

# Minnesota Statewide AIS Advisory Committee (SAISAC)

---

## *August 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes*

*Virtual Meeting via WebEx from 10:00 a.m. – 12:40 p.m.*

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

**Members Absent:** Eric Johnson, Chris DuBose, Roger Imdieke, James Johnson

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Doug Jensen, Nick Phelps

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

**DNR Staff Present:** Heidi Wolf, Phil Hunsicker, Tina Fitzgerald

*Meeting began at 10:05 a.m.*

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

***Motion to approve meeting notes. Since the Committee did not receive the Meeting Notes of March 25, 2021 until the day before the April 22 meeting, approval of those notes, along with the notes from the April 22 meeting were postponed until today, which include the small edits to both meetings notes suggested by D. Jensen. A motion to approve the notes from March and April with D. Jensen's changes was made by J. Dauphinais with a second by H. Kalbus. Motion approved unanimously.***

## Meeting Summary:

- The Committee learned about the Metrics Template results from 2020, which annually captures AIS prevention work accomplished by counties receiving AIS Prevention Funds.
- The Committee learned about the status of the Community Asset Mapping (CAM) that was led by the DNR's Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) consultants. The CAM attempts to identify influencers in our communities within and outside of our typical AIS networks, and tapping into them and their extensive connections to spread the word about AIS prevention.
- The Committee discussed agenda topics for the remaining 2021 meetings.

## Committee Member Updates

- **H. Kalbus** has been doing in-person meetings with lake associations to give updates on the county AIS prevention program. Attended a bass fishing conference and set up a booth at the banquet. Asked for pledges from participants. Got 15. For those who signed pledges, she did a drawing for Aqua-weed Sticks. Awarded 3 sticks. City of Waterville had a fishing contest. She worked with their inspectors, who are hired through Water

Guards, to be present at the contest. Because of low water in many lakes, there are many public accesses that make it difficult for boats to enter and exit. These accesses are not being used, so she has shifted inspectors to accesses that are being used. Did a CBSM training yesterday, but only had 4 attendees. Struggling to get participants. Another training is planned and anticipate 6-10 attendees. Many people use the excuse that they don't move their boat around, so they don't need to be trained on what to do. **P. Hunsicker** says that he's seen studies that show that many people who say they don't move their boats, actually do. Not a lot, but because it is only occasionally, they consider themselves as sticking to one lake. **D. Jensen** adds that 65% of MN boaters say they don't move their boat, but that response may only reflect their behavior in the last three years, which is often referenced in the question. For future work with tournaments, **D. Jensen** suggests offering to inspect boats, asking for time during the rules meeting to talk about "Clean-Drain-Dry-Dispose," and get a booth and ask for affirmations from those who visit the booth. He has gotten 95% of the participants visiting a booth on AIS to sign an affirmation. **M. Kofoed** says that fishermen are told during the rules meetings that if they break the laws and are caught, they are disqualified from participating.

### Committee member updates continued

- **M. Kofoed** says that feedback has been good on the Aqua-weed Stick stations. Just one weed-stick out of 12 has gotten damaged (bent). Using one on her own lake to test it out.
- **K. Hagsten** says that her employee, Raining, continues to look for starry stonewort on other parts of Leech Lake. Also doing purple bladderwort research to learn if it is coming farther north due to climate change. None found yet on the reservation. Getting CD3 stations through an LCCMR grant. Not able to hire inspectors this year. Coordinated with Cass County and the DNR to staff the Cass Lake Hwy 2 access. The Leech Lake starry stonewort is in an area of wild rice. Setting up some monitoring and working with ricers to properly clean their gear. Hoping to hand out polarizing sunglasses to ricers to help them search for starry stonewort beneath the surface. Looking at using DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting) on starry stonewort in Leech Lake. Is DASH permitted in Minnesota? Hoping to use it on Eurasian watermilfoil, too. **H. Wolf** says you can't disturb the sediment when using DASH. She says the DNR had a hard time finding a qualified DASH crew in Minnesota and had to hire one from Wisconsin. **K. Hagsten** says they are also looking for good maps of infested lakes in the area, so that inspectors can refer to it when interacting with boaters.
- **K. Taylor** has a new baby. Found two new small patches of curly-leaf pondweed in the St. Louis River. Chinese mystery snail population is expanding despite control efforts. Providing decontamination services at events. Got teachers involved. Working to explain the meaning of "Clean, Drain, Dry, Dispose." The public knows the words, but doesn't necessarily understand the meaning. **D. Jensen** says having a logo helps with the understanding of the words. An example is the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! campaign.
- **R. Wersal** says that school started on Monday. His summer research was interrupted as he had an accident with his left hand.
- **P. Brown** says that veliger sampling continues on Lower and Upper Red Lakes. No adults found yet. Now has a joint AIS work plan for Red Lake with the DNR. Receiving funding for CD3 units on Red Lake. Working with the county to install a hot water unit on the lake. New signage was done collaboratively by the Red Lake Band and the DNR. Signage calls for protecting the Red Lake Watershed from AIS. Sign was later shown to the Committee.
- **J. Dauphinais** has been busy with drought issues and stormwater issues. Good news: suspected flowering rush turned out to be a native bur-reed, which has never been documented before in Anoka County. Continuing with hand-pulling of Eurasian watermilfoil. Also using ProcellaCor, which knocked it down to 2% of what it was. No new non-native *Phragmites* in Anoka County. Year three of treatments at 14 sites. Only 7% of the original infestation remains. Being treated with state funds. No zebra mussels in Anoka County except in the Rum River. Some scares at accesses, but inspectors successfully stopped infested boats from entering lakes.

- **D. Jensen's** update from Minnesota Sea Grant (MNSG) includes the following (more details were provided after the meeting):
  - **St. Louis County AIS Check-In Check-Out Webhub Project:** Developing a new program at water accesses using a webhub app, signage and pavement markers to help improve boater compliance using Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! Clean-Drain-Dry messages. Will teach boaters how to use app, inspect specific areas based on watercraft type, and pilot F2F survey and observation guidance. Advisory committee advising. Will compare results to Ramsey Co. program.
  - **BWCAW AIS Signage Project:** Developing new AIS signage with a watershed message for trailheads and water accesses to help prevent spread of AIS into the BWCAW. Coordinating national signage inventory in a concurrent project with ANSTF to populate the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! campaign graphics portal (<https://stopaquatic hitchhikers.org/campaign-resources/>). Advisory committee will be advising.
  - **Don't Pack A Pest** virtual student focus groups (5) from four campuses - summary is in prep. Phase 2 for private colleges was approved for funding. St. Cloud State on-board, waiting for responses from St. Olaf, Augsburg, and St. Scholastica. Developing and ordering products for distribution to students attending study abroad fairs this fall.
  - **Yellow Iris** – At least 20 infestations have been reported in the St. Louis River, another near Hartley Nature Center, on the UMD campus and across the street on private property on a tributary of Tischer Creek which drains into Lake Superior. HNC infestation was treated by John Lingren, DNR, and Tim Beaster, St. Louis Co. SWCD. The UMD infestation at Norton St. will be managed by their contractor. There is interest among several Duluth area partners to get these infestations treated and under control. Sea Grant is interested in pursuing funding sources.
  - **Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz:** Impressive results statewide and NE MN. Adam Doll, DNR, reports that from 6/26 – 7/4 inspections were conducted at 520 accesses, 59,490 watercraft inspected and 95% compliance. MNSG coordinated NE MN efforts: On 6/26, 11 organizations led efforts, which reached 204,015 people. There were 949 watercraft inspections at 31 public accesses, 1,201 people educated through inspections and booths, 2,570 people reached via social media, 200,244 reached through mass media (newspaper and radio spots), and 99% compliance with only 6 watercraft in violation.
  - **MN State Plan Revision:** Very favorable pre-review comments from ANSTF, NOAA and in-state organizations, including SAISAC, that helped strengthen plan. Working with Chelsey to improve introduction that will serve as a promotional handout. Goal: ANSTF approval at fall meeting.
  - **Gathering Partners Conference (May):** Presented *Silent Invasion of the Great Lakes*.
  - **IAGLR (May):** Presented *Reporting Underreported Aquatic Invasive Species Sightings in Northeastern Minnesota* at the Int'l Conference on Great Lakes Research Conference.
  - **Great Lakes Panel meeting (June):** Helped plan the 3-d meeting including sessions on biocontrol and didymo and chaired I/E Committee meeting. Next meeting in Oct.
  - **Great Lakes BIOTIC Symposium III (June):** Hosted by Great Lakes Panel, this event brought together AIS management and specialists together with Ontario, federal and state law enforcement in the first event of its kind in the United States. Planning fall meeting to address business issues.
  - **ANSTF Meeting (June):** As co-chair of the Outreach Subcommittee, gave an update on progress based on work plan. Meeting planned for Nov.
  - **ICAIS 22:** Serving on technical planning committee for Int'l Conference on AIS, April 18-22, in Belgium. More info: [here](#).
- **J. Dauphinais** asks about the comments on the MISAC Plan that were organized on Basecamp. **D. Jensen** says Chelsey Blanke of the DNR is integrating this Committee's comments into the plan.
- **N. Phelps** informs the Committee that the Showcase is coming up on September 22. It is an opportunity to hear about research updates happening at MAISRC. Right now there will be both online and in-person

options. There will be COVID protocols for the in-person event based on University of Minnesota policies. Please share this event with your networks. Cost is \$20 for the virtual and \$50 for the in-person, which includes lunch. Of 5 concurrent sessions, two of them will be live-streamed.

## DNR Updates

- **H. Wolf** says we don't yet have from the Commissioner's Office a list of new members to be appointed to the Committee. We now need four new members as Isaiah Tolo had to step off the Committee because he recently accepted a DNR position with the fish pathology lab. The DNR hired a new Invasive Fish Consultant – Grace Loppnow. Grace comes to us from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Wisconsin. She received her PhD from the University of Minnesota. In legislative and budgetary updates, the DNR will receive \$850,000 from the general fund to be used for AIS management grants for lake associations, LGUs and tribal nations. This amount will be split between the two years of the biennium. MAISCR will get an additional \$500,000 from the general fund to be used mostly for field work. Starry Trek happened on August 21. DNR provided plant ID trainings to those volunteering to get out to accesses to search. No news yet on if any new infestations were found. There was no change in the AIS surcharge. Neither the rounding up from \$10.60 to \$11.00 or the increase to \$25 succeeded in gaining traction with legislators.

## 2020 Metrics Review

- Presented by **P. Hunsicker**
- AIS Prevention Aid doesn't give specifics on what counties have to report. The Template helps counties provide information that is consistent, useful and easy for them to calculate and track. The DNR didn't want to provide a lot of extra work for counties. Much of the Template is what they are already tracking. In 2020, 61 of the 83 counties receiving AIS Prevention Aid voluntarily filled it out (73%). This accounts for \$8 million or 88% of the aid given out in 2020.
- The Template is broken down into categories and looks at things like jobs created, grants awarded, money leveraged, etc. For example, 1,259 people did AIS work in 2020. This included 865 paying jobs and 394 volunteers serving 6,904 hours. \$1,687,092.19 was given out in grants to 196 organization. \$1,153,913.06 in additional funds were leveraged. These additional funds come from matching funds and contributions by lake associations, local governments and other organizations typically for watercraft inspection and invasive aquatic plant management.
- **D. Jensen** asks if the additional funds include in kind. Yes, we think so. We continue to try to get the counties to give us their information in the same way. It is a learning process.
- 2020 was challenging for outreach and communication. With COVID-19, counties couldn't do in person events like county fairs and in-school presentations, but they still had good numbers. In 2020, we also added a metric for social media.
- The Template gives us good hard numbers. It gives us specifics so we can make accurate statements about the impact of AIS Prevention Aid.
- The watercraft inspection program has excellent statewide data collected, but the numbers in the Template are just 61 counties worth of data. Full statewide data was 605,000 inspections – highest number yet!
  - Anecdotally, confrontations at the access were reportedly higher during COVID-19. Not sure if it was due to busier accesses or people being more stressed out.

## 2020 metrics review continued

- We always hope to get 100% of the counties to fill out a Template, but AIS is not a priority in some counties, and some counties are getting very little money for AIS prevention, so it's hard to get some counties to submit. Using peer pressure, and in our summary, we note the counties that submitted Templates.
- After Templates are submitted to the DNR, **P. Hunsicker** and **T. Fitzgerald** compile everything in a spreadsheet and summarize. Changes a bit every year based on comments by counties.
- Template includes both quantitative and qualitative data.
- **H. Kalbus** says the Template is of value to her, to see what was done and for sharing her budget at county board meetings. She has to do it anyways, so the Template is valuable to understand what is working and what's not. Can understand how it might be hard to juggle. Nice summary. Nice snapshot.
- **D. Jensen** says The Template is useful, but asks, how many counties have actual plans? **P. Hunsicker** says plans aren't required to receive funding. A county can just submit a simple board resolution every year to the DNR. Some do. Estimate that perhaps 60% of the counties that receive funding have created AIS plans to guide their actions. Their plans are diverse, which is a good thing, but it makes it hard to gather consistent information from them every year. That is why the Template is so helpful.
- Are counties tracking where they are monitoring? Yes. But really specific information, like the names of water bodies, isn't included in the Template. We do ask them how many lakes were surveyed for AIS. Specifically, we ask how many early detection surveys did they do, how many aquatic plant surveys did they do, how many zebra mussel settling plates did they deploy, and how many veliger tows did they perform. We encourage counties to use EDDMapS, so that information about what happened on specific water bodies can be found in one place.
- **J. Dauphinais** likes the summary map that highlights which counties submitted information. She observed that Anoka County wasn't on there. Coordinator typically does fill it out, but she was out on maternity leave. She sees that \$500,000 was spent on control activities. Seems like a small amount given the level of contention surrounding use of Prevention funds for treatment activities. **P. Hunsicker** explains the different ways counties use AIS Prevention Aid for treatment. Some have outside pressure from lake groups to use a lot for control; some do specific species; some don't use it for treatments at all; some require a match. They ask themselves, how does treating one lake benefit the whole county? This is a good conversation that is brought up often at our workshops. Most counties have set budgets to allocate for multiple strategies, so all their money doesn't go to satisfy just one loud voice.

## Community Asset Mapping (CAM)

- **T. Fitzgerald** presented about CAM, and how it will help the DNR and its partners to identify influencers in our communities to help us spread the word about AIS and water-related issues.
- Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) consultants talked with DNR staff, AIS Advisory Committee members, MISAC members, and county AIS coordinators to come up with a long list of influencers. What they found was that the DNR is well-connected when it comes to AIS. We need to beef up non-AIS connections, and use them to help us spread the word and reach those in our daily, non-AIS lives. Where can we integrate AIS information into places we are already going in our daily lives?
- Produced a large spreadsheet of contacts. It is a living database and will be maintained, added to, and updated. There will also be an accompanying final report.
- Next steps are to go where people are already going. Use messaging channels people are already using.

## Community Asset Mapping continued

- What does this mean for SAISAC? Your established connections set the foundation. This living database will make it easier to make future connections with specific stakeholder groups that haven't been included in AIS conversations in the past.
- **P. Hunsicker** says that in the draft final report, he read that this was the first time the consultants had tried the CAM process by meeting virtually due to COVID-19. Typically, the CAM process is an in-person interaction. The consultants used an application called Mural to facilitate brainstorming for participants who aren't physically in the same room. It worked really well. They found that they gathered more data than they typically do in an in-person event.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks, what are next steps for the Advisory Committee with regards to CAM? The Committee can read and comment on the draft report, which will be posted on Basecamp in September.
- **D. Jensen** asks if Ken Donnelly will make recommendations on how the report can be used. Yes, our contract with them runs through October, and they have been very generous with their time and advice.

## Discussion of priorities to address at September and upcoming meetings

- **T. Fitzgerald** says that we will hold time for a representative from the Commissioner's Office to talk at the September 23 gathering about looking into alternative sustainable funding for the DNR. Specifically, they will talk about how DNR advisory committees can participate in the process moving forward.
- Managing boater movement was a priority topic for discussion. The Committee has already learned about the AIS Explorer tool, which looks closely at boater movement and risks to lakes.
- **K. Taylor** is interested in the movement of large boats entering the Great Lakes. For example, is the Coast Guard monitoring them after they enter from the St. Lawrence Seaway? What is the federal government doing to monitor boat movement in the Great Lakes? Does the State of Minnesota have a responsibility to monitor the movement of boats in the Great Lakes?
- **D. Jensen** says Lake Superior is the least invaded of all the Great Lakes. It only has 60% of the total number of invasive species that have been found in the other Great Lakes. Commercial boats have the most movement in the Great Lakes. Most of the recreational boat movement in the Great Lakes is sailboats participating in regattas. **T. Fitzgerald** adds that the MPCA is involved with ballast water regulations.
- **J. Dauphinais** is interested in learning more about invasive pressure coming from outside of Minnesota and the DNR's role. For example, invasive carp and other species that transcend Minnesota. **H. Wolf** says there could be a couple of different perspectives – a statewide DNR perspective or a non-DNR task force perspective like another member on the Great Lakes Panel.
- **N. Phelps** thinks we should look at where there are opportunities for input from this Committee. For example, issues on which we can advise the DNR.
- **H. Wolf** says the Invasive Carp Forum has already happened, but continues to move forward. The DNR is currently looking closely at the watercraft inspection program – improving training, determining DNR responsibilities and those of the counties, etc. That could be an area for Committee input.
- **M. Kofoed** is interested in what is happening at public accesses, especially from the perspective of anglers. **H. Wolf** says the DNR would love to hear ideas from anglers to make the inspection program more efficient/successful. **M. Kofoed** follows up by saying that a big concern with anglers is all the floating vegetation that can be found right next to the launch and where boats are getting back on the trailers. This vegetation can get trapped between the boat and the trailer and is difficult to remove and be in compliance with AIS transport laws. Can't inspectors clean up that area next to the public launch as part of their regular

responsibility? **H. Wolf** says it is a job duty for DNR inspectors and they are provided a rake to do so. Some counties ask this of their inspectors. Some don't. It also depends on how busy that access is.

## **Wrap-Up**

- Next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday September 23, 2021**. **T. Fitzgerald** will work with **J. Dauphinais** and **H. Kalbus** to determine topics to include in the agenda as discussed today.

***Adjournment at 12:40 p.m.***