

Prevent Introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species-Threat Campaign

Douglas H. Grann, *Wildlife Forever, 2700 Freeway Blvd. #1000, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430*

Douglas A. Jensen, *University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program, Duluth, MN 53202*

Nick Schmal, *U.S. Forest Service, Milwaukee, WI 55812*

Abstract: America's boaters and anglers need to be fully engaged in the aquatic invasive species (AIS) issue. In the United States, there are 12.7 million boaters and 40 million anglers. If they are unaware of the AIS issue and do not know what to do, they pose great threats for the spread of harmful invasive fish, plants, and other organisms. While research shows they are part of the problem, the good news is they are willing to be part of the solution. Several studies show they are willing to take action with the understanding that our waters are too valuable to allow them to be invaded. To address this issue, Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! campaign partners teamed up with the Threat Campaign, led by Wildlife Forever, to expand the prevention message across the country to enlist an army of support in the battle against aquatic hitchhikers. Linking the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! and Threat Campaigns together provides a unique opportunity to strategically promote effective multi-media targeting to boaters, anglers as well as hunters. Combined efforts used television, radio, newspaper ads, billboards, airport dioramas, rest area displays, retail kiosks, gas pump ads, lawn banners, regulation booklets, watercraft inspectors, signs at water accesses, windshield flyers, stickers and print materials. Through Wildlife Forever's expertise in marketing and media buys, the combined efforts generated some impressive results. In 2006, 125 million people were exposed to the campaign's messages. In 2007, 137 million people were reached. The Threat Campaign partnership included the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state agencies, lake associations and Sea Grant. So the question is: are the messages reaching the target audiences and do the messages work? Results of a 2006 survey led by Minnesota Sea Grant in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa shows that not only is the campaign reaching the target audience, it is raising awareness and empowering people to take precautionary actions at water accesses to prevent the spread of AIS. Based on their exposure to the campaign, 86% said it raised their awareness. Importantly, 97% said it will influence them to take action. Through this campaign partnership, we feel that it is really making a difference to protect our waters from the spread of harmful AIS.

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