

# Minnesota DNR AIS Advisory Committee

*October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 Final Meeting Minutes*

## **Online via Teams**

**Members Present:** Shelly Binsfeld, Andrew Dickhart, Beto Garcia, Liz Kaltenhauser, Jared Langer, Spencer McGrew, Carrie Ohly-Cusack, Patrick Selter, Amanda Weberg, M. Mahmood Tajbakhsh, Kate Hagsten (for Raining White)

**Members Absent:** Nick Bluhm, Stephanie Hadler

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Maddie Hayden

**Ex-officio Members Absent:** Nicole Lalum, Amy McGovern

**DNR Staff Present:** Rafael Contreras-Rangel, Doug Jensen, Kelly Pennington

Chair **S. McGrew** called meeting to order at 10:04am

**Motion to approve Agenda: A. Weberg**, motion, **M. Tajbakhsh**, seconded, agenda approved

**Motion to approve September Minutes: B. Garcia**, motion, **A. Weberg**, seconded, minutes approved

## Meeting Summary

- Committee discussed the following:
  - Updating the Committee's charter
  - The Committee's advocacy role in response to the potential decrease in local prevention aid AIS Funding
  - Use of Decontamination Units vs CD3s
  - Changes to MAISRC Showcase

## Action Items

- **Action Item:** DNR will verify whether Ex-Officio members can sign onto recommendations sent to the Commissioner.
- **Action Item:** Invite Nick Phelps to present the results of their finds at the December meeting.
- **Action Item:** Invite Jeff Forester to discuss the budget process and potential next steps.
- **Action Item:** **S. Binsfeld** volunteers to contact the legislative arm of the Association of SWCDs to determine which legislators could be sent a letter of support.
- **Action Item:** **J. Langer** volunteers to lead update past letter of support emphasizing new data and findings and be active citizens to empower meetings with Legislators.
- **Action Item:** **J. Langer** volunteers to form a letter writing subcommittee expressing its concerns to DNR which in turn can be taken to the Legislature.
- **Action Item:** **A. Dickhart** volunteers to lead a committee to develop a county survey to measure how they plan to respond to potential cuts.
- **Action Item:** **M. Hayden** will discuss MAISRC social science researchers about the cost analysis and other modeling of impacts.
- **Action Item:** **C. Ohly-Cusack** will bring further information about CD3 stations and MLRA's plans for discussion at December meeting.

## Charter Update Discussion

### Member Removal Policy

- Members may be removed for inactivity or failure to follow charter guidelines.
  - This change allows committee leadership to recommend removal to the Commissioner, rather than requiring direct action from the Commissioner or their representative.
- Extensive discussion took place regarding voting procedures for removal (e.g., in-person vs. email voting).
- It was agreed the charter should remain general, with a separate, detailed expectations document.
- Doug shared a sample expectations document from the Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee, which could serve as a model.

### Term Limits

- A proposed 12-year lifetime term limit was discussed.
- Doug noted that other DNR committees do not have term limits, and adding one may raise concerns about consistency.
- To align with other DNR committees, the group decided not to include a lifetime term limit.

### Voting Rights

- All members may vote on committee activities.
- Ex-Officio members may not vote on motions or actions involving recommendations to the DNR.

### Meeting Length

- Meetings will be scheduled for a minimum of two hours and a maximum of five hours.
- Members expressed support for this format.

### Attendance and Member Status

- Original language stated members must not miss more than three consecutive meetings to remain active.
- Some members found this language too rigid.
- Revised: Members absent for more than three consecutive meetings will be considered inactive.
- Final wording will be determined by the Chair and Vice Chair.

### Quorum Definition

- Quorum will be based on the number of active members present at the meeting (removing “at the beginning”).
- Inactive members will not count toward quorum.
- Members suggested defining “active member” as determined by committee leadership.

## DNR Updates

### K. Pennington, DNR Invasive Species Program Supervisor

- Via chat: Invasive species specialists are meeting today with statewide program staff to talk about end-of-season updates and discussion items (that's where I've been most of the day today).
- Most seasonal watercraft inspection staff are done for the season.
- We continue to work on 2025 annual report and planning for next Invasive Aquatic Plant Management (IAPM) grants season.

- In addition to proposed change to make it legal to possess, import, transport, purchase, and sell dead and eviscerated bighead, silver, and grass carp without needing a permit from DNR, the DNR plans to propose **to add black carp to the list of species that people are required to report**. Currently, if someone takes a grass, bighead, or silver carp they are required to report that to the DNR. This proposal would add [black carp](#) (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*) to that list. We have not yet detected black carp in Minnesota, but they have been detected further downstream in the Mississippi River. The DNR is seeking this change because public encounters with this species might be our first source of early detection information and would be critical to inform the state's management and removal efforts.
- Contact her, R. Contreras-Rangel and D. Jensen you have questions about these and we can follow up via email or at the next meeting.

#### **D. Jensen**, AIS Prevention Planner

##### *Training:*

- In September, DNR held an Invasive Species Program Meeting in St. Cloud.
- DNR supported and spoke at a *Crayfish Monitoring and ID Workshop* hosted by Michigan State University and IL-IN Sea Grant in Lanesboro.

##### *Coordination:*

- In September, several DNR staff attended (in-person and online) a joint two-day meeting of the Mississippi Regional Basin Panel and Western Regional Panel on ANS in Lawrence, KS.
- DNR joined a National Golden Mussel Work Group to plan responses to the new and rapidly spreading infestation in CA.
- Several DNR staff attended the fall meeting of MISAC and a record of 35 staff at the MAISRC Showcase.
- In November, DNR staff will provide leadership during a meeting of the Great Lakes Panel on ANS in Detroit, MI, if the federal shutdown is lifted.

##### *Outreach:*

- Next month, three DNR staff will present talks and posters on model approaches to AIS outreach, facts and fallacies about AIS, jumping worm regulatory update, and a new MN invader, prickly waterlily.
- Last, DNR staff have been invited to talk about MN's "A Success Story in AIS Prevention" online at the International Joint Commission's Ask an Expert Speaker Series.

**R. Contreras-Rangel**, AIS Prevention Planner – No update.

## **Member and Ex-Officio Updates**

#### **Kate Hagsten** (Filling in for **R. White**)

- Previously served on the committee; currently covering while Raining is on vacation.
- Involved in a harvesting program and DASH pulling of starry stonewort on local lakes.
- Investigating invasive species interactions on Leech Lake.
- One inspector completed over 800 inspections.
- Closed out a rapid response grant with MAISRC focused on starry stonewort and wild rice assessment; monitoring will continue.
- Raining met with neighboring counties to discuss AIS efforts, including CD3 unit deployment.

- CD3 stations are being shut down for winter due to remote locations.
- Multiple stations are breaking in the same area, possibly indicating a manufacturing issue.
- Vandalism has occurred at some units.
- The team is evaluating whether maintaining CD3 stations is worthwhile due to ongoing challenges.

#### S. McGrew

- Recommends adding a timestamp to the bottom of the SAISAC website indicating the last update.

Due to time limitation, the rest of the members did not report any updates.

## SAISAC Advocacy Discussion: Local Prevention Aid AIS Funding Concerns

### Funding Threats & Impact

- **D. Jensen** mentions Minnesota is unique in offering Local Prevention Aid to support a statewide AIS program, which has helped curb AIS spread over the past decade.
- **J. Langer** emphasized the committee's dual advocacy role:
  1. Advising DNR's AIS prevention efforts.
  2. Supporting Local Prevention Aid efforts.
    - He proposed that DNR prepare a report detailing how funding loss would undermine its mission.
- **S. McGrew** noted:
  - Over 450,000 watercraft inspections were conducted last season by nearly 900 inspectors.
  - LGUs account for ~90% of inspections.
  - A 50% reduction would be catastrophic.
  - MAISRC research supports continued investment in prevention.

### AIS Summit

- Jeff Forester from Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MLR) is planning AIS Summit III for Spring 2027, aimed at influencing the Legislature before the May 31 budget deadline.
- The Aquatic Invasive Species Boundary Waters Collaborative (ABC) Coalition, hosted by MLR, will help organize the Summit.
- Previous Summits were held in 2017 and 2019.
- MLR will work with DNR to gather inspection data.
- **B. Garcia** suggested holding the Summit earlier to influence the Governor's budget proposal.

### Economic & Legislative Strategy

- **S. McGrew** highlighted the economic risks of AIS, such as a 20% drop in property values due to starchy stonewort.
- Called for an environmental economist to quantify benefits of prevention and included the following study

- [Will Property Values Cool as AIS Heat Up? | Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center \(MAISRC\)](#)
- **S. Binsfeld** stressed the need to identify legislative champions and engage bipartisan support.
- Advocates include MLR, Wildlife Forever, MISAC, AMC, and SAISAC.
- Target committees: Tax and Appropriations ([Minnesota Senate](#)); Environmental Caucus.

### Committee Roles & Partnerships

- **D. Jensen** reiterated SAISAC's role in advising DNR and advocating for statewide/local prevention efforts.
- MASWCD actively advocates for conservation funding at state and federal levels ([MASWCD website](#)).
- Career paths from the Invasive Species Unit to the Commissioner's Office were discussed.
- December's Association of SWCDs Conference may help identify SWCD champions.

### Research & Data Needs

- Discussion on forming a **Blue Ribbon Panel** or leveraging MAISRC to study impacts of funding cuts.
- **A. Dickhart** noted AIS is the second-highest contributor to global biodiversity loss and suggested framing it as an economic issue.
- **M. Hayden** referenced MAISRC's study on Eurasian watermilfoil and property values ([link](#)).
- A comprehensive report should include:
  - DNR's mission alignment.
  - AIS management costs.
  - County-level impacts and responses.
  - Metrics from nearly a decade of Local Prevention Aid data.

### County-Level Insights

- **K. Pennington** emphasized the need to understand county plans before DNR can respond.
- **A. Dickhart** pointed to existing DNR metrics as a starting point.
- **J. Langer** repeated his call for a DNR investigative report.
- **S. Binsfeld** raised concerns about DNR's capacity to absorb responsibilities if counties reduce efforts.
- **R. Contreras-Rangel** proposed off-season county workshops to gather insights.
- **D. Jensen** shared that:
  - Counties receiving minimal aid may discontinue programs.
  - Staff protection is leading to cuts in inspections and grants.
  - Since 2014, Prevention Aid has led to:
    - More DNR inspectors.
    - Two AIS prevention planners.
    - Increased AIPM grant funding.
    - Over 600 lakes and rivers monitored.
    - Significant leveraged funding reported in annual metrics.

## Action Items

- **Invite Nick Phelps** to present findings at the December meeting.
- **Invite Jeff Forester** to discuss budget strategy and next steps.
- **S. Binsfeld** will contact the legislative arm of the Association of SWCDs to identify supportive legislators.
- **J. Langer** will:
  - Update the previous letter of support with new data.
  - Form a subcommittee to draft a letter expressing concerns to DNR/Legislature.
- **A. Dickhart** will lead a committee to develop a county survey on anticipated responses to funding cuts.
- **M. Hayden** will consult MAISRC social science researchers on cost analysis and impact modeling.

## Discussion: Use of Decontamination Units vs. CD3 Stations

### Strategic Planning & Partnerships

- **Carrie Ohly-Cusack** emphasized the importance of planning for multiple scenarios and gathering more information.
- She supports collaboration with MLRA and MAISRC to address declining watercraft inspections and underutilized decontamination units.
- Suggested counties consider investing in CD3 cleaning stations as a long-term alternative, especially if inspector numbers continue to decline.
- Public education on how to use CD3 stations is critical to their success.
- [CD3 Systems Website](#)

### County-Level Approaches

- **D. Jensen** referenced Tony Brough's proactive strategy in Hennepin County, using Prevention Aid funding to install CD3 stations in anticipation of reduced inspections.
- **S. McGrew** shared that his county is installing lower-cost AIS tool stations to maintain prevention efforts and build program legacy despite reduced staffing.

### Effectiveness & Limitations

- **A. Dickhart** presented research showing CD3 stations reach only 10–30% of boaters, even at launches with inspectors.
  - Without inspectors, coverage drops from 99% to 7–10%.
  - CD3 stations are most effective at high-traffic sites with signage and prompts; less effective at remote accesses.

### Cost Considerations

- CD3 station pricing:
  - Basic unit: ~\$17,000
  - Full-featured unit: ~\$35,000
  - Annual maintenance: up to \$1,000

- DNR commissioned a 2023 observational [study](#) on AIS tool use at public water accesses.
- MLRA received a grant to install CD3 stations statewide, paired with an educational campaign to ensure proper usage.

### Inspection vs. Infrastructure

- **M. Hayden** cited a study showing inspections are 30% more effective when inspectors are present.
- **D. Jensen** noted that combining inspectors with CD3 stations increased compliance to 70%.
- **P. Selter** questioned whether infrastructure investment should be deprioritized in favor of maintaining or increasing inspections.
- **D. Jensen** responded with 2024 data:
  - 35 counties hired inspectors
  - 40 decon units operated
  - 317,007 inspections conducted
  - 2,055 decontaminations performed
  - Coverage included 699 accesses across 584 waterbodies
- **A. Dickhart** added that counties with more funding are better positioned to invest in infrastructure like CD3 stations.

### Outreach & Media Costs

- Ottertail County media cost estimates (per impression):
  - Coasters/billboards/radio: \$0.03
  - I-LIDS camera: \$3
  - Watercraft inspector: \$30
  - Sheriff deputy: \$300
- These figures are outdated and should be adjusted for inflation.

### Committee Consensus & Action

- Committee supports promoting installation of AIS tool stations.
- Past studies indicate public support for having cleaning tools available at water access points.

### Action Item

- **C. Ohly-Cusack** will present additional information on CD3 stations and MLRA's plans at the December meeting.

## Committee Discussion: MAISRC Showcase Highlights

### MAISRC's Strategic Shift

- MAISRC is undergoing a reorganization to better align its research with the practical needs of local AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) managers.
- The new approach emphasizes actionable, applied science over purely academic or benchtop research.

- As part of its 10-year anniversary, MAISRC is asking:  
*“What real-world questions need answers?”* and *“What solutions are most urgently needed?”*
- The goal is to ensure science keeps pace with on-the-ground AIS management challenges.

#### Featured Study: Common Carp & Carbon Cycling

- A recent MAISRC study compared 10 lakes with common carp to 8 lakes without over a two-year period.
- Researchers measured:
  - Greenhouse gas emissions (methane)
  - Water quality
  - Sediment composition
- **Key findings:**
  - Lakes with common carp emitted less methane, despite being more nutrient-rich.
  - These lakes had lower sediment organic matter and nutrient levels, which contributed to reduced emissions.
  - However, carp activity disrupted long-term carbon storage, altering the balance of carbon and nutrients in lake ecosystems.
- The study highlights the complex role of invasive species in ecosystem processes, showing that carp may reduce emissions but at the cost of carbon retention.
- Read the full study [here](#).

#### Next Meeting

- More charter discussion.
- Advocacy and prevention aid.
- Three-pronged approach for who we need to discuss.
- Discuss past meeting topics and ranking with implementation in January.

#### Adjourned 2:58 pm

Next meeting is December 4<sup>th</sup>, 10 am – 3 pm via Teams