

# Minnesota Statewide AIS Advisory Committee (SAISAC)

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## *October 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes*

*Virtual Meeting via WebEx from 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.*

**Members Present:** Norman Baer, Justine Dauphinais, James Johnson, Brian Gross, Jim Boettcher, Kate Hagsten, Pat Brown, Holly Kalbus, Ryan Wersal, Isiah Tolo, Michaela Kofoed, Mary Alverson, Roger Imdieke

**Members Absent:** Eric Johnson, Kelsey Taylor, Chris DuBose

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Nick Phelps

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

**DNR Staff Present:** Heidi Wolf, Phil Hunsicker, Tina Fitzgerald, Shane Kirlin, Jake Walsh, Steve Colvin

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

**Motion to approve agenda. Addition of EWR Director, Steve Colvin, to the agenda. Motion made by J. Boettcher and second by J. Dauphinais. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Motion to approve Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2020 made by J. Dauphinais and second by K. Hagsten. Motion approved unanimously.**

## Meeting Summary:

- The Committee reviewed the 2020 Invasive Aquatic Plant Management Control Grant program and discussed ideas for refining the process in 2021 to make it more fair and equitable.
- The Committee learned about the “Willingness to Pay for AIS Management” study conducted by Lucy Levers and Amit Pradhananga with the Minnesota AIS Research Center.

## Committee Member Updates

- **B. Gross:** Brunswick Corporation is behind schedule, trying to keep up with demand. Working on a “smart livewell” to keep fish alive longer and keep unwanted species out. E.g. prevent water sloshing around.
- **H. Kalbus:** Wrapping up the season, year-end reporting, and scheduling AIS committee meeting.
- **J. Johnson:** Wants to discuss control grant availability and the fact that the funds were gone in first 4 or 5 minutes – he is getting a lot of questions from clients on how they are going to work this year. Overall hearing it worked OK. What is in line for next year? **P. Hunsicker** says that is on the agenda for discussion today.
- **J. Boettcher:** Summary from county and watershed district – Pierson Lake found zebra mussels, now asking homeowners to look on docks this fall. Eurasian watermilfoil found on Duck Lake, did some hand-pulling. Brittle Naiad currently in Starring, Ann, and Lotus lakes – continued monitoring of this species. The watershed district collected veliger samples on newer zebra mussel lakes. Found veligers in Lake Riley. On Lotus Lake

they didn't find veligers or adults and had one eDNA hit near the boat launch. Lake Riley was listed in 2018 and since then the zebra mussel population has exploded. They are looking at plate counts which went from 1/square-foot in 2018 to 1,000/square-foot in 2019. Monitoring carp populations in the Riley chain of lakes found no young-of-the-year and no recruitment, likely due to recovery of bluegill populations after winter kills.

- **J. Dauphinais:** Volunteer zebra mussel spotter program with 70 volunteers doing monthly checking and reporting. So far zebra mussel-free in Anoka County. First year had 70% reporting no zebra mussels which is a very high reporting rate. Now in the third year they are down to 40% reporting, potentially due to volunteer fatigue. For Maple Grove, Fish Lake – doing common carp control efforts this fall. Tagging carp and northern pike, to better prevent carp movement but allow for pike movement.
- **K. Hagsten:** Starting to strategize for next year. Now that safe working conditions are better understood, hoping for more robust staffing next year. “Not all stoneworts are starry” project with Donna Perleberg (DNR). Looking forward to winter for time to become familiar with more research about wild rice and the impacts of AIS and climate change. Species that take over Mahnomen habitat. Developing water management plan and looking at it from an indigenous perspective – how to care for the water in a holistic approach.
- **M. Alverson: N. Phelps** helped her develop and manufacture a bilge pump filter that catches things so they don't go back into the lake. It's been in the works for a while and they finally found someone to make the filter, so hoping by early spring it can be sold.
- **M. Kofoed:** No updates.
- **N. Phelps:** Showcase presentations are available via email listserv. Will also be posted to the website. Will be sending out announcement for new funded projects for next two years. The Research Needs Assessment has things down to the top 200 ideas now, then whittle down to top 20. Working on estimating risk for starry stonewort and zebra mussels for all lakes in Minnesota. The tool is available now (<https://aisexplorer.umn.edu>) a workshop for local managers is coming up as well as a presentation to DNR staff.
- **P. Brown:** No new infestations on the reservation this year. Shipping veliger samples to St. Paul.
- **R. Imdieke:** No updates.
- **R. Wersal:** Students are not coming back after Thanksgiving, so cramming in everything right now.
- **I. Tolo:** New carp edema outbreaks. Don't know much about it yet. Found evidence that cormorants might move it around. Developing calculation for measuring viral load.
- **N. Bear:** No updates.

## DNR Updates

- **H. Wolf** says concerning invasive carp the DNR and partners are looking in pool 8 right now, given past big finding. Modified-Unified method going to be tried next year.
- **H. Wolf** says due to the pandemic there is a state hiring freeze. We were ready to hire full time AIS Trainer right when it went into effect. Instead we now received permission to hire a “work out of class” position. This allows us to hire a current DNR staff person to do this job temporarily. We get to keep them through June at the very least. Their role will be to improve training and support local governments.

## Invasive Plant Control Grants in 2020 and Looking Forward to 2021

### Presentation by Jake Walsh (DNR Invasive Species Research and Grants Coordinator)

- **J. Walsh** is new to the DNR, he just started in May about half way through the curly-leaf pondweed control grant implementation. With the first grant season near complete, he is starting to think about the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for 2021.
- Program background
  - Designed to support local aquatic invasive plant control by lake associations, watershed districts, cities, and counties.
  - Eligible species are Eurasian watermilfoil, curly-leaf pondweed and flowering rush.
  - Grants funds are used for reimbursement of expenses directly related to control project.
  - Control projects include herbicide treatment, mechanical harvest, or a combination.
  - Tied to IAPM permits.
  - 2012-2017, thanks to a lot of public support they returned in 2020.
- 2020 RFP process
  - Sent RFP two weeks before the submission window opened.
    1. Apply for IAPM permit.
    2. Apply for grant.
    3. If awarded and executed a delineation survey required by third party contractor (Reduced potential conflict of interest with contractor doing both)
    4. If treatable areas found, arrange for treatment.
    5. Reimbursement includes submitting invoices to **J. Walsh** who reviews, approves and submits requests for payment – check sent to the grantee within 30 days.
- Award offer calculation
  - Determined by proposed project acreage, which is modified by Invasive Species Specialists during grant review.
  - Projects < 10 acres: \$50/acre + \$1,000 for delineation.
  - Projects > 10 acres: \$150/acre.
  - \$1,500 for first 10 acres (accounts for delineation and \$50/acre for 10 acres), then \$150/acre for each additional acre.
  - Capped at \$7,000 ( $7000/150 = 46.7$  acres) – didn't get many projects that needed to be capped.
- Reimbursement
  - Expenses must:
    - Be directly related to and solely for the project (work plan linked to IAPM permit).
    - Occur after grant execution (when all parties sign the grant agreement).
    - Historical challenge, but excellent compliance with this in 2020.
    - Not be supported by another external funding source.
  - Reimbursable expenses:
    - Pre-treatment delineation (regardless of decision to treat).
    - Treatment under an IAPM permit.
- Current structure
  - Currently designed for a larger number of small grants.
  - Application review process works well with existing permitting workflow.
  - Reimbursement request review process is well-supported by current invoicing and reporting practices.
    - Delineation: survey map and report.

- Treatment: treatment map and pesticide application report.
- 2020 summary
  - Total funding: \$530,000.
  - 175 grant offers from >250 applications.
  - First come, first serve: funds were used within 6 minutes of opening the submission window.
    - The primary issue was this 6 minute window. The DNR wants to make sure it is a fair and equitable process in 2021.
  - Average: \$3,040.
  - Average permitted acreage: 27 acres (4,979 acres total).
  - So far, grants have covered 35% of delineation and treatment expenses with a range for individual grants from 6% to 100%.
  - **P. Hunsicker** asks, is there information by species? **J. Walsh** said he would look into it and provided the following information after the meeting:
    - Curly-leaf Pondweed: 105 offered grants; 3750 acres (33.8 acre average); \$336,000 (\$3,200 average).
    - Eurasian watermilfoil: 64 offered grants; 1146 acres (17.6 acre average); \$180,000 (\$2,800 average).
    - CLP & EWM: 3 offered grants; 61 acres (17.6 acre average); \$10,000 (\$3,200 average).
    - Flowering Rush: 2 offered grants; 23 acres (20.3 acre average); \$3,000 (\$1,700 average).
- Comparison to past years – the biggest change is the average acreage, it is much lower.
- Next Steps
  - Continue to engage this group on this process.
  - Distribute online survey to potential grantees to gather feedback about specific items for 2021 planning.
  - Presentation about the 2021 plan at the next Committee meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Control Grant Program Questions & Discussion

- **M. Alverson** asks, will you send us these slides? **J. Walsh** says yes.
- **J. Boettcher** says the grants going in 6 minutes, that causes some angst and hard feelings, what about a lottery system? Are you getting any negative feedback about the current process? **J. Walsh** says we are paying close attention to that. We've looked at lottery system and have gotten negative feedback on that. It's a top priority to figure out the submission window issue. **P. Hunsicker** reminds the committee to share ideas to figure out what is a fair way to distribute these funds.
- **J. Dauphinais** says a lottery would be fairer than first come. But that might make the well-prepared people mad if they don't get it. What about competitive process? Rank it on its merits? **J. Walsh** says we have considered making it merit or need based. Focused on ecology or other needs. Something with broad support without overtaxing our resources in the spring. Now with his position the program has additional resources to think about that and tackle that. Ideally a system that is more targeted with program goals that is fair and equitable.
- **J. Johnson** says the "Lake Minnetonkas" of the world are very well prepared, but also extremely well-funded. Grants are really, really helpful to small groups without taxing authority, even though they aren't that organized. Not sure how to balance that. The "Minnetonkas" should get support, but rank low on the "need" scale. The smaller groups need more support. **N. Baer** says from a small lake association, he agrees. They have been doing this for 12 years. That should factor into who gets a grant. **J. Walsh** says he has been running analysis to see if there is bias. Our database wasn't designed to look into things like well-funded groups.

## Questions and discussion continued

- **J. Johnson** says in his experience, the lake groups that missed out were new infestations. Either they didn't know the process or it was found later in the season. Could you earmark some money for small groups for small treatments? It would be really great if they have assistance. It is in the spirit of the grant. **J. Walsh** says he is not sure how that would work, but definitely something to bring up to the planning team. Could somehow consider associations that have been investing a lot and balancing for new infestations.
- **J. Dauphinais** says the range of total project costs was interesting. One thing you could do is capping up to a certain total project cost, not 100% of the project covered.
- **J. Johnson** asks, how do you keep track of other funding sources? Other sources may come in before or after a DNR grant and groups might not let you know. **J. Walsh** says it varies. In the RPF we require groups to report additional funding. He also reviews requests to make sure the support is not greater than the expenses and to make sure DNR is not reimbursing expenses that have already been reimbursed. **T. Fitzgerald** suggests asking counties that fund invasive aquatic plant management through local grants how things went and how they coordinated their program with our grants this year. **J. Johnson** says it's probably very unlikely any are double-dipping, but there might be a few.
- **N. Baer** says Stearns County gets funds, but none of it goes to management. They have applied in the past, but haven't received any funds. Checking with the county would be a good idea.
- **P. Hunsicker** asks, how did the third party delineation requirement go? **J. Walsh** says the Invasive Species Specialists say it was a helpful addition. There were some minor challenges with surveys, for example timing of curly-leaf pondweed surveys. Overall received good internal feedback on delineations. Hoping to design a grantee survey to ask them how the process went in 2020.
- **J. Dauphinais** says the delineation is great. High quality data collection. Many researchers are using MPARS (Minnesota DNR Permitting and Reporting System) data. What about funding genetic testing of Eurasian water-milfoil? Think about acquiring high quality, useful data. **J. Johnson** agrees, genetic testing would be helpful today. In the past he had conversations with Chip Welling, but the technology wasn't ready yet. Now we have more genetics information that we can use to actually inform management.
- **J. Johnson** says for reimbursement, some of his clients didn't understand it was reimbursement-based and therefore they didn't have the money to pay him until the proof of payment was submitted, which is counterintuitive. **J. Walsh** clarifies that they just need invoice, not proof of payment.
- **J. Johnson** says he got lots of questions about timing. For example, some wanted a survey in February. Did people estimate the amount to be treated? **J. Walsh** says they would come in with an estimate, then the Invasive Species Specialists adjusted the estimate, then the award amount was determined. **J. Johnson** says for example they would request 30 acres, but the Specialists reduces it to 20 acres. **J. Walsh** says yes. **J. Johnson** suggests to clarify in the application that it is based on ESTIMATED acres. Some were waiting to apply for the permit until after delineation or other work. **J. Walsh** could come up with a flow chart and other support materials to outline simultaneous but somewhat ordered tasks that need to be done.
- **J. Johnson** says he typically does Eurasian watermilfoil surveys later in the season (not in May), or even in the fall. Lake groups weren't able to get reimbursed for work. What about post-treatment survey? **J. Walsh** says the requirement this year was a pre-treatment survey in the treatment year. It is something we are going to discuss more. Make it more flexible and make it work for more people. He appreciates feedback from surveyor. **J. Johnson** says the pre-treatment wasn't very expensive, but the lake-wide meander in the fall takes more time, but it also identifies important hotspots for next season's treatment.
- **J. Dauphinais** asks, what about full lake point-intercept surveys? This is helpful data for the entire plant community. **J. Walsh** says he likes that, it's another area to discuss especially in his research role.
- **N. Baer** says his association can only afford treatment with a grant, they can't afford full lake point-intercept survey.

- **J. Walsh** says grants will focus on control projects and what is needed to get that work done.
- **N. Baer** says they do a point-intercept survey every 3 years.
- **J. Dauphinais** suggests perhaps they are eligible for point-intercept survey funds if they haven't done one recently.

## Presentation: Public Perception and Willingness to Pay for Local AIS Management

Presentation by Lucia Levers and Amit Pradhananga (MAISRC)

### Background

- AIS management can restore ecosystem services. Little is known, however, about monetary benefits that come from AIS management. This study is an attempt to quantify and analyze the ecological, social and economic benefits of AIS management.
- They chose to concentrate on starry stonewort and zebra mussels since both can cause very visible changes to a lake.
- In the summer of 2019, researchers looked at four Minnesota lakes with AIS infestations – either starry stonewort or zebra mussels. For starry stonewort, they looked at Lake Minnewaska and Lake Koronis. For zebra mussels, they looked at Lake Pokegama and Gull Lake.
- They did surveys at public accesses. It was about an 8-minute survey. They had undergrads ask survey questions. Standard survey analysis (confidential and anonymous).
- Questions looked at public water access visitor behavior (what do you do?) and why they were visiting that lake. They also asked about peoples' perceptions about the lake and AIS. For example, when did you first use the lake? One respondent went back to the 1930's. Also asked, how often do you visit, have you noticed any changes or differences, to what extent is AIS a problem, and how important is it to prevent the spread? Tried to highlight ecological concerns, social concerns, and economic concerns.
- Current spending: The State of Minnesota currently spends approximately \$5,000 per Minnesotan on AIS.
- Survey asked, would you support a lake access fee for this lake to fund prevention, management and containment of AIS? Would you spend \$X, less or more? If none, why?
- Survey also captured demographic information like age, sex, cultural identity, income, etc.

### Results

- Good response rate: 53% to 62% at the four accesses.
- Demographics: 90% were white; 70% were male; 50% had Bachelor degrees; 70% made over \$60,000/year.
- Values and uses: Survey respondents valued clean water, habitat, natural beauty, and the idea that lakes are the heritage of Minnesota.
- The average amount people are willing to pay to access a lake is \$9-10/day, if it goes directly to AIS issues.
- There were about 200 protest votes (not willing to pay any amount). Basically, they were angry about the situation.
- The willingness to pay findings were similar on all four lakes.
- Having more income meant you were willing to pay more.
- Respondents who came to be on their own at the lake were willing to pay less.
- People who knew the correct AIS on the lake were willing to pay the same as those who didn't know what AIS were on the lake.
- People who identified as valuing ricing were willing to pay more.



- Looked at behaviors like avoiding live bait release, pressure washing your boat, and drying your boat. The willingness to pay did not have a correlation with boater behavior.
- Local infestations may not be as important as overall perspectives on AIS.
- Wild rice and recreation enthusiasts were different than those who want to be on their own or socialize.
- Results show the need to communicate AIS risk and problems and explore values.
- Implication for management: those with higher values (water/habitat quality, recreation, heritage) are willing to pay higher amounts. Feelings were more important than knowledge.

## Questions and Discussion

- **J. Johnson** asks, what is the next step? **L. Levers** says of course there are legal implications to imposing fees at public accesses. The study shows that Minnesota citizens are willing to pay if they are convinced the funds will go towards invasive species management. Not surprisingly, there is some distrust with the government and between those who live on the lake and with those who just visit the lake. There are equity issues to consider. Not everyone can afford to pay an access fee, so is it still public?
- **J. Johnson** says that the Three Rivers Park District looked at charging fees to gain access to the lake. They couldn't do it, but were able to add it as an added "parking fee." This study could have applications to raising the watercraft registration fee.
- **T. Fitzgerald** is curious about the protest vote. Was there a correlation between awareness and values? **L. Levers** says for those respondents there was a high percentage who chose not to answer the other questions, so it's hard to make correlations.
- **M. Kofoed** asks if survey respondents were told what the money would be used for if they agreed to pay a fee. **L. Levers** says they were told it would be used for prevention, containment and management, along with a small explanation of what that meant. Some was for that particular lake. **M. Kofoed** adds that generally, anglers don't like chemical treatments and she was wondering if that action was specifically mentioned. **L. Levers** says the surveyors didn't specify what kind of management would occur.
- **P. Hunsicker** asks if the surveys were given where watercraft inspectors were also surveying boaters, if so, were there any issues with people saying I don't want to do two surveys and the watercraft inspection survey is mandatory? **L. Levers** says there was no issue. For this survey, we sometimes caught people as they were coming off the lake instead if they seemed pre-occupied with their entrance inspection. They used signs to let people know what the survey was for, used young undergrads as the surveyors, and made sure to let the public know they didn't work for the DNR.
- **J. Johnson** asks if there are any social science studies that show if people pay for something are they less willing or less likely to take other actions (e.g. clean boats) because they paid for access. **L. Levers** says they have not seen that correlation. **T. Fitzgerald** says a community-based social marketing technique is to make a small ask first. If they do the small request, they are more likely to do a bigger request later.
- **J. Johnson** asks if the state could add an optional contribution during the watercraft registration/renewal process to support AIS management like the nongame request on the state tax form that supports loons and other nongame species in Minnesota. **T. Fitzgerald** says that Wisconsin tried something like that. Not sure of the results. **L. Levers** says they are doing a mail survey that will ask about willingness to pay a statewide fee/tax. **J. Boettcher** asks if we can discuss voluntary contributions at the state level. For example, when he goes to buy dog food, he is asked if he would like to contribute an extra \$2.00 to support the Humane Society. He always agrees to pay the extra \$2.00. Could something like that work for AIS funding? Maybe for purchases of boats or fishing gear or bait, etc. **H. Wolf** says we can certainly have those discussions. There are sure to be road blocks to trying those. We could invite Cynthia Osmundson with the DNR's non-game program to talk about the loon check-off on the state tax form and how that came about. **N. Phelps** reminds the group that the walleye stamp supports walleye stocking. **J. Johnson** says lake groups have member fees. They have

the ability to tack on a voluntary AIS fee or fishing fee and get contributions. He'd like to see something similar when you register your boat. Would you like to contribute an extra \$X to support AIS management in the state?

### **A few minutes with EWR Division Director, Steve Colvin**

- **S. Colvin** announced that after 40 years at the DNR, he will be retiring January 2021. His last day will be January 4, 2021. He is proud of what the Division has accomplished and feels he is leaving it in good hands.

### **Wrap-Up**

- Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday December 3, 2020. We will continue our discussion about possible changes to the 2021 Control Grant program with **J. Walsh**. The Committee will elect a new chair and vice-chair for 2021. Three members – Jim Boettcher, Norman Baer, and Mary Alverson – are completing their terms on the Committee. Thank you for your energy, your ideas, and your service.

***Adjournment at 12:35 p.m.***