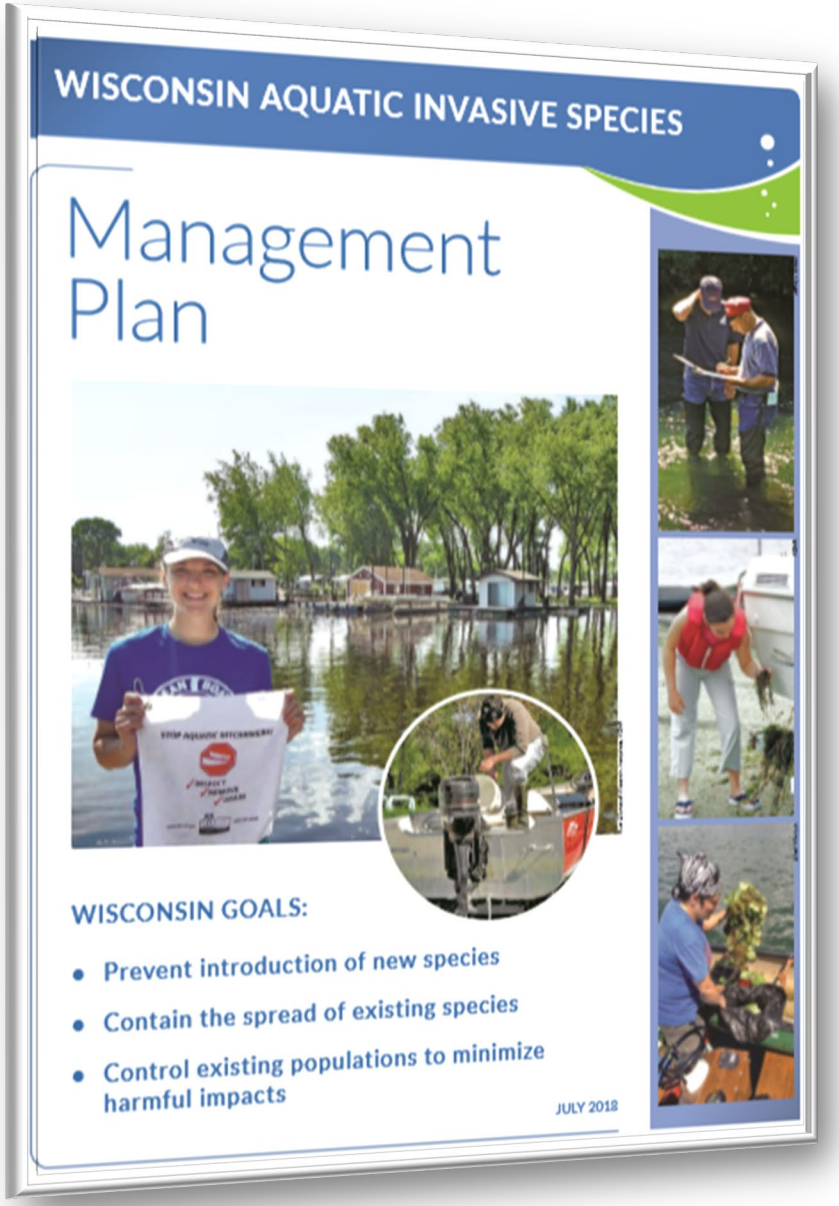
# AIS Prevention in Wisconsin:
## *Dock Service Providers*

Amanda Smith, AIS Biologist

June 12, 2025

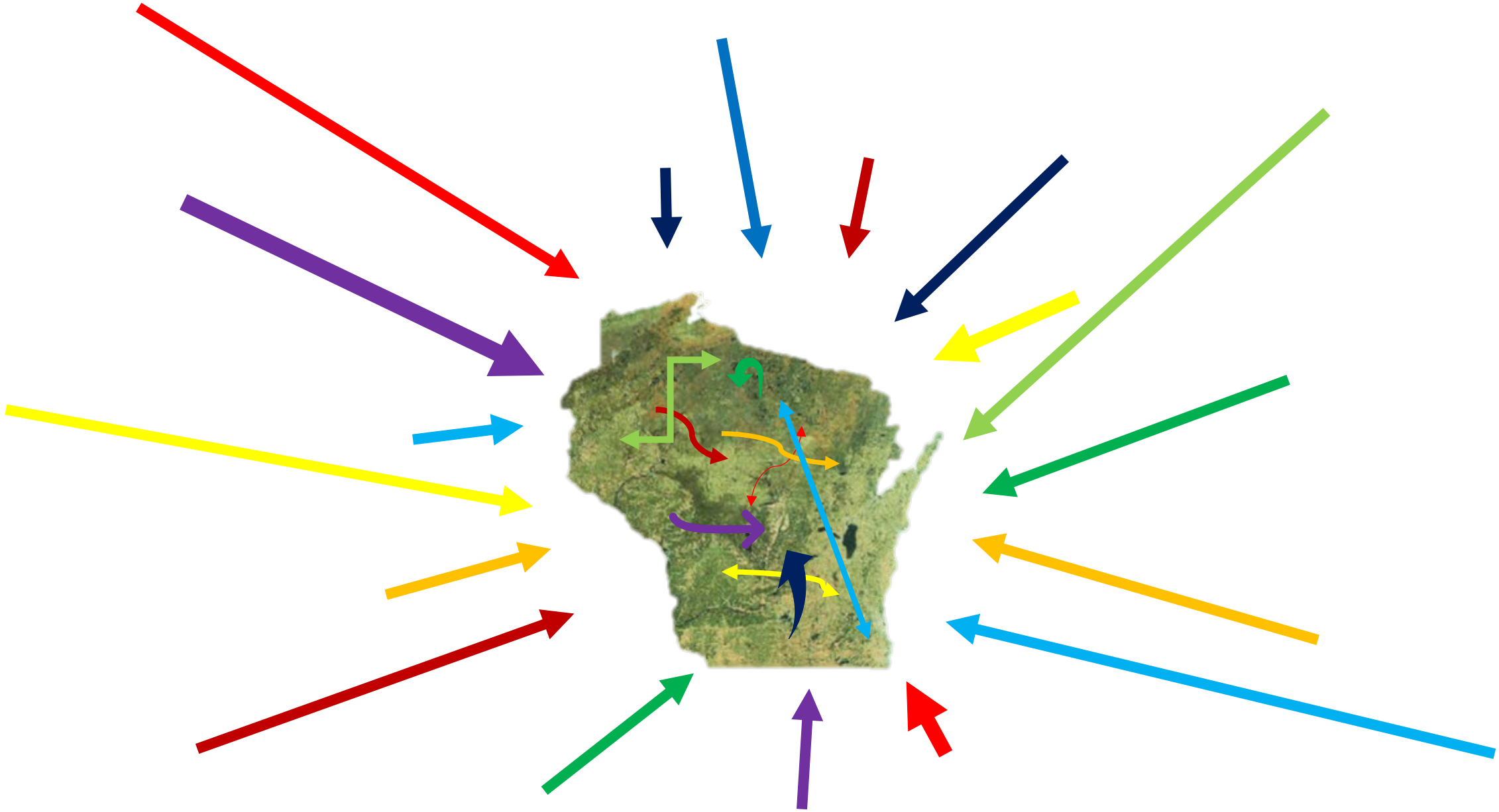
1st Annual FLOW Meeting




## WISCONSIN GOALS:

- Prevent introduction of new species
- Contain the spread of existing species
- Control existing populations to minimize harmful impacts

# PATHWAYS



# AQUATIC INVASION PATHWAYS:

**PATHWAY:**
CANALS, DAMS AND DIVERSIONS

**PATHWAY:**
MARITIME COMMERCE

**PATHWAY:**
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

**PATHWAY:**
AQUATIC SURVEYING AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES

**PATHWAY:**
NON-RECREATIONAL FISHING AND AQUACULTURE

**PATHWAY:**
TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITY CORRIDORS

**PATHWAY:**
ORGANISMS IN TRADE

Satellite image: WisconsinView – University of Wisconsin Space Science and Engineering

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Satellite image: WisconsinView – University of Wisconsin Space Science and Engineering



Photo credit: DAS Aquariums



Photo credit: Ken Goedken


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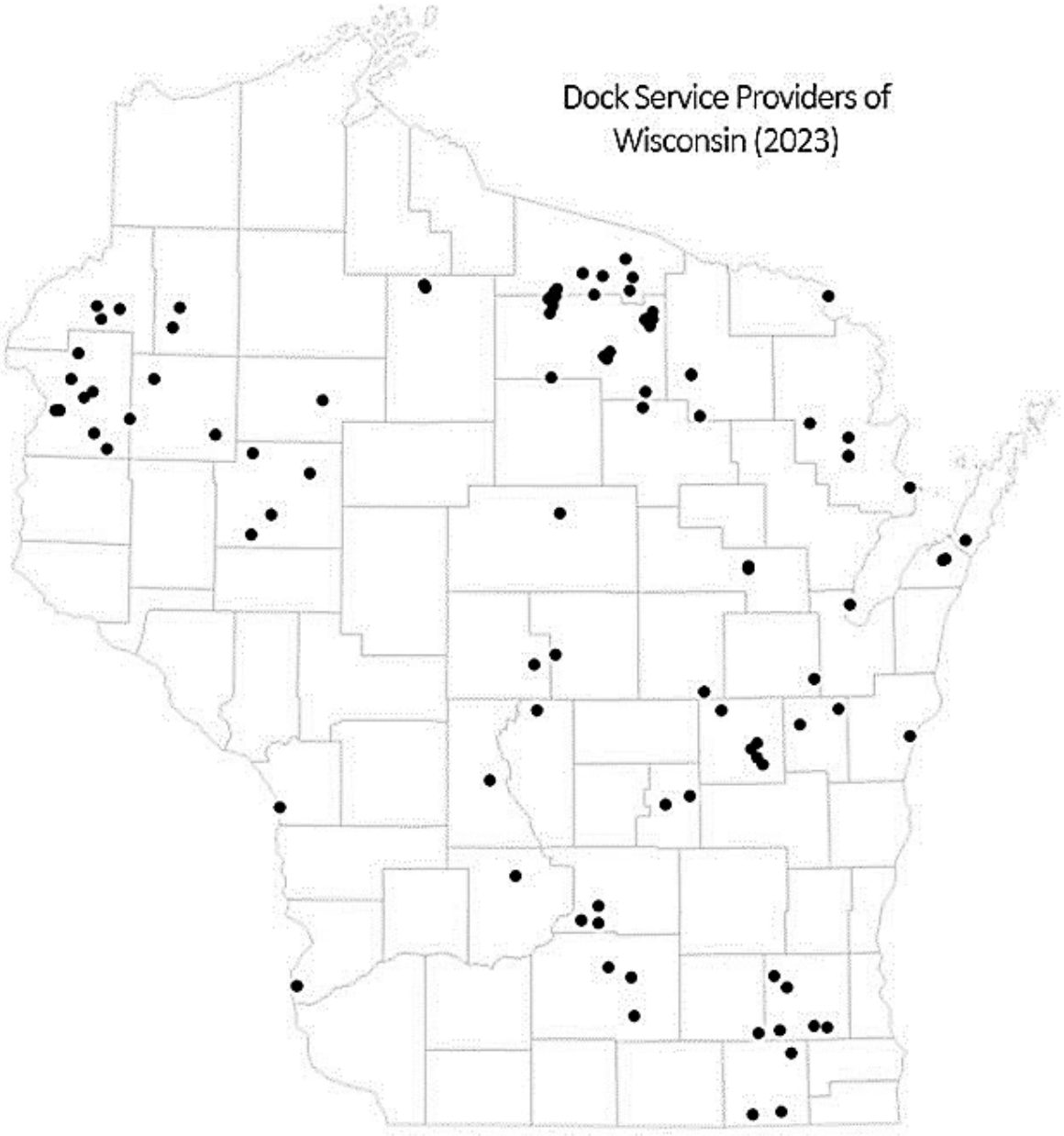
# Subpathway = Dock Service Providers (DSPs)

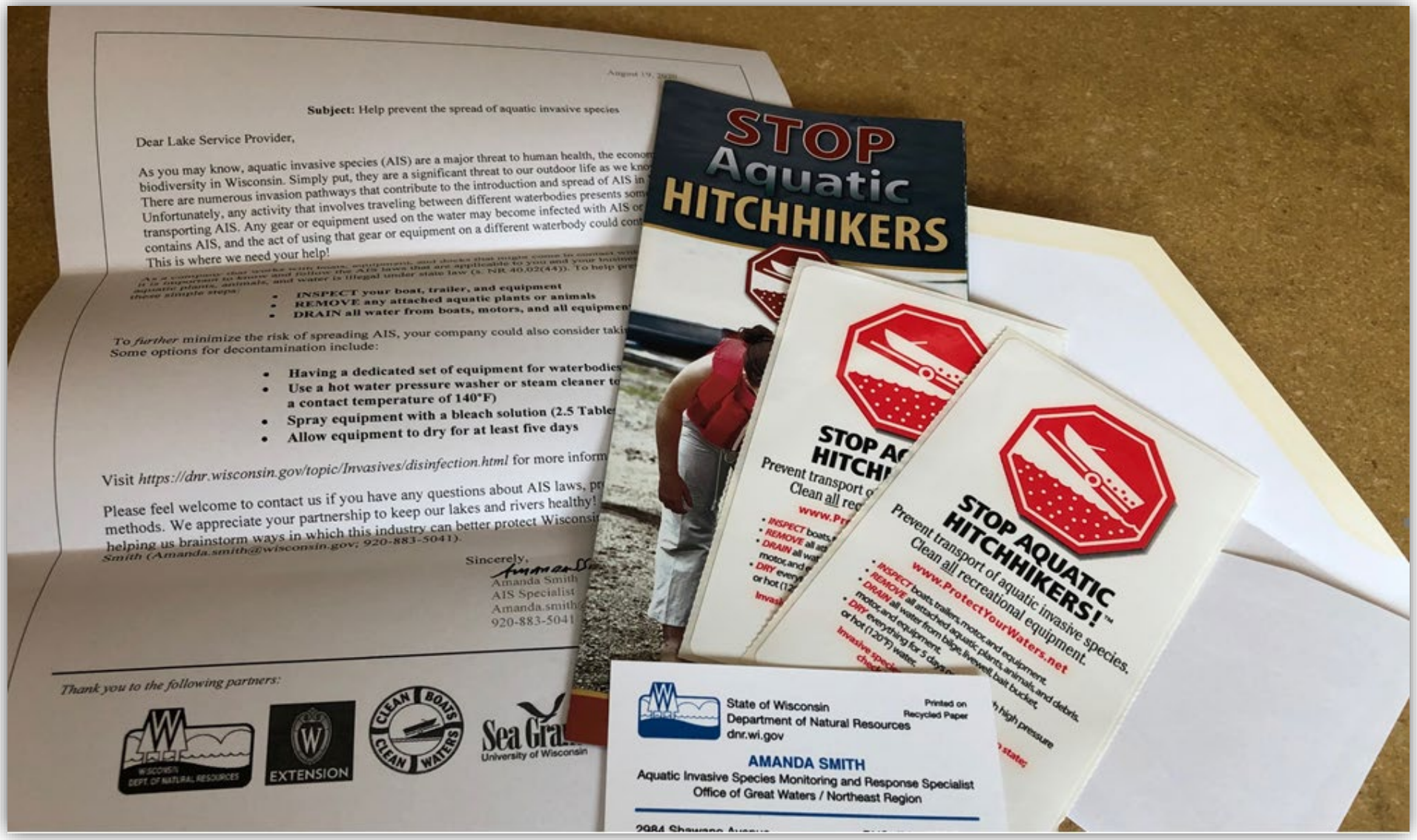

Schmidt


Deano Dock & Lift, LLC




**130** DSPs in Wisconsin

**38** Counties with DSPs


Subject: Help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species
Dear Lake Service Provider,
As you may know, aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a major threat to human health, the econom
biodiversity in Wisconsin. Simply put, they are a significant threat to our outdoor life as we kno
There are numerous invasion pathways that contribute to the introduction and spread of AIS in
Unfortunately, any activity that involves traveling between different waterbodies presents som
transporting AIS. Any gear or equipment used on the water may become infected with AIS or
contains AIS, and the act of using that gear or equipment on a different waterbody could con
This is where we need your help!
INSPECT your boat, trailer, and equipment
REMOVE any attached aquatic plants or animals
DRAIN all water from boats, motors, and all equipmen
To further minimize the risk of spreading AIS, your company could also consider taki
Some options for decontamination include:
Having a dedicated set of equipment for waterbodies
Use a hot water pressure washer or steam cleaner t
a contact temperature of 140°F)
Spray equipment with a bleach solution (2.5 Table
Allow equipment to dry for at least five days
Visit https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/disinfection.html for more inform
Please feel welcome to contact us if you have any questions about AIS laws, pr
methods. We appreciate your partnership to keep our lakes and rivers healthy!
helping us brainstorm ways in which this industry can better protect Wisconsi
Smith (Amanda.smith@wisconsin.gov; 920-883-5041).
Sincerely,
Amanda Smith
AIS Specialist
920-883-5041
Thank you to the following partners:
EXTENSION
CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS
University of Wisconsin
STOP Aquatic HITCHHIKERS
STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™
Prevent transport of aquatic invasive species.
Clean all recreational equipment.
www.ProtectYourWaters.net
State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources
dnr.wi.gov
Printed on Recycled Paper
AMANDA SMITH
Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring and Response Specialist
Office of Great Waters / Northeast Region

# Aquatic Invasive Species Pathway: Dock Service Providers


Evelyn Hammond and Owen J. Moylan

Evaluation Unit

Natural Resources Institute

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Project background

Many pathways have been identified for the introduction of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into the environment. One of these is recreational activities and service providers (sub pathway – dock service providers). The "dock service provider" pathway could be broad, but focus is on businesses and people that remove and install docks and other lake infrastructure since they use a lot of equipment that could move invasive species. While they could be an important pathway between waterbodies, there has not been much research done in Wisconsin to define and understand it.
This evaluation investigated the perceptions of dock service providers (DSPs), their knowledge about AIS, what AIS prevention measures they were taking between waterbodies, and whether they were open to learning about and implementing new AIS prevention strategies.

## Project goal

- To evaluate the behaviors of the dock service provider industry in order to better inform a pathway management plan.

## Methodology

An interview guide was developed to elicit information about DSPs perceptions of AIS and business impacts on AIS spread. After several iterations, the interview guide was finalized and piloted.
The project team generated a list of DSPs and contacted them to be interviewed. Eight interviews were conducted with DSPs via Zoom. Seven of the eight interviews were transcribed using otter.ai. The transcripts were manually reviewed and edited for accuracy. Notes were taken during the ninth interview.
A coding team was created to code the transcripts. The team met weekly to discuss the codes and emerging themes. Once all the transcripts were coded, the codes were synthesized, summarized, and analyzed and this was report written.

## Who were interviewed?

Interviewees comprised seven DSPs and one lift distributor. They service at least eleven different counties, mainly between Vilas and Sheboygan Counties. The distributor sells shoreline construction products to dealers throughout the state but does not himself work on waterbodies. Although the distributor was not a target audience, he was included in the sample because he deals directly with DSPs and was interested in AIS prevention. The rest of the interviewees were DSPs who work on the water.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key Findings

### Business Operations

- DSPs reported operating in at least eleven different counties in Wisconsin between Vilas and Sheboygan counties
- DSPs' work begins in April/May; and ends in September/October. They are busiest over the summer
- Among the DSPs, the number of clients DSPS served varied between 25 – 400 with the 2 largest contractors having about 500 clients

### Knowledge about AIS

- Knowledge of AIS among the DSPs was low
- The DNR should make AIS information accessible and more available

### Perceptions of AIS

- The overall level of understanding of AIS impact was low

### Impacts of business operations on AIS spread

- DSP operations pose a high risk to AIS spread. AIS may be spread via:
  - Inconsistent cleaning of equipment
  - Multi-use equipment
  - Use of equipment on multiple waterbodies

### Barriers and challenges to performing AIS prevention protocols

- The biggest barriers to performing the AIS prevention protocol included:
  - Time
  - Lack of washing stations at some boat launches
  - Too many weeds at boat launches
  - Meeting clients' timeline/requests

### Motivation to help limit AIS spread

- There was some level of concern about AIS among DSPs.
- DSPs fear a worst-case scenario where lakes and rivers are rendered unusable
- DSPs acknowledged that their actions may affect the spread of AIS when they move between different bodies of water

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key Findings

### Preferences for partnership

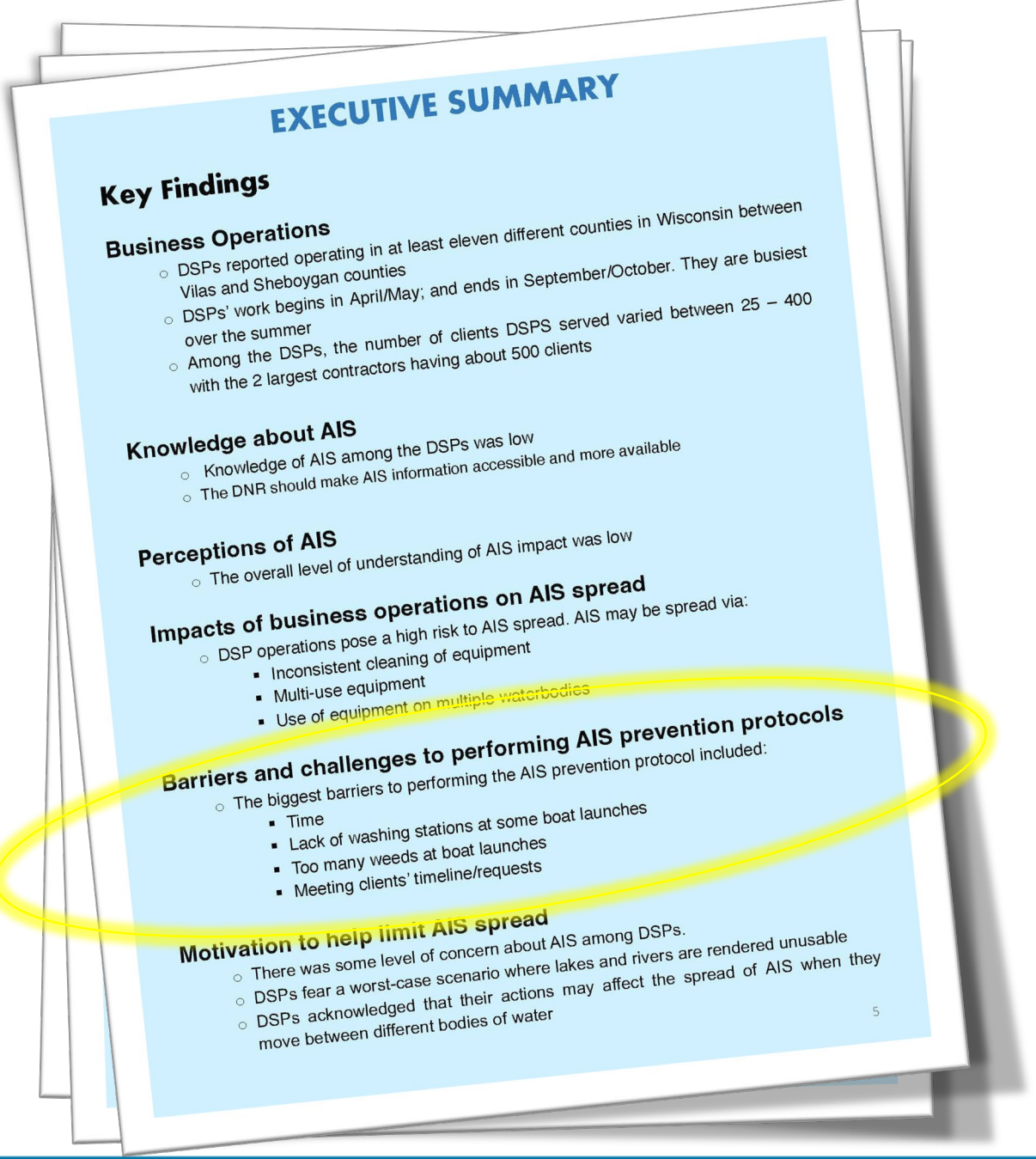
- DSPs expectations of partners included:
  - Respect for DSPs and clarity about what partners were doing and why
  - Education is important/needed but partners should not be directly involved in DSPs' daily work
  - Partners need to explain the material benefits of following the AIS prevention protocols
  - DSPs do not want to risk getting into trouble for doing things wrong

### Preferred formats for AIS information/training

- Most DSPs underscored the importance of having hardcopies of AIS information and periodic trainings. They preferred:
  - Trainings during the winter months when DSPs were least busy. Too many trainings and workshops would be overwhelming
  - Online (via Zoom) or pre-recorded videos, trainings, and workshops
  - In-person trainings or workshops in the winter with the provision of incentives, for instance free food
  - Handbooks, pamphlets, and flyers, which DSPs could easily keep with them or at their shops for reference

### Recommendations from the DSPs

- There should be more AIS identification and information boards at boat launches, with photos for reference (as opposed to illustrations)
- AIS prevention goals need to be communicated more clearly; e.g. Is the goal to stop more spread of AIS or reverse existing damage?
- DSPs should be provided with curriculum to train their employees, so that they do not need to send each of them individually to training
- The DNR should provide (or publicize) a way for DSPs to cross-check pictures or samples to make it easier for DSPs to identify AIS
- The DNR should mail postcards to homes with lake or river access. This would help spread awareness of AIS and best practice
- More cleaning solutions and pressure washers should be provided at boat launches



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# Pathway Management Plan

| Barrier/Challenge | Strategy | Solution |
|---|---|---|
| *Time*  | • Meet them where they're at geographically<br>• Meet them where they're at contextually<br>• Demonstrate the steps to instill a sense of achievability | • On-site, expedited training<br>• Incorporate economic benefits of compliance into messaging |
| *Lack of washing stations at boat launches*  | • Provide tools | • Free decon kits |
| *Too many 'weeds' at boat launches*  | • Provide tools | • Free decon kits |
| *Meeting clients' timeline/requests*  | • Empower consumers to flex purchasing power | • Article to citizen groups<br>• Decon contract language template |

## On-site Training

## *FREE* Decon Kit

- ❑ Long handled brush
- ❑ Short handled brush
- ❑ Garden sprayer
- ❑ Water jug
- ❑ Bleach
- ❑ Towel
- ❑ Scraper
- ❑ Tarp
- ❑ Bucket
- ❑ Trash bags
- ❑ Plant grabber
- ❑ BMP handout
- ❑ BMP poster

## BMP Handout

Your Customer's Lake & Rivers at Risk of Invasive Species

INVASIVE SPECIES have the potential to take over the nearshore areas of your customers dock space.

### WHAT DOCK SERVICE PROVIDERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INVASIVES

- Invasive species are nonnative plants, animals, and diseases that can cause harm to the economy, environment, and human health.
- Invasive plants reproduce and grow quickly, easily invading natural areas. They often spread & reproduce in numerous ways, even by small plant fragments or microscopic eggs/larvae.
- Invasive species pose a threat to Wisconsin's waterbodies and waterfront properties that are critical for fishing, boating, and swimming.

### WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH DOCK SERVICE PROVIDERS?

- Invasives such as zebra mussels can be moved on equipment, sediment and plants, and other debris.
- Invasives can diminish customer base by interfering with recreational activities and the need for docks and other in-water structures.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Minimize the movement of invasive species to non-infested areas within a waterbody during work activities.
- Follow the mandatory prevention steps.
- Consider implementing at least one decontamination option.
- Work with your client to meet timelines/requests while prioritizing the resource.

More information on mandatory Prevention Steps and option decontamination options can be found on the back of this document.



## BMP Poster


*Help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)...*

# BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR DOCK SERVICE PROVIDERS

## GOOD

**Wisconsin law requires all water users, including water-related businesses like Dock Service Providers, to take the following steps when leaving a public access:**

**INSPECT** boats, trailers, and equipment

**REMOVE** all attached aquatic plants, animals, and sediment

**DRAIN** all water from boats, vehicles, and equipment

**NEVER MOVE** plants or live fish away from a waterbody

## BEST

**To further minimize the risk of spreading AIS, your company could also consider decontaminating all equipment and gear. Some options for decontamination include:**

Have a **dedicated set of equipment** to use in waterbodies that you visit frequently

Spray equipment with a **bleach solution**
**Use a ratio of 2.5 Tablespoons/gallon of water*

Use a **hot water pressure washer** or steam cleaner to clean equipment
**contact temperature of 140°F*

Allow equipment to **dry** for at least 5 days

If working on multiple waterbodies within a day, plan to **work from least to most infested** to reduce risk of spread.

- Professional designs coming soon
- On-site/free kit offered as part of LMPN in 2026

# Article for Citizen Groups

## How Lake Stewardship & Consumer Power Can Help Prevent the Spread of AIS

*Article provided by: Wisconsin AIS Partnership*

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One of the many challenges facing a healthy waterbody is how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) to protect the **ecological**, **social**, and **economic** benefits that we so greatly cherish in Wisconsin. Prevention of AIS is key to the long-term sustainability of 'lake life' and needs to be at the forefront of any protection strategy. Simply put, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

But if only it were just that simple. The variables and situations that can impact a waterbody may seem so limitless that it can be daunting to know where to start. As a lake resident, you might consider questions such as:

*Does our launch have an AIS prevention sign?*
*What if a new AIS is documented in our lake?*
*What are people doing upstream that could impact our lake?*
*Do they follow AIS prevention laws?*
*Where will the next visiting boat come from and will they have taken prevention steps?*
*What if they didn't? What then? What next?...*

The problem can feel overwhelming. The important thing is that each of us can do *something*. Big or small. Simple or complex. New or old. **Every action counts and every action matters**. As a lake resident, you are in a unique stakeholder position to do something particularly powerful and that is to flex your **consumer power** when it comes to services that you might need as part of your lake life. These might be services such as dock and lift installation/maintenance, shoreline construction work, etc. Any activity that involves installing, removing, operating, and transporting water-related equipment, structures, and gear presents a high risk of inadvertently transporting and spreading AIS without proper decontamination. While everyone is required to "inspect, remove, and drain" per Wisconsin State Statutes NR40, these steps might not always be 100% effective especially for high-risk users such as service providers who are often working on multiple lakes in a single day and interacting with lake water and sediment in ways that recreational users are not. These kinds of service providers need to follow the same prevention steps that we all do, but they are not required to take the extended steps, such as spraying equipment with a bleach solution, making it all the more important for consumers to advocate for their lake.

Photo courtesy of: Steph Boismenue, Oneida County LWCD

To flex your consumer muscle, here are some simple ideas to consider –

- Ask your existing or prospective provider what AIS prevention steps they take.
- Build 'decontamination' into the service contract. Ask that the provider implement at least one decontamination option (see figure) and provide you with documentation such as a video, logbook, or arrange to witness it in-person.
- Talk with your neighbor or lake group to discuss the possibility of hiring the same provider to reduce the number of providers coming to the lake throughout the season.

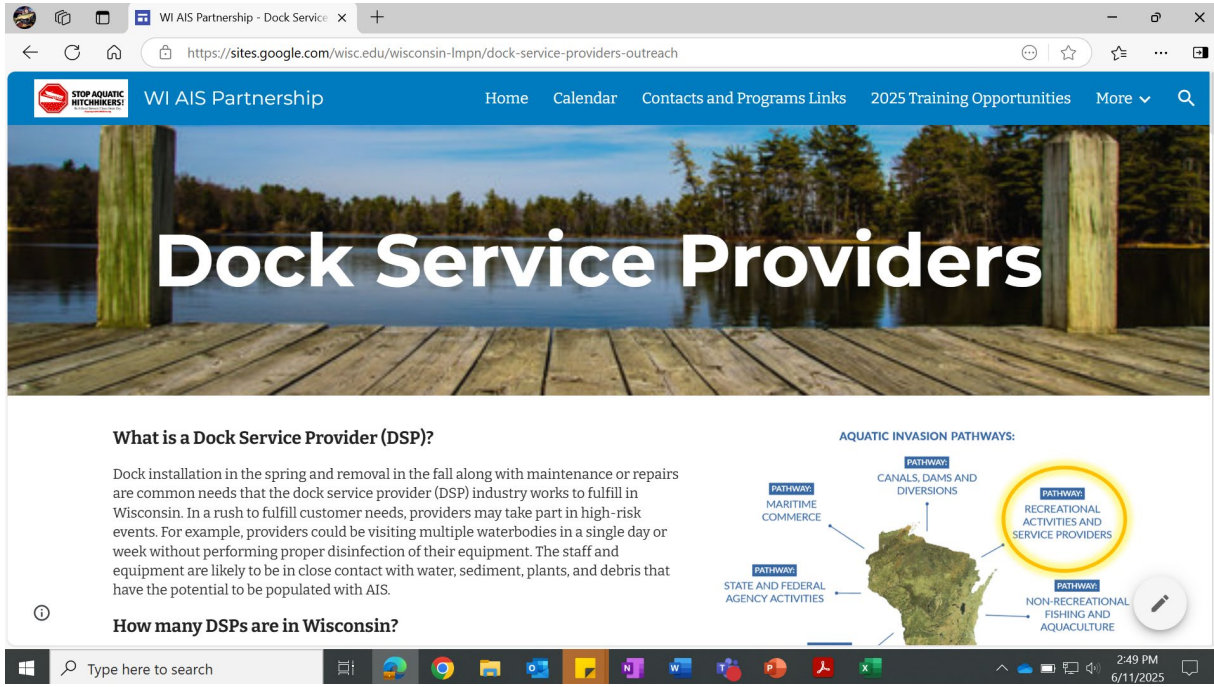
*Thank you for being a steward of your lake!*


# Decon Template Contract Language

Coming soon!

# Outreach Kit


- Offered as part of LMPN in 2026
- Kits provided free of charge to LMPN through GLRI grant



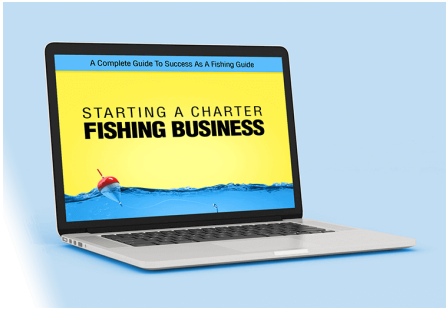
# Where to next?

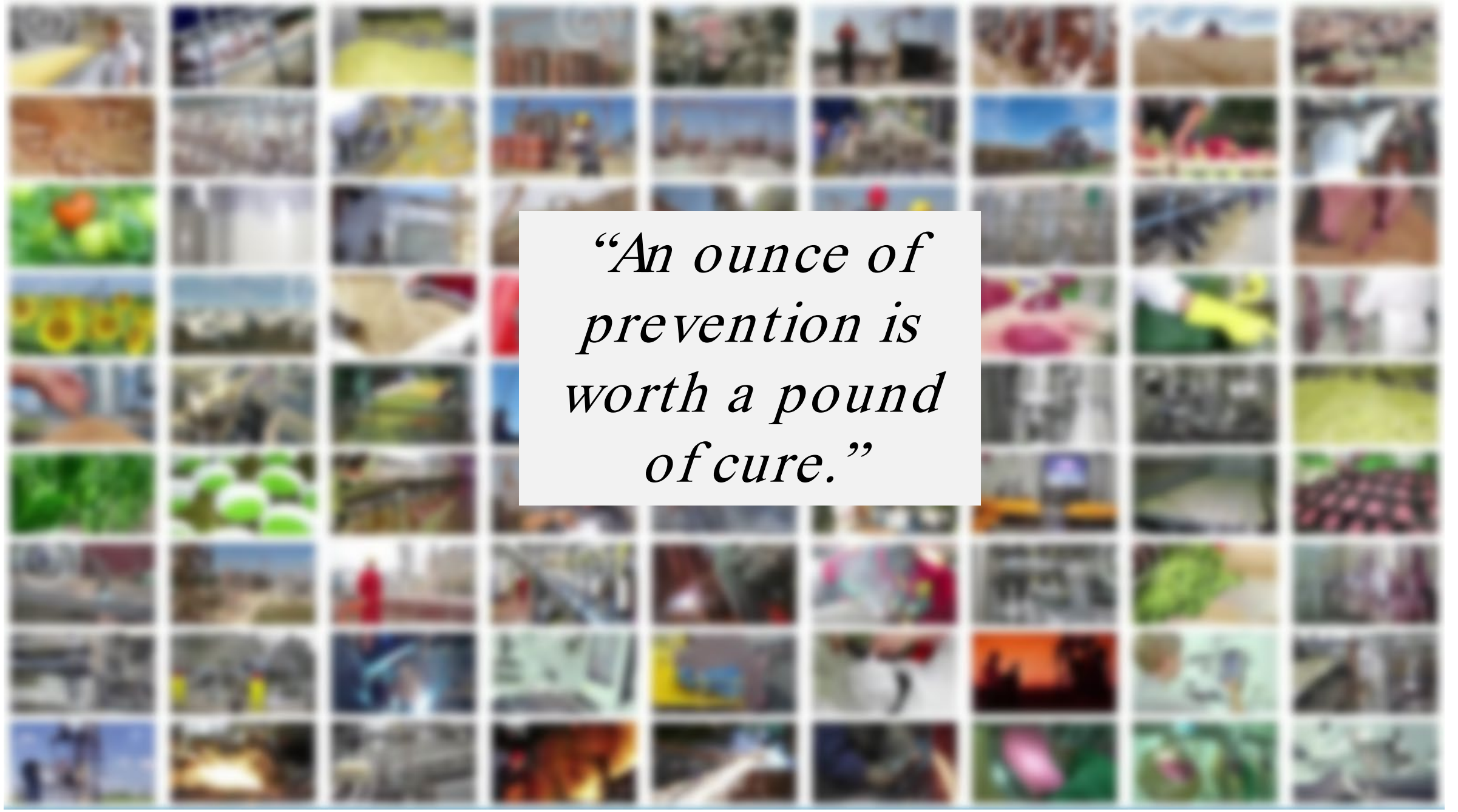
WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

GREEN TIER

Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters

CLEAN WATERS – GOOD FOR BUSINESS





*"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."*

# CONNECT WITH US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"WILD WISCONSIN:
OFF THE RECORD"