

Minnesota Statewide AIS Advisory Committee (SAISAC)

April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via WebEx from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Members Present: Justine Dauphinais, James Johnson, Kate Hagsten, Holly Kalbus, Ryan Wersal, Kelsey Taylor, Pat Brown, Michaela Kofoed

Members Absent: Eric Johnson, Chris DuBose, Isaiah Tolo, Roger Imdieke

Ex-officio Members Present: Nicole Lalum, Doug Jensen

Ex-officio Members Absent: Amy McGovern, Nick Phelps

DNR Staff Present: Heidi Wolf, Phil Hunsicker, Tina Fitzgerald, Shane Kirlin, Jan Shaw Wolff, Carli Wagner

Meeting began at 10:02 a.m.

Motion to approve agenda. Motion made by H. Kalbus and second by J. Johnson. Motion approved unanimously.

Since the Committee did not receive the Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2021 until the day before this meeting, approval of the notes will be postponed until the August meeting, so Committee members have sufficient time to review and submit their edits/corrections.

Meeting Summary:

- Committee agreed to meet during the summer for a short virtual gathering so they can meet the three newly selected members of the Committee after they are chosen by the Commissioner.
- Committee discussed submitting comments on the MISAC Statewide Management Plan before the May 28 deadline.
- Committee discussed the Walleye Stamp, and whether or not it was a good model to allow Minnesotans to make voluntary contributions to support AIS work.
- Committee learned about the Modified Unified Method that was recently employed to capture and harvest invasive carp in the Mississippi River.

Committee Member Updates

- **H. Kalbus:** County AIS advisory meeting went well. Lake associations are anxious to meet since their meetings last year were postponed due to COVID-19. Most are planning their lake association meetings for late-summer. The American Legion Bass Fishing Tournament was cancelled last year, but it is scheduled to happen this summer. As regards the Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) project, direct mailings have helped.

Getting good participation. Fifteen LGUs are participating in the video project. Anticipate a 2-day production for the video.

Committee member updates continued

- **J. Johnson:** Getting out on the lakes now. Curly leaf pondweed (CLP) is early this year. About halfway through the lakes that need to be treated before water temperatures rise above 60 degrees. **J. Dauphinais** asks if this looks to be a good or bad year for CLP. Not sure. It begins growing earlier in low snow years. Not necessarily denser in low snow years.
- **K. Hagsten:** Conducting interviews for watercraft inspectors. Reaching out to other Leech Lake programs for Level 1 inspectors to be placed at more remote accesses. Lined up with cooperators for noxious weed grants from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).
- **K. Taylor:** Spearing and netting season is done. Completed in ten days. Expected it to last a month or more. This year, found lots of zebra mussels and algae. No Eurasian watermilfoil, but did find some rusty crayfish. Vigilant about cleaning equipment. Cleaned at the access, and band members clean equipment again at home. Cleaned about 100 nets per night.
- **M. Kofoed:** Planning for the high school fishing season. Working with lake groups to get more Aquaweed Sticks at landings.
- **P. Brown:** Ice is off Red Lake. Attending meetings with state and federal partners for funds. Will be looking for zebra mussel veligers and putting out sampling cinder blocks for the adults.
- **R. Wersal:** Winding down the semester. In full teaching mode before finals.
- **N. Lalum:** Busy organizing the Governor's Fishing Opener in Otter Tail County. Working closely with the MPCA on their "Get the Lead Out" campaign. Otter Tail County AIS Committee has created an ambitious Fish Donkey App for the fishing opener that allows people all over the state to participate in the opener.
- **D. Jensen:** Applied to the St. Louis County AIS grants program for a check in and check out project based on boat type. It will be connected to the Cloud. Participants can sign an affidavit. A second project is seeking funding from Lake County to do a sign inventory at the entrances to the Boundary Waters to warn the public about the risk of transporting AIS. Sign prototypes will be developed. Will use two undergrad interns. A third project is for the "Don't Pack a Pest for Academic Travelers" campaign. Expanding to other colleges. Will be coordinating the Great Lakes Landing Blitz this summer.
- **J. Dauphinais:** Waiting to confirm flowering rush in a long ditch in the county. Non-native *Phragmites* update: 93% was controlled after the first treatment. Looking at a second treatment to get rid of the remaining 7%. Anoka County AIS Coordinator is having trouble finding watercraft inspector candidates this year. On Fish Lake, they are partnering with Hennepin County for an app to educate lakeshore homeowners through a series of short videos. Homeowners can sign a pledge and get a score for their actions. Creates a healthy competition between lake groups. **P. Hunsicker** adds that the Hennepin County app was inspired by a DNR CBSM meeting that Hennepin's AIS Coordinator, Tony Brough, attended.

DNR Updates

- **H. Wolf:** Watercraft inspection training has officially started. Jeanine Howland was hired temporarily as the full-time AIS trainer. She is planning the in-person Level 2 trainings, which are for new Level 2 inspectors. Like last year, trainings for Level 1 inspectors and returning level 2 inspectors will be online. Looking at a new vendor to improve the online training. Currently working on obtaining permission to do volunteer training. Two grants are currently open for applications – the state/interstate grant for \$92,000 and the GLRI grant for about \$800,000. Both are due at the end of the month. The GLRI grant will cover Region 2 (Northeast) watercraft inspectors, among other things. DNR leadership decided that the AIS Advisory Committee will no

longer have a tribal ex-officio position since one individual from one tribe does not necessarily represent the opinions of all tribes. Final list of ten recommended individuals to fill three empty seats on the committee was sent to the Commissioner's office. Proposed that since the Committee will be on hiatus when the selections are made, perhaps the Committee would be interested in a short virtual meeting this summer (30 minutes or so) to introduce themselves and to meet the three new members. Committee agreed that that would be a good idea. **T. Fitzgerald** and **P. Hunsicker** will arrange the meeting. DNR has posted the vacant invasive fish position. DNR met with tribal representatives to discuss the process of bait harvesting in zebra mussel-infested waters, and whether or not the current process should be modified.

DNR updated continued

- **J. Dauphinais** announced that she wrote a letter on behalf of the Committee supporting the \$25 surcharge proposal. It appears to have passed through the House Ways and Means Committee. Sent the letter of support to both the House and the Senate. **H. Wolf** says the status of that surcharge increase is confusing. The House Omnibus bill and the Senate Omnibus bill are different. One has \$100,000 less support for the DNR. **J. Dauphinais** says that in the Senate bill, there is language about the state AIS management plan being updated every 10 years. **H. Wolf** says the DNR met with Senator Ruud, and she was leaning towards the 10-year requirement instead of the proposed five years. Justine says the language also struck out "shall" and replaced it with "must." **H. Wolf** says the LCCMR funding is being held up again.
- **T. Fitzgerald:** Parks and Trails Division did a survey of registered watercraft owners. Some questions dealt with AIS. This Committee has discussed in the past a mandatory boat operator's permit, which would include AIS training. In the Parks and Trails survey, only 10% agree that it should be required. However, 57% supported offering it as an optional training. A question on the survey asked about the most important things to have at water accesses. Docks and toilets were the overwhelming preferences, but 27% said there should be a place to put weeds/AIS, and 20% said there should be tools available to help boaters clean their boats and trailers of weeds/AIS. One question asked how long a boater was willing to spend for a decontamination. 5% said they weren't willing to spend any time. 42% said they would spend 15 minutes or less. 35% said they would spend 15 to 30 minutes for a decontamination. So 77% were willing to spend 15 minutes for a decontamination. **J. Johnson** says it would be easy to create an online training that has the applicant click through a series of links to other resources about AIS. **T. Fitzgerald** says right now, there already exists an affirmation of AIS knowledge, which must be signed, when someone registers their boat or purchases an out-of-state fishing license. **J. Johnson** asks if the DNR is resistant to including a link for a small AIS training. 70% register online. Could target them. **T. Fitzgerald** says we can check to see if that is possible. **P. Hunsicker** adds that Jeff Forester's group announced in a recent mailing he received that they are pursuing a mandatory boat operator's permit because boats are bigger and faster, and we are seeing more serious accidents on the water. No further details were given about proposed actions by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates.
- **D. Jensen** says that in an old DNR study, 95% were willing to spend 10 minutes or less for a boat wash. 40% refused washing. 30% were not willing to pay for a wash.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks about the Wright County mandatory inspection. Is it continuing? **H. Wolf** responds that it is not continuing. Many challenges. **T. Fitzgerald** adds that many of the complaints were about the extra drive time to and from the inspection station. **H. Wolf** adds that another issue was that the station wasn't open 24 hours per day, so fishermen complained that if they wanted to get on the lake early, the station wasn't open. Doing it the day before was too inconvenient. Also, there were problems with the seal and assorted ways boaters found to skirt the rules.

Committee Feedback/Comments for MISAC State Management Plan

- **J. Dauphinais** reminds the Committee that the deadline for comments is the end of May.
- **H. Wolf** says that the plan is MISAC's plan. The DNR uses it as a state plan to access the federal state/interstate grant dollars, which have funded CBSM, zebra mussel canines, a display at the state fair, and starry stonewort research.
- **D. Jensen:** When AIS Prevention Aid was started in 2014, it was recommended by DNR and Sea Grant that the state plan and the MISAC plan be in alignment.
- **P. Hunsicker** says that in the draft MISAC Plan, there is a section that looks at gaps. One identified gap is that counties are currently not required to submit accurate data about how they spent their AIS Prevention Aid. The DNR created a metrics template to address that need, and asks the counties to voluntarily submit one at the end of the year. Two years ago, after numerous reminders, 65 of the 83 counties receiving aid submitted a template. This past year, the number is probably comparable. We're still organizing the data. **H. Kalbus** says filling out the template is easy and provides her with great information about her own program that she can pass along to anyone who asks. She uses that information a lot. **J. Dauphinais** finds it surprising that \$10 million goes to counties every year with no strict reporting requirements, yet \$9 million goes to the DNR with a lot of reporting requirements. **J. Johnson** asks if counties could be interviewed by the DNR about what they did with their money. **P. Hunsicker** replies that that is the purpose of the metrics template, and in recent years, it has accounted for over \$8 million of the \$10 million that is dispensed every year.
- **J. Dauphinais** says there are two questions the Committee has to consider: Do we want to weigh in on the draft MISAC Plan, and if so, what does that look like? **K. Taylor** adds, should the Committee support the MISAC Plan as the DNR's state plan? Most Committee members need more time to fully review the draft MISAC Plan. Others recommend that letters of support could also come from individuals or individual organizations in addition to a letter of support from the AIS Advisory Committee. **J. Dauphinais** encourages Committee members to review the draft MISAC plan and discuss via Basecamp over the next month. Remember, the deadline for comments is May 28. She also suggests that part of the conversation at the scheduled August meeting could be about whether or not the MISAC plan is sufficient to serve as the DNR's plan for invasive species management, or is a more detailed plan needed?

Discussion: Is the Walleye Stamp a Good Model to Encourage Voluntary Contributions to Support AIS Work?

- **P. Hunsicker** informs the Committee that he and others spoke with Fisheries staff about the Walleye Stamp, which may or may not be a good model for asking Minnesotans to contribute additional dollars to support AIS work when they register their watercraft, which is a major pathway of spread. They learned the following:
 - The Stamp asks Minnesotans who purchase a fishing license to voluntarily contribute an extra \$5 to support walleye stocking. The Stamp is not needed to catch and keep walleye.
 - The fund generates about \$90,000 each year. Last year, Minnesota sold 1.1 million fishing licenses. To make \$90,000, 18,000 people (less than 2%) agreed to pay an extra \$5 to support walleye stocking.
 - The Stamp was externally driven, and was originally meant to support stocking, assessment, and management activities associated with walleye. DNR Fisheries supported this initiative.
 - Not long after enactment, the private walleye fingerling producers and some key constituents got the Walleye Stamp statutory language changed, forcing the DNR to use all the funds generated from the Stamp for purchasing walleye fingerlings from the private sector. Money could not be used for assessment or management costs. This was/is the largest criticism of the Walleye Stamp.
 - Now, proponents of the Stamp want the DNR to make the \$5 contribution mandatory. DNR Fisheries opposes this.

- Those involved in the process urge caution in attempts to create a similar AIS Stamp. Good intentions could evolve similarly. For the reasons noted above, DNR Fisheries has resisted other stamp initiatives for fishing tournaments and Muskie management.

Discussion

- **J. Johnson** asks if it was externally driven. Yes. Don't know who in particular. Can this be done internally? **H. Wolf** doesn't think so, thinks it has to be introduced by a bill. DNR can't create our own funding sources, it doesn't work that way. We can testify about it. Don't know who drafted the language or where it came from. **J. Dauphinais** asks, how much does DNR purchase from private stock? **H. Wolf** doesn't know, didn't ask that. Lack of flexibility was the challenge. **J. Johnson** doesn't understand slippery slope; \$90K is better than nothing. Thinks there is more interest in AIS and doesn't see a negative side. Is DNR saying is it more trouble than it is worth? Or need to set up language carefully? **H. Wolf** says we're not saying either, we're just sharing a story. It can't come from DNR. It would be a constituent group, it would have to come externally. What would it look like? **J. Johnson** asks, what is the downside? **H. Wolf** says it is always a possibility that it will be directed to something that DNR isn't excited about, or they see DNR is getting other funding and then take away that amount from the general fund. **J. Shaw-Wolff** adds there is a risk of asking for something and then it going in an entirely different direction. For example, the DNR wanted to modify the license plate for critical habitat – it grew out of the non-game program (e.g. pollinator plate). Intent was to add to non-game wildlife money that gets matched with the incomes and also money that goes into fish and wildlife acquisitions to acquire and manage those critical habitats. Rep Hansen now wants to parse out the different plates and have the funds go to different things. Deer and moose go to wildlife, fish plate to fisheries, chickadee to non-game, and pollinator plate to MPCA for lawns to legumes. But that is inadequate, it is focused on residential and wouldn't impact larger wildlife areas. There is always a possibility to pivot, reassess, etc.
- **P. Hunsicker** adds that raising surcharge to \$25 to support control grants, DNR, MAISRC. If that passes this year, how receptive would they be to adding more?
- **J. Johnson** says this idea came from the results of the willingness to pay study where 30% said \$0, but most are willing to pay substantially more. Tap into that.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks what are the logistics for registering a boat? That change from \$10.60 to \$11 is to make things easier. A voluntary contribution versus a specific amount, would that impact clerical stuff? e.g. very willing to round up.
- **J. Johnson** says maybe this is not the way. Seems like it would have to go through the DNR. Table this and bring it back up after this legislative session.
- **P. Hunsicker** it could potentially go through a non-profit? They don't have to deal with legislature?
- **J. Dauphinais** are there other similar things for other hobbies? **J. Johnson** says he got the idea from working with lake associations. They have lake association dues, then the group earmarks other funds for specific activities (e.g. CLP), voluntary contribution for those that are interested. Understands DNR and state budgets are different than a lake association. But that study showed people are really willing to pay a lot more.
- **H. Kalbus** gives an example of a lake association that sells pull-tabs and generates a ton of revenue for that. Smaller scale watershed plan for the lake was developed using those funds.
- **J. Johnson** asks for DNR input, is it worth pursuing? Or more trouble than it is worth? **P. Hunsicker** says it is worth looking into, it is a way this Committee could have a greater impact. There are a lot of folks that are generous – easy way to support a cause of interest. **J. Shaw-Wolff** says it is a good idea worth pursuing. It is complicated, worthy of a deeper dive. Appreciate you bringing this up. **P. Hunsicker** says we could get more information from Fisheries. Most were not engaged with the actual process, but can look into it. **J. Johnson** says MAISRC has a way to do this. That impulse click. Tack it on to where they are already have a credit card ready, and thinking about water. Revisit this next fall? **T. Fitzgerald** says we can look into how watercraft are registered and where something like this could fit in.

- **J. Dauphinais** adds what about a for-profit partner? Premier Pontoons, Gander Mount, Flow Docks. See what other information we can gather. Keep this on the agendas as we move forward. Has seen QR code on a sign, or text something to a number, etc.
- **T. Fitzgerald** can ask our CBSM consultant about methods for collecting contributions.

The Modified Unified Method (MUM) for Capture and Harvest of Invasive Carp

Carli Wagner (DNR AIS Specialist)

Presentation

- **Timeline:** A collaborative project, first time in MN/WI waters to respond to the 2020 captures. WI, MN, USFWS (wildlife area on Mississippi), USGS (developed the method). Did tagging in 2020. All lead up to the MUM.
- **MUM Goals:** Reduce density of invasive carp in Pool 8 to prevent spawning event potential. Evaluate the MUM for future use as density management and early detection tool.
- **MUM Methods:** Drive invasive carp into block nets, concentrating fish into a seine-able area, and pulling in one net. These organizations had never worked together this way before. They worked in harmony, completed all sites, with no hitches. Went better than we imagined.
- **Snapshot:** Planned to go 12 days, but actually completed in 5. Did 7 “mini-MUMs” at 6 different locations across Pool 8 because of low densities. Revisited one site, where most invasive carps were first captured. All MUM runs were completed in 1 day, no overnight net placement, not impediment to access.
- **Summary:** Visited the site where the large capture occurred in 2020, and did find invasive carp at that location. They jumped a lot in the final seine. A lot of work holding up the nets to prevent the carps from escaping. Netted them out as fast as possible. One location caught 31 silver carp – same spot as 2020. Good thing we didn’t see silver carp in any other parts of the pool. Suggests they are still at low densities. Saw more jump and escaping nets. Goals #1 and #2 (early detection) were met!
- **Takeaways:**
 - It was critical to concentrate invasive car for removal when at low densities. All partners travel and equipment, was it worth it? Yes, because only 3 silvers were captured in standard follow up efforts.
 - Invasive carp still appear to be at low densities in Pool 8, but presence is persisting. Same numbers as last year. Not moving seasonal/high-water. Mostly males captured, several large females, but no evidence of spawning.
 - Continued surveillance and removal efforts are critical.
 - Extras: Good data on native fish. No negative feedback or interactions with stakeholders. Highly publicized, including a media day. Right now DNR Fisheries relies on anglers to report carps, so this increased media will hopefully increase awareness and reporting. Established a strong interstate, multi-agency partnership for future invasive carp management and response.

Discussion

- **P. Hunsicker** asks, how big is Pool 8? **C. Wagner** says they focused mostly on the Lacrosse area. Large area with braided channels and scattered runs throughout the pool. Green Island is where the captures happened. Did see carp jump at a northern site, but all captures happened at one site.
- **J. Dauphinais** – why in April? **C. Wagner** that was double duty to get out before recreational boats, as soon as possible after ice out, when the water is colder so the carps are less active and less jumping. Good to avoid conflict with public use. **J. Shaw-Wolff** adds there was concern with hunting and waterfowl in the fall, didn’t

want to do it then. Worked closely with the Refuge to make sure all the work is consistent with the conservation goals of the Refuge.

- **D. Jensen** asks, were all the fish the same size? **C. Wagner** says the USFWS is doing data collection on the captured carps. 23 males and 7 females. No evidence to suggest they have established. **J. Dauphinais** asks, was it the same as the 2020 capture? **C. Wagner** says it was a similar sex ratio, not sure on size. First time it has been done in the Upper Mississippi. Good kickoff to prevention efforts. **D. Jensen** were they fecund? **C. Wagner** says there were some eggs, they are still working on that data.
- **J. Johnson** says it seems significant they are in one spot. Is there something environmental that attracts them there? **C. Wagner** says they didn't do water quality testing but did do temperature monitoring. Surprised to continue to capture carps in the same area multiple times after the big catch. It is surprising. **H. Wolf** adds that they they do school, that's why we were using the tagged Judas fish methods for tracking. Schooling is not surprising, but why they are hanging out there, we don't know. **J. Dauphinais** what about the tagged carps? **C. Wagner** says they didn't get any pings from any of the tagged carp, so it seems they had moved out of Pool 8. Those are still tagged, expecting valuable information. They had gone south at that time. **J. Dauphinais** asks, when were they tagged? **C. Wagner** says in October, but they don't track when ice is on.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks if there are any management updates, such as the sound system at the lock and dam? **C. Wagner** says that is a Peter Sorensen lab project. **D. Jensen** says they went in 2016.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks, where is the largest upstream population? **C. Wagner** says Pool 8. Only 1 or 2 in commercial harvest efforts elsewhere. **H. Wolf** says the DNR has meetings set up with partners to see if/when we can do this again. Are they considering the fall? Need partners. Interested in using this method to keep populations low. **C. Wagner** says it was a feasibility test. There was a lot of concern at first, but it was really a success. **J. Shaw-Wolff** says great job **C. Wagner** for co-managing and **H. Wolf** stepped up too in vacancy from invasive fish coordinator and did it all in a COVID-19 landscape. Thoughtful and safe. A scramble over Easter weekend. Acknowledge the dedication, competency, leadership = successful.

Discussion Time

- Action items
 - Potential short meeting in May with new members.
 - J. Dauphinais and T. Fitzgerald will develop and post MISAC Plan review instructions on Basecamp.
 - Members will review March meeting minutes.
 - Summer ideas to keep in touch? field trips? MAISRC showcase?
 - Keep up to date on invasive carp issues.

Wrap-Up

- Committee begins three-month hiatus over the summer. Next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday August 26, 2021**. A proposed topic for the agenda is a discussion about the MISAC Plan and if it is sufficient to serve as the DNR's invasive species management plan.

Adjournment at 1:50 p.m.