

# Behavior Change Grant Summary Report

## Audience:

Anglers and boaters.

## Behavior:

Clean/drain boats and remove visible debris from boats, trailers, and any other equipment.

## List of Partners:

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Anoka Conservation District
- Anoka County Parks
- MAJK Solutions LLC.
- Lake George Improvement District
- Coon Lake Improvement District
- Crooked Lake Area Association
- Martin Lakers Association

## Project Design:

First was to collect observation data on boater's behavior when at the boat launches in Summer 2020. The data collected included weather data, if boat plugs were out, plants present on the watercraft, and if they are compliant with AIS laws when leaving the launch. There were 26 boaters observed in 8.25 hours in the summer of 2020. Out of the 26 boaters, 5 boaters were entering and 21 exiting the waterbody and all 5 entering boats were in compliance of all AIS laws. Out of the 21 exiting boaters, 18 boaters left the boat launch in compliance of AIS laws and removed water and plants when needed to prevent the spread of AIS.

The aqua weed stick stations were then installed at 5 launches in Anoka county by Anoka County park staff and every month the number of uses data was collected at each unit during the 2021 season. There was a design sticker installed on the unit reel box to explain who helped fund the project and a number to call if there is anything wrong with the unit. There were no visual markers or new areas created to direct boaters to the new aqua weed stick stations. Lake George already has an installed pull up area when boaters take their boats out of the water. There are garbage cans, recycling cans and AIS messages by the area. This is where the aqua weed stick was installed to make it easy for boaters to use when needed. Coon Lake Launches, Crooked Lake and Martin lake stations were installed where boaters normally pull up to remove the plugs and start pulling weeds off their equipment based on previous observations and information from the watercraft inspectors. When boaters did not pull up to the desired area, the watercraft inspectors instructed them to pull up to the area by the aqua weed stick stations to make it easier for boaters to use.

During the 2021 boating season, watercraft inspectors introduced boaters to the unit and how to correctly use the aqua weed sticks. Watercraft inspectors were trained how to use

the stations shortly after they were installed by their supervisor. They were shown how to use the units and how to educate boaters on how to use them as well. The first day when inspectors learned about the stations, the supervisor stayed with them for a couple hours to show them examples on how to talk to boaters and answer any questions from inspectors or boaters about the station. Lake Associations and their members were always updated on any changes about the stations and when they were installed. Shortly after the stations were installed and inspectors were trained on how to use the units, the lake associations were invited to visit the inspectors to talk and learn about the units themselves.

In the fall, the commitment data sheet was made and data was collected from boaters at the launches with the new stations. Commitments were only collected over 2 weekends in end of September and early October by watercraft inspectors. The supervisor taught and demonstrated how to correctly collect verbal and written commitments from boaters. There was a total of 94 verbal commitments out of 111 boaters. Out of the 94 verbal commitments, 71 boaters also agreed and did a written commitment to use the aqua weed stick station. One part of the project we did not do was make the commitments public. We collected all the commitments from boaters at the 5 boat launches but never made them public and that would be one thing we would do differently if we could do the project again.

The results of the project were presented at the Anoka County's AIS annual stakeholder meeting in November 2021 to anyone who was able to attend the meeting. There was an explanation how the grant from the DNR allowed us to install the units. There was a lot of great feedback from attendees about the units and great interest on getting more installed around the county. There was also an email sent out to the lake associations on the results of the unit installed at the boat launch they helped with.

#### Successes and Challenges:

There were many successes because of this pilot project. There were 5 stations installed at 1 DNR, 1 city and 3 county launches in the county with over 1,700 uses in 1 season. Another success was when we had a stick break the owners of the company sent a replacement fast and easy. We also did not have any vandalism, which was one of the biggest worries. We also continued to build strong relationships with the lake associations involved and it increased their moral because they were taking an extra step to help prevent the spread of AIS.

We have had many challenges with the pilot project. Some include obstacles we had to work around like some boat launches do not have designated pull off areas and not a good location to place the aqua weed stick station. The locations could interfere with snow maintenance activities during the winter. Some of the other challenges where it was hard to find volunteers to collect observations needed before and after the stations were installed. The Aqua Weed Sticks had a small design flaw because the brackets on the reel box were bending and there were 2 incidents where the sticks themselves snapped in half.

There are a couple improvements to better the Aqua Weed Stick Station. The reel box on the unit is held by one bracket that is not very sturdy. As the boaters were using the units,

the reel box bracket was bending. There were also 2 broken aqua weed sticks during the season. I'm not sure if they were run over by a vehicle or someone bent the stick. The improvements are already discussed with the company and they are working on improving the design. Another change would have been made would be to get the units installed before fishing opener. With schedules and weather, we were not able to get them out until the May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, just a couple days after opener.

**Expenses:**

The following table shows project expenses, including a date, item description, detailed expense description, and total cost.

Date	Item	Description	Grant	Match
04/05/21	Aqua Weed Stick Landing Station	5 Stations – Lake George, Martin Lake, Crooked Lake, 2 Coon Lake. Unit cost is \$781. 75% paid by grant, 25% paid with match from Lake Associations	\$2,928.75	\$976.25
04/05/21	Aqua Weed Stick Demo	Extra Aqua Weed Stick for demonstration purposes	\$25.99	
05/17/21	Installation Materials	FEMA rate for 1 ½ ton truck is \$23.22/hr x 8 = \$185.76	\$185.76	
05/17/21	Installation Labor	Work was done on May 17, 2021. 7-3:30pm. Technician: \$50/hour x 8hrs = \$400. Seasonal: \$13/hour x 8hrs = 104.	\$500	4.00
08/09/21	Installation Materials	Removal Station Decals - 10in x 10 in - 7 units	\$40.67	
12/27/21	Installation Labor	Reinforce Aqua Weed Stick reel box. Nat. Res. Specialist: \$42.52/hr x 4 hr = 170.08 Truck: \$12.78/hr x 4 hrs = 51.12 Hardware: \$2.60	\$223.80	
01/10/22 thru 02/01/22	Grant Admin	Grant administration and reporting ACD District Manager: 4.5 hrs x \$65.75/hr = 295.88 ACD covered small overage.	\$280.00	15.88

**Number of times the Aqua Weed Stick Station was used:**

The following table shows the number of cumulative uses for the stations by date, presented with each of the five lakes having its own column. All stations were installed on 5/17/2021.

Date	Crooked Lake	Lake George	Coon Lake County	Coon Lake DNR	Martin Lake
06/04/2021	37	22	25	40	21
06/30/2021	89	88	72	131	91
08/02/2021	179	211	122	265	121
09/02/2021	258	322	158	388	142
10/04/2021	330	450	222	419	159

<b>Date</b>	<b>Crooked Lake</b>	<b>Lake George</b>	<b>Coon Lake County</b>	<b>Coon Lake DNR</b>	<b>Martin Lake</b>
11/01/2021	352	492	233	462	192
11/24/2021		492	235	467	