

## Controlling the Spread of Invasive Species

The citizens of Northwestern Wisconsin request that the state legislature:

- **Enact and support legislation and additional funding to expand the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection programs to stop the spread of invasive species.**

For several years, the citizens of Northwestern Wisconsin have requested development of a significant statewide program to stop the spread of invasive species. The spreading of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species is costing the taxpayers millions of dollars in degradation of plant, wildlife and fish species, impairment of natural habitat and the lowering of property values both on waterways and on land. Northwestern Wisconsin has specifically requested that Wisconsin develop a program similar in size and nature as that in Minnesota, which has proven to be effective particularly for preventing the spread of aquatic invaders. Additional resources both dollars and personnel are still needed as well as additional statutory authority and administrative rules. Because Wisconsin has more inland lakes, wetlands, river miles and miles of Great Lake shoreline than Minnesota we recommend additional funding to provide a program complimentary to Minnesota's. This additional funding will help to stop the spread of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species in Northwest Wisconsin and within the Lake Superior Basin.

### *Reasons for the request:*

Legislation enacted by the Legislature in 2002 represented a major step forward in addressing this issue. Additional dollars in 2004 were made available as grants to municipalities to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Additional financial resources and amended legislation is still needed. The Lake Superior harbors include high densities of many detrimental species. Stopping the spread of invasive species from Lake Superior to the inland lakes and from one lake and waterway to another by boaters and anglers is one of the most effective ways of prevention. An expanded Lake Superior boater education would continue to be one of the first defenses to stop the spread of invasive species to the inland lakes and streams.

In addition to waters of the region, the forests and other habitats of Northern Wisconsin are also vulnerable to the invasion of non-native species. There are a number of extremely invasive plants, insects and diseases currently spreading into northern forest areas. These forest and terrestrial invasive species have the potential to change the composition of forests and surrounding landscapes. Long-term forest production and the forestry related industries in Northern Wisconsin may be significantly impacted by these invaders. With sufficient resources, education and prevention and early detection programs can help keep these invasive plants, pests and diseases out of forests and their neighboring communities.

### *Recommendations:*

Many of the key elements for a future program are already in place at the state level but need to be enhanced in several key areas: prevention of spread, particularly in coastal areas through education/outreach: partnerships, since DNR and other state agencies have limited staff to do the job; citizen involvement through monitoring and watercraft inspection efforts; and evaluation of the program to make sure it is effective by amending Senate Bill 23:22.

- **Expand Boater Education.** We request legislation providing additional dollars for the Wisconsin DNR to conduct additional boater education programs through a college internship program.

- **Support the current DNR budget initiative on invasive species to DOA.** DNR has submitted a budget initiative intended to integrate invasive species efforts in water, land, and forestry programs. .
- **Amend S. 23.22** dealing with Aquatic Invasive Species grants to decrease cost share of AIS grants from 50% to 75%, similar to other lake management grants administered by DNR and allow non-profits to apply for the funding. Also Amend S. 23:22 to provide statutory authority to DNR and DATCP to implement and enforce regulations on invasive species and to provide local authorities as needed.
- **Expand the Program to Further Address Terrestrial Species.** We request that the Wisconsin DNR be provided additional funding and staff to further address the introduction and spread of Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Forest Pest Species in the state.

**Contact Persons:**

Bob Browne, US Chair of the Bi-National Forum, 422 Fisher Avenue, Superior WI 54880, 715-394-6235, [bbrowne112@yahoo.com](mailto:bbrowne112@yahoo.com)

Bruce Lindgren, NW Coordinator of the WI Stewardship Network & Co-Vice Chair of the Bi-National Forum, 15165 Spruce Tree Drive, Herbster WI 54844, 715-774-3325, [bflind@cheqnet.net](mailto:bflind@cheqnet.net)

Mike Kroenke, Lake Superior Basin Educator for Natural Resource, Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center 29270 County Hwy G, Ashland, WI 54806, 715-685-2674, [mike.kroenke@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:mike.kroenke@ces.uwex.edu)