



# Public Opinion About VHS and AIS in Wisconsin

Bret Shaw  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Life Sciences Communication  
UW-Madison

&  
Environmental Communication Specialist  
UW Extension

# Badger Poll Methodology

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- Data collected by University of Wisconsin Survey Center
- Statewide random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey of 538 Wisconsin adults with working land phone lines
- Conducted Oct. 21-29, 2008
- Results have margin of error of a little over plus or minus 4 percent
- Questions commissioned by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

# Sample

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- Gender
  - 54.5% female
- Employment
  - 48.3% full time, 14.6 part time; 37.1% no job
- Age: 54.6 years (range 18-91)
- Education
  - 38.4% high school education or less
- Location
  - 39.2% rural; 37.3% suburban; 23.5% urban
- Party Identification
  - 35.4% Democrat; 24.7% Republican; 29.5% independent

# Recreational boating and fishing

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- 46.1% of respondents participated in recreational boating within Wisconsin in the past 12 months
- 39.3% have done recreational fishing in Wisconsin in past 12 months

# Concern re: AIS and VHS is high

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## ■ Question:

- How important is preventing the spread of fish diseases and other aquatic invasive species to new lakes and rivers in Wisconsin?

## ■ Responses

- |                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| ■ Extremely important  | 57.9% |
| ■ Quite important      | 28.4% |
| ■ Somewhat important   | 11.4% |
| ■ Not too important    | 1.6%  |
| ■ Not at all important | 0.7%  |

# Awareness of VHS is low

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- Question:
  - How much info have you heard, read or seen about the fish disease viral hemorrhagic septicemia also known as VHS?
- Responses
  - None at all 37.3%
  - Only small amount 28.2%
  - Moderate amount 20.3%
  - Large amount 9.7%
  - Very large amount 4.4%

# Sources of learning about VHS

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- Only asked if had never heard of VHS
- Responses
  - Newspapers 70.3%
  - TV News 66.2%
  - Education info from DNR 45.9%
  - Radio news 42.5%
  - TV ad from DNR 37.1%
  - Radio ad from DNR 24.6%
  - Person at boat landing or natural resources professional 24.9%
  - DNR Web site 19.1%
  - Other Web site 14.6%

# VHS prevention practices

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## ■ Question:

- We are interested about the actions you may have taken since learning about VHS. Please tell me whether or not you have done any of the following because of VHS?

## ■ Responses

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| ■ Empty water from live-well before removing a boat | 86.6% |
| ■ Follow new rules re: using minnows as bait        | 83.5% |
| ■ Avoid fishing on waters known to contain VHS      | 61.2% |
| ■ Never move live fish between bodies of water      | 58.6% |



# AIS prevention practices

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## ■ Responses

- Inspect boat and trailer and remove plants and animals before leaving a landing 90.8%
- Rinse off hull and trailer when removing boat from the water 56.8%

# Group Differences

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- Party identification
  - Democrats are marginally more likely to see preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species as important though perceptions for both Republicans and Democrats are high
- Gender
  - Females more likely to avoid waters with VHS
  - Males more likely to empty live wells

# Implications

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- Preventing spread of VHS and other aquatic invasive species to new lakes perceived as important but track record in taking required steps to prevent spreading is mixed
  - Focus on the 'why' and increasing incentives/reducing barriers to adopting best practices
- Clarify confusion around rules surrounding bait and moving live fish

# Consistencies with previous research

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- Other recent data supports that awareness about VHS and AIS is high or growing
  - e.g., 39% were taking prevention steps in 1994
- Several studies supported that print media among most common sources of info
  - Is this because that's what's provided by DNR, Extension, Sea Grant, etc. – or because that's what people would be most likely to pay attention to?

# Raising Awareness



Published in Milwaukee Sentinel Journal on December 13, 2008

The screenshot shows the top portion of the JSOnline website. On the left is the JSOnline logo with 'MILWAUKEE • WISCONSIN JOURNAL SENTINEL' below it. To the right is a banner for American Family Mutual Insurance Company with the text 'YOUR AGENT KNOWS WHAT TO DO IF YOU' and a partial image of a woman's face. Below the banner is a dark navigation bar with links: Home, News, Watchdog, Opinion, Sports, Business, Food & Dining, Entertainment, Features, Photo/Video. Underneath is a date and category bar: Wednesday, March 18, 2009 | Main Page | Michael Hunt | Packers | Brewers | Bucks | UW | MU | UWM | State | Preps | Golf | Au. Below this is a white box containing the RSS icon and the word 'Outdoors' on the left, and a breadcrumb trail 'Home » Sports » Outdoors' on the right.

## On the trail

*By Paul A. Smith of the Journal Sentinel*

Posted: Dec. 13, 2008

The vast majority of Wisconsin residents say preventing the spread of VHS fish disease and other aquatic invasive species to new lakes and rivers is very important, a recent statewide poll shows.

Boaters and anglers, however, had a mixed track record in taking the required steps to prevent accidentally spreading the invaders. Boat traffic between lakes, and the transfer of infected baitfish from one water body to another, are the major ways that invasive species and viral hemorrhagic septicemia, respectively, are introduced to new waters.

"Wisconsin residents are clearly worried about the threat invasive species pose and place a high priority on stopping their spread," said Bret Shaw, an assistant professor with the Department of Life Sciences Communication at UW-Madison who helped analyze the results. "Boaters and anglers are doing a good job in taking some of the prevention steps, but not all of them. Unfortunately, they are not taking some of the essential steps that would do the most to protect the Wisconsin lakes, rivers and fish they enjoy."

# Unanswered questions

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- What are the characteristics of people who are not adopting AIS-prevention practices
  - e.g., employment, gender, education, age, region
- What environmental solutions exist (e.g., what means to boaters have to rinse hull when removing boat from water?)
- Why do/don't boaters adopt some practices and not others (e.g., time, convenience, knowledge, awareness)?

# Unanswered questions

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- How much should we care about whether people know about technical terms like VHS?
- How well do respondents' self report correlate with actual behavior?

# Questions?

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- Thank you!