

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! Summary

Introduction: Over the past 40 years, the world has changed dramatically. Globalization, demographic changes and other issues have added to today's complex conservation issues. And within the U.S., ideological differences have created public sector gridlock, so continuing to rely on government to be the country's sole environmental steward is not prudent. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration and public-private partnerships.



**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!™**

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.
Clean all recreational equipment.
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

Today's environmental issues are all about us and with 7.1 billion humans now on the planet, everything we do creates an environmental impact. Our wasteful behaviors and unconscious environmental impacts contribute to today's conservation issues, and expecting the government to address this situation alone is not practical. Thinking differently is necessary to deal with the multiple layers of change resistance. To help address these conservation challenges for aquatic invasive species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) developed cross-sector partnerships with different industry sectors. By working through national coordinating bodies like the ANS Task Force and applying theoretically-grounded social marketing and branding processes to address complex environmental issues, the FWS has collaborated to develop much needed tools that empower individuals and communities to become part of the solution to our 21st century conservation challenges.

Estimated Funding: The FWS funded initial startup costs of SAH! with \$120K. Over the campaign's 13-year lifespan, an additional \$130K has been added by the agency. While initial start-up costs were modest, the campaign was designed to leverage and maximize external support. Through this financial backing, a grassroots branding strategy was created that builds local awareness and support through the marketing of prevention actions via different networks and this approach to localized delivery has empowered individuals and has created diverse stakeholder support that promotes, models and advocates for invasive species prevention behaviors.

Target Audiences: Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are moving around the globe as a result of globalization, transoceanic shipping, and the trade in living organisms for food, pets, and other purposes. This made it difficult to define an initial target audience because there was little leverage to affect change. However, when zebra mussels began to spread to other waters outside of the Great Lakes, clarity was achieved. Recreational boaters and other aquatic recreational activities became implicated for inadvertently spreading AIS and as a result, they became critical target audience for a national behavior change campaign.

Scope: With the issue's complexity and the connections between outdoor recreation and conservation, to effect change, the campaign's scope is focused on promoting environmentally-responsible recreational-use behaviors; however, the key is leveraging the power of place. American's relationship to the environment and their worldview about conservation are defined by where they grew up. To properly inspire and empower individuals to become part of the solution and adopt effective prevention behaviors to address this complex issue, it is critical we evoke emotions that trigger this "local" sense of place. Target audiences need to know that carrying out the prevention behaviors promoted by SAH! will have a direct influence on conserving their local waterbody that they identify with, enjoy, and recreate on.

Effectiveness and Evaluation Metrics Used: Creating a national social science-based campaign like Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers inside the FWS had never been done before; so, the evaluation metrics cover many issues. Traditional metrics like brand impressions, daily totals of unique website visitors and formal partners who have joined the campaign were used along with an evaluation of the agency's return on its investment and actual measures for determining behavior change. By conducting pre and post surveys along with different interventions has shown the legitimacy of this approach. With this spectrum of metrics, the agency has become more supportive about using social science-based strategies to promote conservation. And having the campaign featured as a branding case study in a social marketing text book helps as well.

Habitattitude Summary

Introduction: After discussing some potential ways to work together at an international meeting, PIJAC, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, which is the trade association for the pet and aquarium industry collaborated with the FWS to develop a mutually-beneficial relationship to help prevent the introduction of non-native pets into the environment. This was quite a point of departure for PIJAC and for the FWS because the basis of their past relationship was adversarial due to industry's challenges of earlier proposals to list numerous fish and wildlife species as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act.



Estimated Funding: In early 2000s, the FWS was somewhat skeptical about committing support for social science-based strategies. However, based on the positive discussions at the Global Invasive Species Program (GISP) meeting, FWS recognized the opportunity and leveraged its role as the operational arm of the national ANS Task Force to commit \$25K in startup funding to launch a US-based initiative. This created a good foundation and helped to catalyze the development of strategies that focused on leveraging additional federal dollars. Eventually, through NOAA's competitive National Sea Grant College Program an additional \$350K was provided to the partnership. Additionally, through various media outreach initiatives and the creation of promotional materials featuring the Habitattitude brand, PIJAC and its member companies contributed approximately \$4.6 million in promotional support that generated significant brand impressions.

Target Audiences: Habitattitude identified a specific customer segment, pet owners, as the target audience. The pet industry through PIJAC and the FWS reached out through the various networks that connected with pet owners. What became immediately apparent – pet owners/consumers were much less organized than aquatic recreational users, they are very diverse in terms of the pets they own, and Habitattitude needed to target specialty groups within the ornamental aquarium industry. So, this has required the partnership to seek new ways to engage pet owners. And PIJAC led efforts to work with state fish and wildlife agencies, and in particular, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to create statewide amnesty events where pet owners could turn in their pets without repercussions.

Scope: Habitattitude is focused on changing consumer behavior by promoting wise consumer decisions when acquiring pets as well as ethically-acceptable ways to surrender pets when the owner has to give up ownership instead of releasing the pet into the environment. While this campaign is national in scope, the dispersed target audience has made it challenging to communicate the desired behaviors. Also, with this campaign, the principles, the FWS and PIJAC have learned over time to make the focus more customer-centric and eliminate the details and jargon of the larger invasive species issue. Recognizing that the decade-old campaign needed to be updated, the FWS and PIJAC have created a steering committee, under a PIJAC and DOI MOU, to head this up, revitalize the campaign and focus on empowering consumers to select the right pet coupled with protecting out environment. Most importantly, the website is being redesigned to be user friendly as well as be expanded to include reptiles and amphibians, water gardening, pets in the classroom, and a resource section for those wanting to learn more about invasive species.

Effectiveness and Evaluation Metrics Used: While Habitattitude has undergone different highs and lows over its first decade; the campaign itself is probably the best evaluation metric. Even though no standard marketing metrics exist, the campaign has helped to create a collaborative relationship involving Federal and state agencies and a cross section of pet industry. Habitattitude is an important catalyst in having regulators and industry join forces to promote innovative, non-regulatory solutions to address an important and complex environmental issue.