



GREAT LAKES AIS LANDING BLITZ

FIRST TIME ■ EARLY EXPERIENCE

BOATERS AND OTHER RECREATORS LEARN ABOUT THE RISKS OF SPREADING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) at public and private boating access sites across the Great Lakes region every summer during the annual Great Lakes AIS “Landing Blitz.” These events take place over a two-week period, emphasizing the need to **Clean, Drain, Dry** boats whenever they come out of the water, and **Dispose** of any unwanted bait in the trash.

Planning and hosting Landing Blitz events is a critical partnership between state, provincial, and local organizations, as well as Indigenous Nations, and there are several factors to be aware of during the planning process. Many of these considerations are outlined below to help you plan a successful event and develop a long-term plan for participation in the Landing Blitz!

Determining event specifics

- Keep the event simple and confined to a 10-day period
- Consider the time of day in which events will be held to increase likelihood of interacting with boaters as they launch or when they come off the water
- Be prepared with a sheltered location for staff if protection from the sun or inclement weather is needed
- Leave ample time for set up the day of the event/arrive early to the location
- Be flexible to unexpected changes that may happen the day of the event
- Offer promotional materials to serve as an icebreaker to conversation
- Hang up large banners, flags, or posters that clearly identifies your group and purpose
- Consider bringing jarred specimens, life-sized laminated AIS photos, or a regional map of AIS infestations
- Walk around the launch area to engage with members of the public that are unlikely to approach on their own

Advance planning

- Before applying or planning for funding, finalize event locations by asking local partners for event location recommendations and/or select locations based on level of AIS spread risk
- Visit sites ahead of time to plan for setup, understand the amount of traffic the launch receives, identify available amenities (e.g., water for boat wash, restrooms for staff, etc.), and ascertain atmosphere and clientele
- Identify who manages/is in charge of the launch, and get their buy-in before planning an event there
- Plan for liability insurance and permits, if needed at the launch
- Research if other events will be held at the launch on the same day as a Blitz event (e.g., fishing tournament) or if there will be special holidays rules and/or closings at the launch (e.g., 4th of July)
- Plan for mileage and the time/staff hours it takes to get to and between sites, and include in budget request
- Plan for the safety and comfort of staff (e.g., provide chairs, shade tent, vests, cones, refreshments, and insect repellent and sunscreen)
- Confirm what resources (e.g., tent, cooler, handouts, etc.) can be used for the event and what may need to be purchased, so that can be budgeted
- Plan for how you will advertise the event and coordinate with local partners to recruit volunteers early
- Order promotional materials well before you need them to prevent backorder issues with suppliers

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Coordination with partners and volunteers

- If paid contracts are needed, make a plan for who will manage them
- It may be difficult to stay in contact with staff across multiple event locations; make a plan for communication
- Leverage existing partnerships from other work/projects to support events
- If working with partner organizations, check in with them regularly leading up to the event
- Work with groups that are passionate about this topic (e.g., lake associations, watershed groups, cooperative invasive species management areas, etc.)
- Share all plans with the launch management group/contact in advance of events
- Reach out to potential partners over the winter to secure partnership well in advance of the summer events

Training considerations

- Complete each of the Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz training modules at www.glblitz.moodlecloud.com
- Staff should be prepared for negative interactions with people and empowered to remove themselves from the situation
- Prepare staff for how to initiate conversations with boaters, which may include referencing talking points
- Role play interactions to build confidence
- Provide tasks for volunteers who might not necessarily know a lot about AIS
- Provide staff with general and region-specific training about priority AIS

Organizational considerations

- Prior to planning events, ensure that you have the support of your board of directors, management, executive director, etc.
- Allow ample time for any funding proposals to be reviewed and approved internally prior to submission to a funding entity
- If applying for funding, keep in mind that it may take time for financial staff to set up an internal fund once a grant is awarded
- Communicate with staff internally about any plans to apply for funding, so that if additional help is needed internally, they are prepared to assist
- If advertising for a paid position, particularly if it is short-term, consider pairing this event funding with other internal staffing opportunities to make a job posting more attractive to applicants, and more likely to be filled. Paid positions shorter than a few months may be difficult to fill
- Staff turnover within the organization can make planning continuity difficult
- Virtual collaboration can be difficult, particularly when preparing a funding proposal
- Develop an event work plan and budget that is achievable based on the number of staff and volunteers likely to be available – don't be overly ambitious
- Track staff time in a way that makes sense to you/your organization, and allows for the track of time against a grant's budgeted allowance for salary, fringe, and benefits
- For safety reasons, aim to staff more than one individual per site and if possible, have a senior staff member present or on call