michigan.gov/deqaquaticinvasives, or contact the Office of the Great Lakes at 517-335-4056. Additional information can be found at www.protectyourwaters.net.