

Aquatic Invasive Species Update Washington & Waukesha Counties



August 2022

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[Washington County Website](#)

[Waukesha County Website](#)

Summer is here! If you spot any suspicious plants or animals in your waterbody, please reach out to [Amanda Schmitz](#) for identification.

Landing Blitz 2022 Results!

Every Fourth of July, AIS Partnership members and Clean Boats, Clean Waters volunteers reach out to boaters across Wisconsin with a simple but powerful message: **You have the power to protect lakes and rivers from aquatic invasive species.**

The AIS teams from both Washington and Waukesha counties had an extremely successful combined campaign over the Fourth of July Weekend! The Landing Blitz took place from July 1st to July 5th, and over the course of these 5 days, our teams worked over **188 hours** on the following lakes:

Washington County: Big Cedar, Little Cedar, and Bark Lakes.

Waukesha County: Lac La Belle, Fowler, Silver, Ashippun, Golden, Pretty, Little Muskego, Middle/Lower Genesee, and Upper/Lower Nemahbin Lakes.

Our team inspected 807 boats and spoke to 1,238 people!

Thank you to everyone who helped out with the event and who was inspected during the campaign!



Upcoming Events:

Oconomowoc River Asian Clam Survey:

August 4th from 1:00pm-3:00pm at the Oconomowoc River (1050 Concord Rd, Oconomowoc)

Come help County staff survey a section of the Oconomowoc River for the invasive Asian Clam. Training on identification will be provided, so come lend a hand and have some fun while you help out! Dress to be in the water and bring sunscreen. Recommended age: 13+.

Register for
event



Snapshot Day 2022:

August 20th from 8:30am-12:30pm

Washington County: Sandy Knoll Park, Shelter #3 [2064 Wallace Lake Rd, West Bend](#)

Waukesha County: Nixon Park [175 E Park Ave, Hartland](#)

This statewide, one-day event connects volunteers, water lovers, and local groups in a search for aquatic invasive species (AIS). You can help protect Wisconsin's rivers and lakes from these invasive plants and animals that negatively impact habitat, wildlife, recreation and health. You can register for the event at the location of your choosing.

Volunteer training: August 12th from 12:00pm-1:00pm online over Zoom. This training will cover Snapshot Day background, protocols, and some species ID.

Register for
event

Register for
training

Annual Meetings

We are looking to get Lake Group Annual Meetings into our calendars.

If you have an event scheduled, please email Amanda with the date: amanda.schmitz@washcowisconsin.gov or aschmitz@waukeshacounty.gov



Invasive Species News: Zebra mussel infestations and increased mercury levels in fish

Zebra mussels are some of the most notorious aquatic invasive species. These tiny invaders were introduced to the Midwest in the 1980's through ship ballast water and have quickly taken over many lakes throughout southeastern Wisconsin. As highly efficient filter feeders, they are problematic for aquatic ecosystems; by over-filtering microscopic food sources, zebra mussels cause issues for popular game fish like walleye and yellow perch.



Photo by: D. Jude,
University of Michigan

Recent findings from researchers at the University of Minnesota suggest that zebra mussel infestations in waterbodies can negatively impact aquatic ecology and subsequently public health. This study examined the behaviors and mercury contents of walleye and yellow perch in infested and uninfested lakes. Researchers found that fish in zebra mussel-infested lakes relied 37-

64% more on littoral (shallow) portions of the lake for habitat and food than their counterparts in uninfested lakes. The authors claim that this behavioral change is likely in response to zebra mussels' disruptions to the food web. Because they filter the water faster than native mussels, this can cause a shift in nutrients from pelagic (central) to littoral lake zones. Fish like walleye and perch are then forced to adjust their normal behaviors.

Although this seems like a small change, it can have cascading impacts. Mercury is often concentrated in littoral zones due to runoff and pollution; fish that rely on these areas of the lake are more exposed to mercury which can accumulate in their tissues. Researchers found that mercury concentrations in walleye and yellow perch were higher by 66% and 90%, respectively, in lakes containing zebra mussels. This is concerning because walleye and perch are common game fish. Consuming high levels of mercury is connected to CNS issues and developmental disorders in humans. Because of these health risks, the FDA suggests limiting mercury-rich fish to one serving per week or a 0.2 ppm threshold. However, the authors found that the probability of exceeding the recommended mercury threshold in the average-sized fish they tested was 95% in infested lakes and 25% in uninfested lakes. If the presence of zebra mussels can indirectly alter the amount of mercury in game fish, this could impact the current guidance for consuming lake fish.

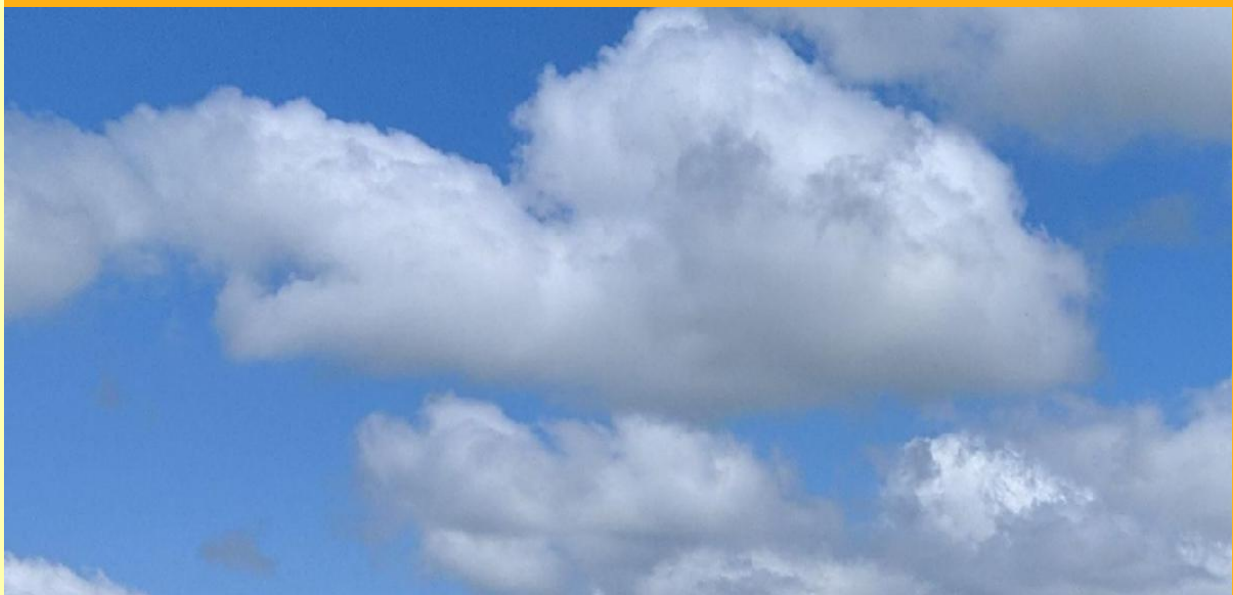
Stopping the spread of invasive species is crucial for maintaining healthy waterways and ecology. As new research seeks to understand the ways that aquatic invasive species alter our aquatic ecosystems, it's important to also consider their impacts on public health.

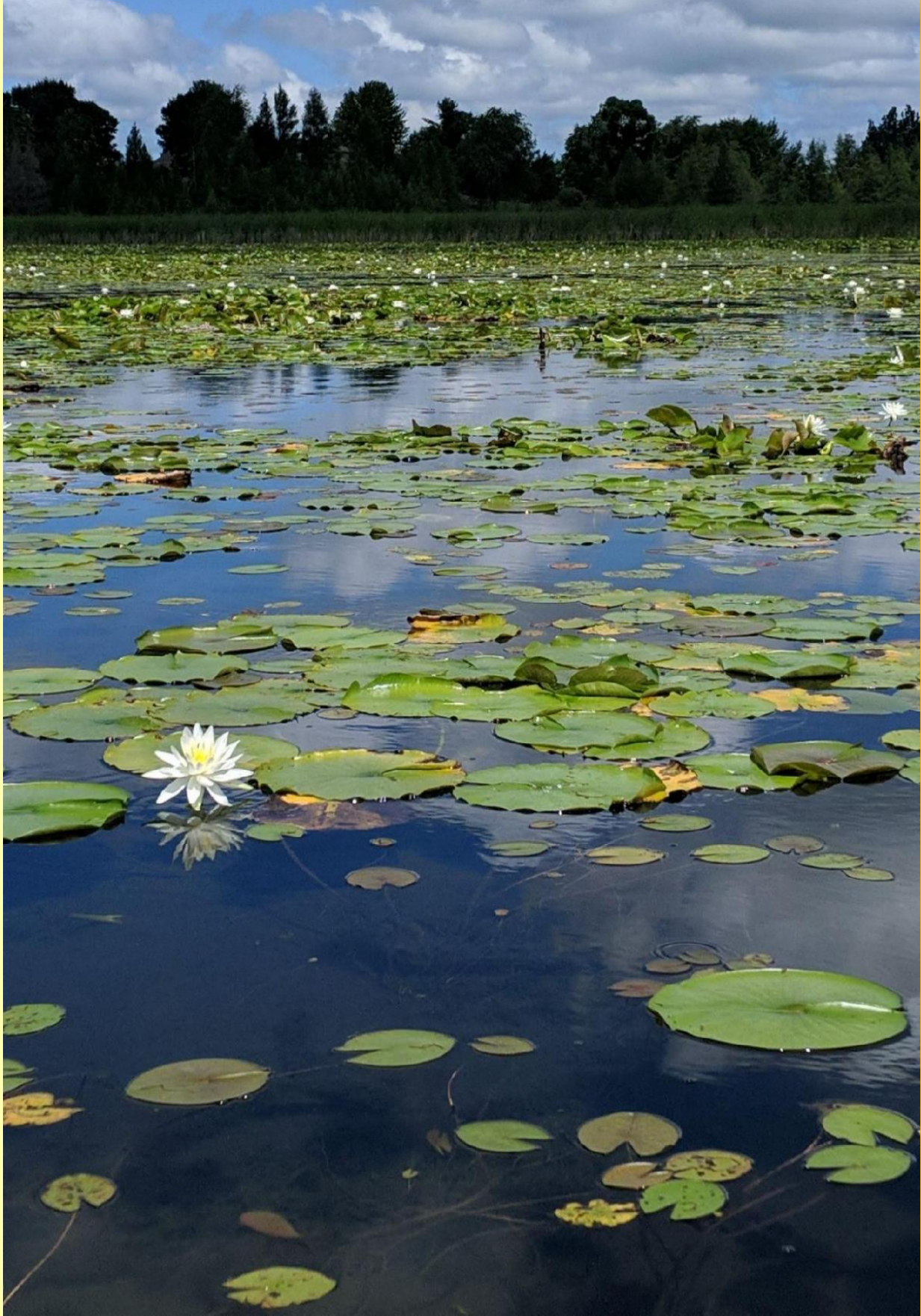
How to reduce your exposure to mercury:

The Wisconsin DNR advises some ways to limit mercury exposure from fish:

- Trim the fat and skin off fish before cooking
- Reducing the amount of mercury-rich fish you consume
- Eat a variety of fish
- Safer Wisconsin species include cod and haddock

It's important to follow Wisconsin's fish advisories to ensure safe recreational fishing and consumption.





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*The Aquatic Invasive Species Program is a cooperative effort between Washington & Waukesha Counties, supported by grant funds from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and a number of generous local lake groups working to control the spread of AIS.
Thank you for your support!*

For more information:

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