



# Wisconsin Association of Lakes

A nonprofit group of citizens, organizations, and businesses working for clean, safe, healthy lakes for everyone.

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Senate Committee on Transportation and Tourism  
Chair Senator Roger Breske  
Room 316 South, State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

February 20, 2008

Dear Senator Breske and Committee members:

The Wisconsin Association of Lakes is pleased that the legislature is considering SB 454. Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a serious threat to the health of our lakes, recreational opportunities like boating and fishing enjoyed by many citizens and visitors, and tourism related businesses and services.

Many of our member Lake Districts and Lake Associations are spending a good portion of the annual operating budgets on suppressing existing AIS populations and preventing further introductions through educational programs, monitoring efforts, and volunteer watercraft inspection programs.

Many of our concerned members have recognized the current gap in existing law. Although it is illegal to launch a boat with aquatic plants attached, it is not illegal for boats to leave lakes without removing plants and associated materials. AIS are frequently spread between lakes by boats. This necessary bill closes that gap. We fully support an Illegal to Transport law. However, we have some suggestions to improve the current bill.

The current bill restricts the transport of "invasive species," but the distinction between invasive aquatic plants and non-invasive aquatic plants can be difficult, and require an expert for positive identification. Invasive species can hide among native species, especially if a boat leaves the water with a tangle of intertwined plants, or the invasive (for example, a zebra mussel) attaches itself to a native plant. Law enforcement officials and boaters may not have the necessary expertise to identify whether plants, mud, or other materials that may contain invasive species are, in fact, violating the law.

AIS can be a nuisance or cause severe problems on some lakes, but largely their introduction happens unintentionally. As drafted, this bill would make it illegal to operate a vehicle on highway if the person has "reason to believe" invasive species are attached. The intent clause included in the bill may make enforcement more difficult; potentially any attached aquatic plants or live animals could be invasive.

Consistent with the AIS prevention steps promoted by the DNR and UW-Extension Lakes Program, we recommend the committee consider revising the bill to require the removal of all aquatic plants, animals, and mud from boat, trailer, and equipment before leaving the landing.

Thank you for your support on this issue.

Tamara Jackson  
Wisconsin Association of Lakes Director of Communications