

Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species Position Statement on Appropriate Messaging

Introduction

Preventing the spread of harmful aquatic nuisance species (herein referred to as aquatic invasive species or AIS) is a primary goal of the Great Lakes Panel. It is widely known that the management of these species relies on effective communication and outreach to stakeholders to achieve management goals. However, certain types of messaging about invasive species undermine our shared AIS management goals.

1. Many species names, especially those with biogeographic reference, associated the organism with a region of discovery or its appearance or behaviors. As such, these names were not ordinarily given with consideration to cultural sensitivity, and some of these names can cause negative societal impacts by stigmatizing people from those locations or perpetuating derogatory, xenophobic, or racist language^{2, 3, 6, 7, 9}.

2. Use of militaristic, nativist, or colonial language in AIS management can alienate marginalized stakeholders while framing environmental management in overly simplistic “good (native) versus evil (introduced)” terms that downplay the role of human behavior in the introduction and spread of invasive species^{3, 4, 7}. Communication research has recently shown that strong militaristic and nativist language in science communication is not more effective than other strategies at engaging water users in AIS management actions^{1, 5}.

To create more inclusive and effective campaigns, communications, and outreach materials, the Great Lakes Panel recognizes the need to join and support other organizations in the effort of evaluating species names as well as the need to use AIS messaging that considers cultural sensitivities and unintended consequences^{8, 10}.

Support

Thoughtful use of vocabulary and descriptive language is required in all aspects of AIS management, whether communicating the value of management programs to elected officials or educating the public to promote AIS prevention actions. The Great Lakes Panel, led by the Information and Education Committee, recognizes the negative impacts on affected communities of species names, militaristic terminology and other language, which can and have caused harm and impede support for AIS management. Based on these considerations, and on research demonstrating that alternative language and messaging is equally effective, the Great Lakes Panel supports new communication approaches and naming conventions aimed at providing the most appropriate, effective, and inclusive terminology used to describe AIS.

Priorities

To promote a better path forward for both issues, the Great Lakes Panel supports:

- 1) Outreach and engagement efforts that apply known information and best practices related to AIS names and messaging, including through collaboration with and support of people already working to improve AIS communication and outreach.
- 2) Development and use of guidelines that consider the principles above for new or revised common names such as those by the Entomological Society of America's Better Common Names Project and the University of Minnesota Extension Invasive Species Community of Practice.
- 3) Continuing research to understand language use within invasive species communication and the impacts of that language.

Resolution

We believe that by supporting work that will incorporate these stated priorities, that the Great Lakes Panel can be more effective in considering the diverse communities we serve, invite more people into conversation and engagement about AIS issues, and ultimately make our AIS management efforts more effective. We hereby call upon the AIS community to support our responsibility to ensure that outreach campaigns, programs, language, names, and messages are welcoming, ethical, and culturally sensitive.

Authority

Chartered under U.S. federal law, the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species is responsible for advancing aquatic nuisance species (ANS) prevention and control efforts in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system. The Panel, a binational body composed of representatives from government (state, provincial, federal, tribal), business and industry, universities, citizen environmental groups and the larger user community, primarily operates through coordination, while providing guidance on research initiatives, policy development and information/education programs on a regional basis.

Supporting Literature and Suggested Reading:

- 1) Bach, T.M. and Larson, B.M.H. 2017. Speaking About Weeds: Indigenous Elders' Metaphors for Invasive Species and Their Management. *Environmental Values* 26 (2017): 561–581. doi: 10.3197/096327117X15002190708119
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- 3) Herbers, J. M., Metcalf, H. E., and V. L. Rhodes. 2022. Problematic Jargon in STEM. ADVANCE Resource and Coordination Network, Washington, D.C.
- 4) Larson, B. 2005. The war of the roses: demilitarizing invasion biology. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 3(9), 495-500. [https://doi.org/10.1890/1540-9295\(2005\)003\[0495:TWOTRD\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1890/1540-9295(2005)003[0495:TWOTRD]2.0.CO;2)
- 5) Shaw, B., Campbell, T., and Radler, B.T. 2021. Testing Emphasis Message Frames and Metaphors on Social Media to Engage Boaters to Learn about Preventing the Spread of Zebra Mussels. *Environmental Management* 68:824–834 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-021-01506-6>
- 6) Simberloff, D. 2003. Confronting introduced species: a form of xenophobia? *Biological Invasions* 5, 179–192 <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1023/A:1026164419010>
- 7) Subramaniam, B. 2001. The Aliens Have Landed! Reflections on the Rhetoric of Biological Invasions. *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 2(1), 26-40. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/407850>.
- 8) Taylor, C., & Dewsbury, B. M. 2018. On the Problem and Promise of Metaphor Use in Science and Science Communication. *Journal of microbiology & biology education*, 19(1), 19.1.46. <https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v19i1.1538>
- 9) Tracy, B. 2022. What's in a Fish Species Name and When to Change It? *Fisheries Magazine*. American Fisheries Society. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fsh.10750>
- 10) Tribal Adaptation Menu Team. 2019. Dibaginjigaadeg Anishinaabe Ezhitwaad: A Tribal Climate Adaptation Menu. Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Odanah, Wisconsin. 54 p.