

## **“Most of them don’t know enough”: Exploring organisms-in-trade hobbyists’ intentions to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes Region**

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Establishment of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in the Great Lakes Region decreases biodiversity by outcompeting native species. Additionally, AIS eradication and mitigation efforts cost federal and state governments billions of dollars annually. Organisms-in-trade (OIT) hobbyists—namely aquarium hobbyists, outdoor pond owners, and water gardeners—have been identified as one of the many vectors of AIS release. Managers have called for self-regulation of hobbyists to perform OIT purchase and disposal behaviors known to prevent the spread of AIS. However, it is unknown if current outreach efforts influence behaviors. In an effort to reduce the introduction and establishment of AIS, this study seeks to identify factors that influence intention to perform purchase and disposal behaviors known to prevent the spread of AIS. Focus groups and key informant interviews (N=22) were conducted in fall 2012 to discuss behavioral barriers and inform survey development. Surveys were administered at two events in each of the eight Great Lakes states (16 events in total) between February and September 2013 (N=542). Survey results suggest that respondents who have high awareness of AIS, high concern regarding the spread of AIS, and high knowledge of how to prevent the spread of AIS report a greater intention to perform general disposal behaviors with preventing the spread of AIS in mind and are more likely to contact other hobbyists to donate their unwanted species. Conversely, respondents who reported low awareness, concern, and knowledge were more likely to contact retailers for humane disposal advice or returns of unwanted species. Communication and managerial implications will be presented and future outreach strategies will be discussed.