



A Comprehensive Regional Public Outreach Campaign on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Eugene C. Braig IV

Assistant Director, Ohio Sea Grant College Program



A Comprehensive Regional Public Outreach Campaign on AIS

- A Great Lakes–wide collaboration organized through the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network and led by Minnesota:
 - Minnesota (project host), Wisconsin, Illinois-Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York Sea Grant programs
 - David Kelch, Eugene Braig, and Frank Lichtkoppler for Ohio Sea Grant
- Start/End dates: August 2010 – September 2012
- Funding: \$147,704 to Ohio programming (\$1,555,235 project wide, routed from USFWS)
- Program Area: I.B.2. Invasive Species Prevention and Control Grant Program

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- The Great Lakes Sea Grant Network proposes a comprehensive outreach initiative targeting 15 pathways aimed at preventing the spread of AIS. Featuring *Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!*™ (SAH!), *Nab the Aquatic Invader*, *Habitattitude*™, AIS-HACCP program, and new Web-based social networking components, we will employ proven and new strategies to protect the Great Lakes. Driven by our survey results and social marketing, we will produce 30 new/improved outreach products reaching 40 communities and 4.85 million media exposures. Evaluation will advance our knowledge of successful outreach, show us how to improve it, and allow replication elsewhere in the U.S.



Top three accomplishments/impacts

- Regarding *SAH!*TM aspect of campaign, post-event evaluations show that nearly 90% of respondents were very to moderately aware of AIS issues based on attending the event, a 22% increase. Nearly 83% of respondents indicated that they would more often take actions to prevent the spread of AIS, a 33% increase.
- In its first year, overall campaign through presentations, exhibits, media coverage, and other events has reached an estimated 5,120,883 individuals project- and region-wide (already 105% of proposed for the project's duration).
- Television and newspaper coverage of April 2011 conference with Sen. Sherrod Brown (Cleveland) may have reached in excess of 1 million individuals.

Regional value

- Because of its collaborative nature through the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network, this project is being implemented regionally by design.
- Problems associated with AIS are a potential issue on any water body receiving human use, especially for recreation and/or shipping: evaluation will advance our knowledge of successful outreach, show us how to improve it, and allow replication elsewhere.

Ecosystem and management improvements

- The Great Lakes region is already a victim of more than 180 AIS (NOAA). Lake Erie with its enormous productivity may be more susceptible than the upper Great Lakes to many of those.
- Greater public understanding and involvement helps combat the spread of invasives and potentially reduces the need for active management and associated costs, both to economies and ecosystems.
- Directly contributes to the implementation of Ohio's Comprehensive Management Plan for Aquatic Nuisance Species maintained by ODNR (Obj:1 Strat1:A1-1A3 and Obj: 5 Stat5B-C:5B1-5B2&5C1).

Public benefits from project

- Reducing negative impacts from AIS potentially enhances ecosystem value to stakeholders: recreational users and anglers, property owners, local businesses, etc.

Economic impact

- The Union of Concerned Scientists compiled estimates of economic impacts of AIS to the Great Lakes region as \$5.7 billion/year.
- The Cleveland Plain Dealer estimated total costs for zebra/quagga mussel damage and control efforts across 23 states to total \$1.5 billion from 1989 –2007.
- Reducing the likelihood of damage by reducing the likelihood of future invasions is obviously beneficial, but difficult to quantify.

New research needs and management questions

- Outcome of outreach evaluation will contribute to future drafts of Ohio's Comprehensive Management Plan for Aquatic Nuisance Species (Ohio Sea Grant partners with ODNR Division of Wildlife to maintain and revise).



Benefits of synthesis effort

- Improved networking with managers and researchers.

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Eugene C. Braig IV
Ohio Sea Grant College
Program
1314 Kinnear Rd.
Columbus, OH 43212

614-292-8949

braig.1@osu.edu

