



**Coordinating the Great Lakes
Aquatic Invasive Species
Landing Blitz!**

**MAY 2026, Great Lakes AIS Binational
Forum**

What is the Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz?

- Takes place over a two-week period in summer (usually coinciding with the Fourth of July and Canada Day)
- All participating agencies deliver consistent messaging about preventing AIS introduction and spread by way of boats and equipment moving between waterbodies
 - The events are promoted locally and statewide



The Goal of the Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz

- 💧 Focus on both AIS prevention and containment
- 💧 Increase AIS awareness and responsible boater behavior
- 💧 Strengthen regional partnerships



Timeline



Timeline: 2019

- **First regionally coordinated event.** The Great Lakes Commission works with states and provinces to coordinate the AIS Landing Blitz

“This is the first time that these valuable educational events will be held simultaneously across the entire Great Lakes region,” said Clift. “It’s a chance to work directly with boaters and deliver a coordinated, regional message about the importance of AIS prevention during the busiest boating weekends of the year.”

Prince Gallitzin State Park holds invasive species checks

By Jack Thompson
of Mainline Newspapers

When a species of plant, animal or insect ends up in a place it doesn't belong, serious problems often follow. For instance, Japanese beetles, stink bugs, coyotes and a host of others cause environmental destruction and general nuisance for Pennsylvania residents each year. The rangers at Prince Gallitzin State Park are acutely aware of the problem and are running a program this summer to raise awareness of invasive species associated with boating.

Assistant park manager Tim Yeager explained that their awareness program is on its third year and runs up to Labor Day. The boat checks are in coordination with a national program affecting the Great Lakes States, which are highly concerned about the health of our lakes and waterways.

Boats are as effective at carrying foreign plants as they are at carrying people, and the rangers are warning boaters of the risk of transferring various invasive species throughout the state. To combat the rise of several invasive species, the rangers are set-

ting up checkpoints at the park's most-used boat launch areas.

According to Yeager, the checkpoints should be pretty easy to spot and will be at the park's busiest marinas. A tent will be set up with information available, and staff at the park will check boats, answer questions and otherwise raise awareness with boaters about the seriousness of invasive species, particularly hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil.

Hydrilla, or water thyme, grows in water and is native to Sri Lanka. Hydrilla made its way into U.S. waterways in the '50s when it was used as an aquarium plant. The plant invades deep, darker waters where native plants can't grow. Combined with its aggressive growth, hydrilla's resiliency allows it to create thick mats that significantly alter underwater environments and choke out native plants.

Hydrilla also negatively impacts dissolved oxygen, and by extension harms fish populations and disrupts the ecosystem. The plant has even been found to overtake water treatment, power generation and

industrial intakes, causing economic damage. Hydrilla is considered one of the world's "worst invasive species" according to a New York invasive species organization.

Eurasian watermilfoil was introduced as far back as the late 1800s, and roots on lake beds. From there, it rapidly forms dense canopies and shades out native plants. As a consequence, natural plant growth is disrupted. The plant also lowers the presence of small invertebrates that fish commonly eat, meaning more watermilfoil results in fewer fish.

The pesticides most effective against watermilfoil also devastate lake ecology, and manual removal is difficult and costly.

Park staff will also perform short surveys about the boaters to learn more about its user base, demographics and other simple questions. The surveys will provide extremely useful information for the state to better track locations of invasive species and ways to combat their spread. Prince Gallitzin is just one park working with Sea Grant Organization to deal with the issue.



Prince Gallitzin State Park interns Nick Comisac and Ricky Wagner man an invasive species awareness tent June 29. So far, the duo has spoken with about 200 boaters in an attempt to prevent the spread of hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil from Prince Gallitzin to other Pa. waterways.

Photo by Jack Thompson.



Walking the lake

Dave Woodley and Barb Pompa enjoy a walk around the lake at the Prince Gallitzin Marina Sunday, June 30.

Photo by Jack Thompson.

St. Vincent de Paul THRIFT STORE

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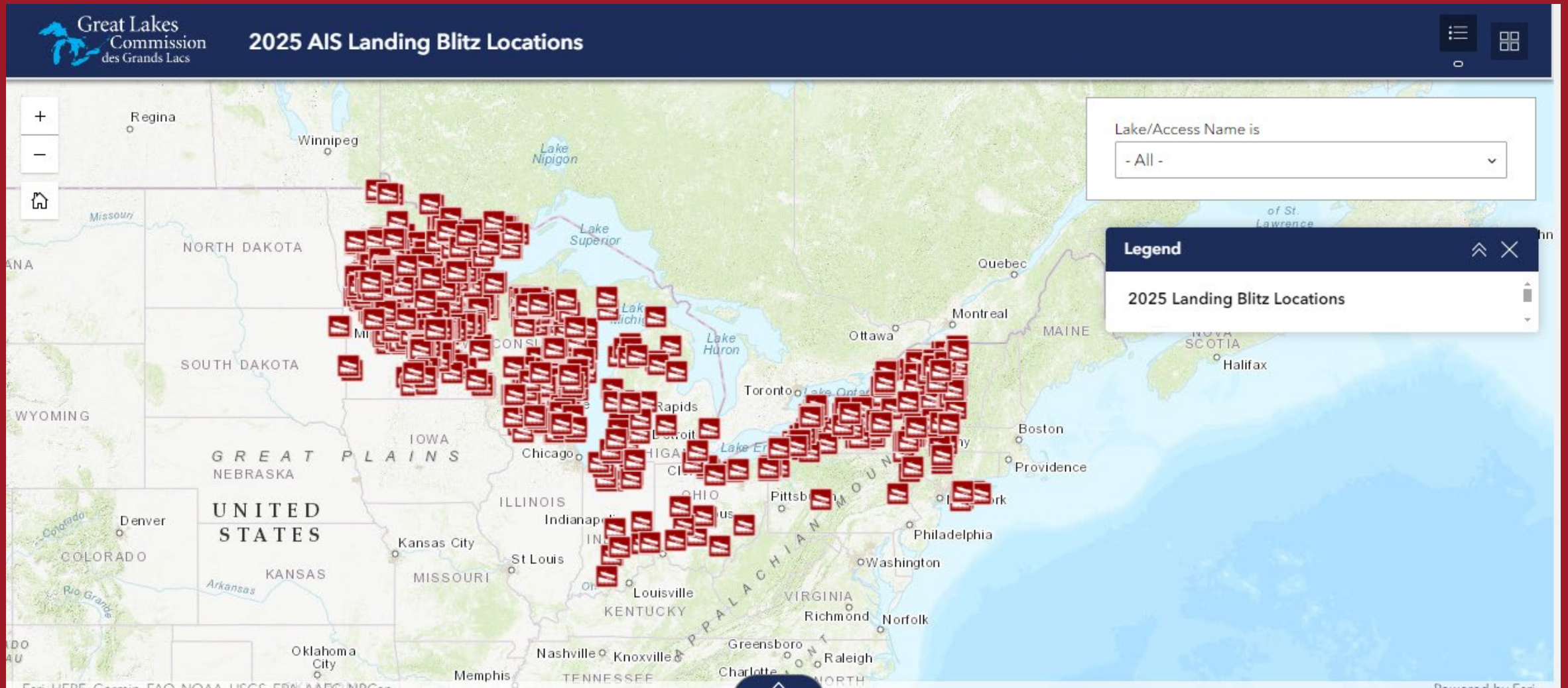
CALL 948-8828 FOR MORE INFO IF NEEDED.

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What does regional coordination look like?

- Maintain and update **website** www.glc.org/work/blitz
 - Hopefully updating website to be more user friendly in 2026

Annual interactive event mapper



What does regional coordination look like?

- **Annually collect event metrics** from participating jurisdictions
 - Total number of media engagements (i.e., media coverage of the event - # of stories)
 - Total number of social media impressions (if any)
 - Total number of inspections conducted
 - Percent or number of inspected boats with AIS on them (if any)
 - Number of sites that hosted in-person events
 - Total number of site impressions (i.e., people talked to during the event)
 - Total number of staff and/or volunteers who worked the event

2019

Thousands of people are becoming part of the solution:

- Approximately **115,000 people** were educated about AIS by agency staff, watercraft inspectors and volunteers
- **1,400 public and private boat landings** in Great Lakes states and provinces participated in the most extensive, coordinated landing blitz event to date
- **94%** of participating boat landings also hosted boat inspections, leading to **over 130,000 inspections**
- Only **6%** of inspections found aquatic plants, animals, and/or mud attached to boats, motors, and trailers



Credit: Christal Campbell, UW Division of Extension

- Multiple media outlets covered event happenings and **millions of people** watched, listened and read about AIS prevention efforts based on news releases by partner agencies
- At least **103,500** people saw information about the event on Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter
- **780+** interested people got information about the event through the event webpage at www.glc.org/blitz



For more information and to become a partner visit:
www.glc.org/blitz



Thousands of people are becoming part of the solution:

- Approximately **130,000 people** were educated about AIS by the **1,000+ agency staff**, watercraft inspectors and volunteers who helped with the event
- **Over 1,300 public and private boat landings** in eight Great Lakes states and provinces participated in the event
- Many of the participating boat landings also hosted inspections, resulting in **over 125,000 boat inspections!**



As part of Landing Blitz virtual events,

- Event happenings received **20 media engagements** where people watched, listened and read about AIS prevention efforts
- More than **386,000** people saw information about the event on Facebook, Instagram, and/or X (Twitter)
- **5,000+** interested people got information about the event through the Landing Blitz webpage at www.glc.org/blitz



For more information and to become a partner visit:
www.glc.org/blitz

2025

What does regional coordination look like?

- Provide branding



What does regional coordination look like?

- Collect and promote regional outreach material

Great Lakes Regional Landing Blitz: AIS Prevention Step Prompts to Assist Inspector

If boaters are not familiar with the prevention steps or have questions, help them understand the reasons for taking these actions. You can use the prompts below to assist you in your explanation and discussions at the boat landing. **Remember the goal is to make this as relevant as possible to the boater by localizing the issue through the conversation.**

Step 1 – CLEAN

- Inspect and Remove visible plants, animals, and mud
- Scrub hull
- Rinse with high pressure hot water
- Flush water in motor

Why this is important:
Plants and animals can easily attach to boat/equipment or become entangled in boat motors and fishing lines and then be moved to another lake. This is a concern in this area because- (ADD LOCAL CONCERNS HERE)

Step 2 – DRAIN water from watercraft, motor, bilge, bladder tanks, live well, and portable bait containers

Why this is important:
Many organisms such as spiny water flea, juvenile zebra mussels, or plant fragments (use organisms that are of concern in your area) are microscopic and invisible to the naked eye and easily transported in water from one waterbody to the next. We know that many of the boaters that frequent our lake also spend time at- (ADD LOCAL CONCERNS HERE)

Step 3 – DRY everything 5 days or more
OR
WIPE everything with a towel before reuse

For Live Bait specific questions -
Never dump live fish or other organisms from one waterbody into another.

Live or Unwanted Bait:

Earthworms minnows leeches

TRASH

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

EVERY TIME YOU BOAT!

CLEAN

Inspect and remove visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from watercraft, motor, trailer, and equipment before leaving water access.

Scrub hull using a stiff brush.

Rinse watercraft, trailer, and equipment with high pressure hot water when possible.

Flush water in motor according to owner's manual.

DRAIN

Drain water from watercraft, motor, bilge, bladder tanks, livewell, and portable bait containers before leaving water access.

DRY

Dry everything **five days** or more, unless otherwise required by local or state laws, when moving between waters to kill small species not easily seen.

OR— If drying is not possible, *wipe* everything with a towel before reuse.

Check these areas where AIS can hide:

Dock Lines Anchor Livewell Bilge Gimbal Area

Hitch Trailer Hull Axle Rollers & Bunks Motor

What does regional coordination look like?

- Encourage social media – #GLAISBlitz

FACEBOOK

Sample Posts

Fishing on the Great Lakes for some summer salmonids? Research has shown that angling line and down rigging equipment have high ensnarement rates for spiny water flea, a small invasive zooplankton that negatively impacts aquatic food chains by decimating native zooplankton populations leaving little nutrients for fish higher up in the food chain.

Spiny water fleas have a large spine that make them hard to be eaten by fish but easy to attach on down rigging equipment that is dragged through the water column. Be sure to #CleanDrainDry your fishing equipment and boat before moving to another water body by following these steps:

-  Clean and remove all mud, plant, and debris from your boat and equipment
-  Drain and dry all water from your boat and gear
-  ...or wait 5+ days between trips

Timeline: 2021

- The GLC receives its first interjurisdictional GLRI grant to “enhance” regional Landing Blitz efforts
 - Phase 1 (2022-2023)
 - Phase 2 (2024-2025)
 - Phase 3 (2026-2027) 😞



Work conducted under the GLRI Grants

- Outreach material creation
 - A reference guide to common GL AIS seen while boating
 - Informational factsheet for new event hosts
 - Information fact sheet for expanding events
 - Moodle training course
 - Event timeline planner
 - Funding guide (coming soon!)

Plants



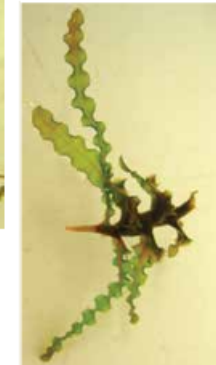
Both photos: Karen Hahnel, MEDEP

Curly-Leaved Pondweed
(*Potamogeton crispus*)

Size: up to 2 m long (6 feet)

Characteristics:

- A submerged, rooted, aquatic perennial plant
- Oblong leaves, 4-10 cm long (1.5-4 inches) and 0.5-1 cm wide (0.2-0.4 inches), with a midvein, wavy edges, and finely-toothed margins; arranged along the stem in alternating pattern; reddish-green coloured
- Flattened, branching stems
- Flowers are tiny and extend above the water in small spikes; blooms in May and June
- Spreads from rhizomes and turions (vegetative overwintering buds) in late fall and early winter, giving it a competitive advantage over native plants



Eurasian Water-Milfoil
(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Size: 50-70 cm long (20-28 inches)

Characteristics:

- A submerged, rooted, aquatic perennial plant
- Feather-like leaves, with a mid-vein and 12-20 paired leaflets (native water-milfoil has 11 or fewer leaflet pairs); arranged along the stem in whorls of 4-5
- Stem is a leafy shoot, branching repeatedly, especially at the water's surface; shoots have reddish brown tips
- Flowers are small and red; extend above the water on 5-20 cm terminal spikes (2-8 inches); bloom in July and August
- Spreads primarily by fragmentation; can spread by seeds as well



VITHC

Work conducted under the GLRI Grants

- Small grants program
 - A total of 26 GL organizations funded
 - Grants all under \$10,000
 - \$20,000 grant limit trialed in 2025 with OH Sea Grant
 - Grantees are provided “starter kits”



Credit: Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association

Organization	Jurisdiction	Year(s) awarded	Total # of events	Total awarded
Keuka Lake Association	New York	2022, 2023	75	\$ 18,515
Kosciusko Water and Woodland Invasive Partnership	Indiana	2022	3	\$ 4,600
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan	Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan	2022	4	\$ 4,405
Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps	Illinois	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025	78*	\$ 26,700
Benzie Conservation District	Michigan	2022, 2023	10	\$ 9,700
Cleveland Metroparks	Ohio	2022, 2024	8*	\$ 9,020
Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance	Wisconsin	2022	19	\$ 5,010
Glacierland Resource Conservation & Development Council	Wisconsin	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025	23*	\$ 30,130
Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association	New York	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025	10*	\$ 26,283
Lapeer Conservation District	Michigan	2022, 2023	8	\$ 5,907
Burnett County Land Services Department	Wisconsin	2023, 2024	36*	\$ 15,993
Saginaw Bay CISMA	Michigan	2023	3	\$ 5,883
Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District	New York	2023	6	\$ 5,360
Sheboygan County Planning and Conservation Department	Wisconsin	2023	8	\$ 8,019
Douglas County Land and Water Conservation Department	Wisconsin	2023	4	\$ 7,935
Friends of the Detroit River	Michigan	2024, 2025	7*	\$ 9,504
Upper Peninsula Resource Conservation and Development Council	Michigan	2022, 2023, 2024	16*	\$ 23,408
Lake to Lake CISMA	Michigan	2025	8	\$ 8,852
Upstate Freshwater Institute	New York	2025	6	\$ 9,997
Florence County Land Conservation	Wisconsin	2025	10	\$ 4,097
Three shores CISMA	Michigan	2025	7	\$ 5,675
Cornell University	New York	2025	7	\$ 4,341
Town of Forestport	New York	2025	14	\$ 7,500
Outdoor Discovery Center Network	Michigan	2025	5	\$ 7,427
Ohio Sea Grant	Ohio	2025	28	\$ 21,996
Spider Lake Property Owner Association	Michigan	2025	3	\$ 3,728
Total: 26 organizations			228 events and counting!	\$ 289,986

Funding for 2026 grantees uncertain

Work conducted under the GLRI Grants

- Digital marketing
 - Used our GLC graphic designer to make banner ads
 - Contracted with WI Sea Grant to create a 15 and 30-second video
 - Use the platform GroundTruth to set up a month-long digital marketing campaign
 - \$15,000 per year (\$1,875)



Snapshot from 2025



- Total spent: \$15K
 - 40/60 split on-site banner ads vs retargeted video ads
 - Additional \$630 in promotional retargeted banner ads
- States updated geofence locations using past results from the past years

Total number of impressions: 2,249,171

	Impressions	Reach
On-site banner ads	1,708,269	371,308
CTV-retargeted video ads	360,589	85,314 *
Promotional retargeted banner ads	180,313	66,860

*does not include others in the household that may have viewed the ad

Geotargeting (banner ads)

People that were within a defined space are served an ad

Quality control for people traveling through a space

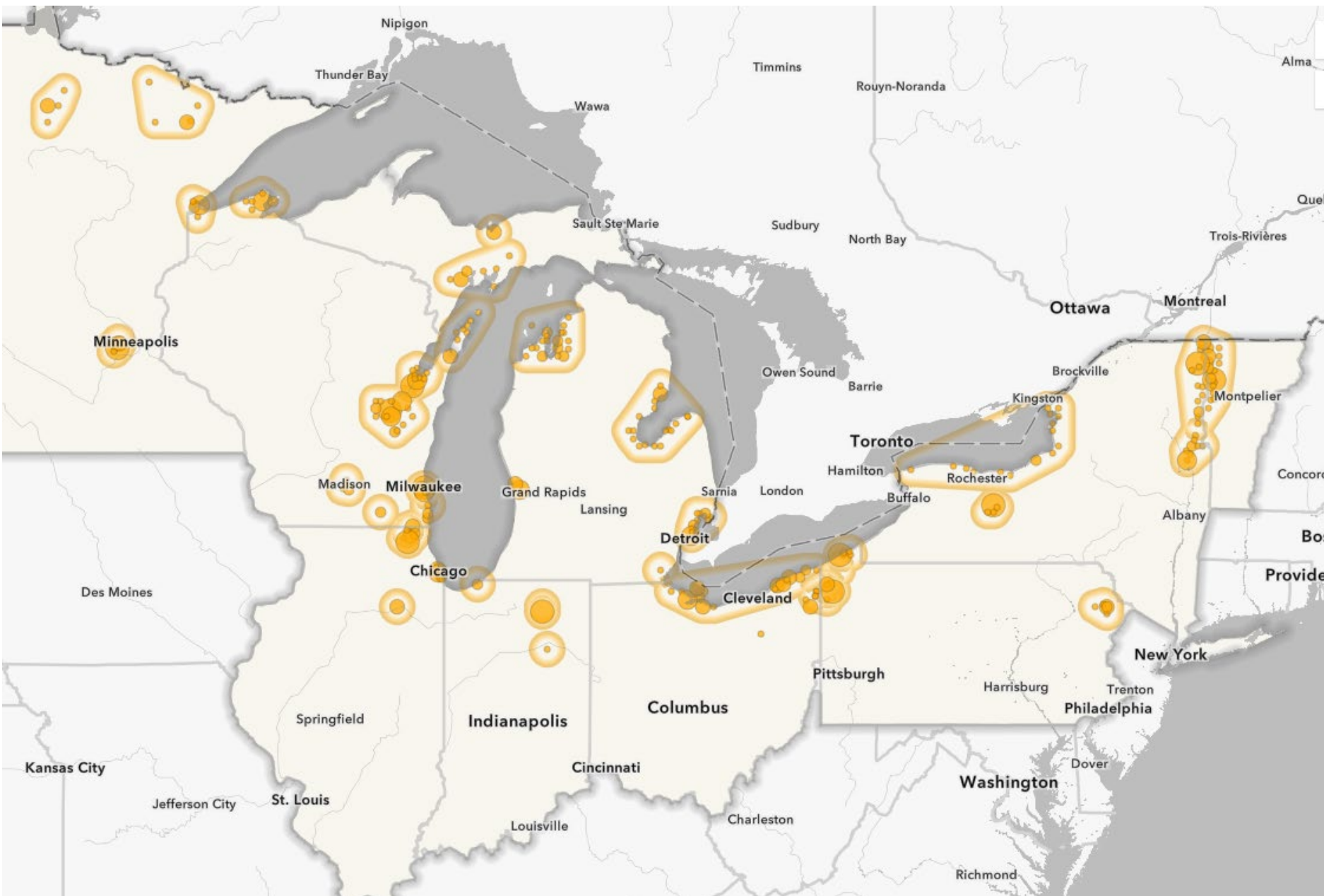
CTV retarget (video ads)

If someone was served an ad in the geofence, they were put into a new audience bucket where the video ads are sent to them, regardless of location

Geofencing Impressions 25

Performance Impressions

- 1 - 1441
- 1441 - 4555
- 4555 - 9505
- 9505 - 24771
- 24771 - 70001



www.glc.org/work/blitz

Work conducted under the GLRI Grants

- Social media marketing
- ~\$30,000 to run Landing Blitz marketing ads on Meta and Google (YouTube) in 2025
- Used a video produced by WI Sea Grant that promotes Clean Drain Dry
- Work lead: Tim Campbell (tim.campbell@wisc.edu)



Campaign generated 2.08 million video views at less than one cent per video view!!

Landing Blitz Phase 3: Coming soon to a lake near you

Reach out if you are interested in joining the project team!



Questions?



Theresa Gruninger:
tgruninger@glc.org

Event website: www.glc.org/blitz