

## HIGH PRIORITY- PLEASE READ AND RESPOND- HELP SAVE OUR INLAND LAKES

Spring 2017

Dear Michigan Lake and Stream Associations, Members and Friends: **CALL TO ARMS!**

Your inland lake, pond, stream and associated waterway may already or soon could be seriously impacted by aquatic invasive species (AIS)! Michigan Waterfront Alliance has taken on a daunting task: The improvement of Michigan policies concerning the identification, confirmation, protection and management of AIS in our critical inland lakes and waterways. Our focus will be on expanding the awareness of the AIS threat to MI waterways, confirming negative impacts to the MI environment and economy and attempting to change actions at the DNR, Michigan Waterways Commission and other groups.

To help your Michigan Waterfront Alliance and its Lobbyist convince the Michigan Legislature, the Michigan Waterways Commission, the DNR and Governor Snyder to take action, **Your Mission** is to fill out the Support Information at the end of this paper and send it to the Michigan Waterfront Alliance Lobbyist Karoub Associates, C/O Matt Kurta, 121 W Allegan St, Lansing MI 48933. It is vital that we have the support of as many of individuals and Lake and Stream Associations as possible.

Background - Tourism and recreation as promoted by the Pure Michigan campaign, currently contributes Billions of dollars of annual revenue to the state economy. Lakes contribute an even larger value to the economic vitality of Michigan than tourism (especially in rural areas). A 2008 study estimated the property value of shoreline property on MI lakes values at \$200B and annual tax revenues of \$3.5B, which directly contribute to local schools, local, county and state governments and services. A tremendous amount of annual additional state revenue is added by lake property in the form of rental fees, owner upkeep and maintenance, and support industries associated with these properties (rental, real estate, groceries, supplies, marinas, boat repair etc.)

Tourism, sports and lake ownership depend on maintaining the ecological and visual vitality of Michigan's lake environments. **People do not want to visit, rent or own property on a lake or water body choked by weeds, zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species (AIS).** Aquatic Invasive Species are plants, animals and even microbes that are introduced from other regions and can aggressively out-compete native species. AIS are generally spread as a result of human activities such as putting unclean boats, fishing gear and bait into uncontaminated lakes.

Status - AIS are rapidly spread throughout Michigan's Great Lakes and 11,000 inland lakes and is a current and future significant ecological, economic/fiscal, and **quality of life THREAT**. It has been nearly 100 years since the first AIS was detected in Michigan waterways. The State Government is aware of the AIS issue and possible solutions and funding options; read the August 21, 2013 report-MI Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Council - Report and recommendations. However, there has been no coordinated or sustained state and local level effort to track and identify the spread of AIS, share data with residents, agree on statewide solutions, nor invest in proven ways to halt the spread of AIS on the Great Lakes AND our 11,000 lakes and ponds, rivers and streams. The current AIS state management plan **unfairly places the entire burden of inland lake AIS management on lake property owners.** Property owners and residents currently spend more than \$25 million annually toward lake management programs in an attempt to stem the spread of AIS, while the DNR and DEQ dedicate limited funding to reviewing lake treatment permits, research and education. Having property owners pay for all of the inland lake management is not sustainable and AIS will further damage the quality of our inland waters. The State analysis estimates a \$5B negative impact due to the spread of AIS!

The Michigan DNR Division of Parks and Recreation continues to recommend the development of new Public Access sites, as well as the renovation and expansion of existing Public Access Sites on Michigan inland lakes, despite the known fact that boat launch sites are the top spreader of AIS to inland lakes! Do we have data or scientific analyses to justify this expansion when there is no boat wash protection to reduce the spread of AIS? For many existing boat launch facilities we do not have accurate counts of the number or types of boats that are launched. Therefore, the State cannot scientifically assess boating demand or the adequacy of the supply of launch capacity on Michigan inland lakes. It may be possible that some existing Public Access Sites developed in the 70's and 80's should be closed because use does not justify the capital and operating costs. Nor could we identify or obtain a comprehensive analysis of the estimated operating costs and needed capital improvements for all public access sites that the Parks and Recreation Division operates. The Michigan Parks and Recreation Division has not made available a scientific, data-based Public Access Needs Assessment, nor plans (other than education) to finance efforts to reduce the introduction of AIS and to control them in lakes where they operate Access Sites. Ironically, while **state departments claim they lack resources** to provide even minor assistance to local residents to stem the spread of AIS in inland lakes, the **state still spends resources expanding state boat launch sites on lake after lake** without evaluating objective criteria such as whether additional launch facilities are needed and how can we protect from the spread of AIS and/or support lake management efforts to reduce AIS impact?

Suggested Actions - We need to change the way we do business and make critical investments if we want to save Michigan lakes, waterways and sustain our tourism and lake economies! An honest airing of the real issues needs to take place at the highest levels and solutions identified.

- Admit there is a problem with the spread of AIS and that responsibility for management and eradication should be shared by state government, local government, the boating public, and lake/water property owners, not just the latter.
- Identify and quantify the AIS problem at local and statewide levels, determine the treat to the Michigan economy of this danger!!!
- Determine realistic options to slow the spread of AIS. All state agencies and associated contractors need to adopt a DO NO HARM approach to protect the Great and inland lakes. This includes inspections and manned boat wash stations at all public boat launch site as other states do.
- Develop a plan involving state, and local agencies to undertake direct, concrete actions to halt the spread of AIS, such as boat wash stations, lake carrying capacity studies, responsible management of boat launch access sites, and lake monitoring and management.
- Focus on protecting the public trust and all the recreational and economic benefits of Michigan’s inland lakes, rather than concentrating on expanding boating access at all costs. Encourage the passing of Michigan legislation similar to that in the States of MN, WI, IN, ME, NH, WA, VT, FL, CA, LA, TX, and ID requiring owners of boats registered and unregistered in Michigan to acquire and attach to their boats or trailers a sticker with all of those revenues going toward the prevention and eradication of AIS in inland lakes. Development of a fair, shared cost burden to manage inland lakes is long overdue.
- We are well behind compared to neighboring states with respect to state investment in AIS treatment and eradication. Learn from other states that have developed comprehensive AIS programs.

• **Reform the Michigan Waterways Commission.**

The Michigan Waterfront Alliance supports recreational boating and recommends:

- Representation of inland lake owners on the Commission
- Redirection of a portion of existing state funding from various sources such as boat sticker fees and the Marine Fuel tax for lake and water preservation
- Creation of a cost-sharing grant system for AIS management
- \* Evaluation of current launch sites state-wide before funds are spent on expansion

**For Lake and Stream Associations:**

I confirm that the \_\_\_\_\_ Association supports the above. Our lake community has \_\_\_\_\_ residents. I hold the position of: \_\_\_\_\_ for the Association. Our Association mailing address is: \_\_\_\_\_  
The email address or phone number to contact me is: \_\_\_\_\_  
On this date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Individual(s):**

I (We) \_\_\_\_\_ support the above. I (We) have a particular interest in this Lake or Stream: \_\_\_\_\_  
My (Our) Mailing address is: \_\_\_\_\_  
The email address or phone number to contact me is: \_\_\_\_\_  
On this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Atten: Matt Kurta – MWA

Karoub Associates

121 W Allegan St

Lansing MI 48933

Or Email to: [mkurta@karoub.com](mailto:mkurta@karoub.com)