
Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee

2016 Annual Report

“The ongoing relationship and dialogue between engaged committee members and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Invasive Species Program staff continues to have a positive impact on our statewide and regional efforts with preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. Our state and its citizens are strongly engaged and committed to working on solutions to sustain the health of the lakes and rivers we cherish.”

Tera Guetter, Committee Chair

Summary of Committee Accomplishments in 2016

In 2016, the Committee worked – in collaboration with, and with the support of, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – on a multitude of aquatic invasive species (AIS) topics. It was in the spirit of a multi-pronged approach that the Committee:

- Facilitated a constructive dialogue representing a variety of constituent AIS viewpoints.
- Reviewed and provided input on various DNR AIS issues, program modifications and products brought to the Committee.
- Supported efforts to secure funding for AIS programs and research.
- Made recommendations for legislative action in the 2017 session at the state level and for current and future federal congressional sessions.
- Fostered collaboration between private and public sectors concerning AIS prevention.
- Contributed expertise to outside organizations.

Looking forward to next year, the Committee will:

- Identify and address important AIS issues.
- Develop and refine a work plan with focus on partnerships, coordinated communication, messages and actions.
- Support the County AIS Prevention Aid Program by learning about successes, understanding common themes, and leveraging resources.
- Formulate a plan to identify and address other pathways/vectors of spread.
- Work with the private sector, for example, nationally with boat manufacturing and locally with resorts and private accesses.
- Collaborate with MAISRC on high priority AIS research needs.
- Continue to track and provide insight on starry stonewort detection and management initiatives.

Minnesota’s Heritage



Water is a key aspect of Minnesota’s heritage. Aquatic invasive species (AIS) threaten to change how we and future generations use and enjoy waters of the state. AIS burden local communities that depend upon healthy lakes and rivers. For instance, the increased cost, time, and effort it takes to clean zebra mussel encrusted boats reduces the number of boats businesses are able to winterize and store each year. AIS damage how lake and river ecosystems function, which in turn impacts how we use these resources for things like fishing, water supply, and recreation. AIS threaten the Minnesota lifestyle – new behaviors must be adopted to prevent the spread of AIS.

Everyone is responsible for protecting Minnesota’s water legacy and this Committee is leading the way by taking on local, statewide, and national initiatives on AIS communications, outreach, education, prevention, detection, management, and research. Continued dedication to address AIS issues is necessary to preserve Minnesota’s unique heritage and deep connection to water.

The Committee

The Committee members are dedicated to finding solutions. Each meeting sparks spirited discussions among stakeholders with diverse backgrounds. Conflicting views evolve to general consensus on complex and sometimes contentious issues. Based on their ongoing work plan, the Committee's initiatives are categorized into four main strategies:

- Legislation & Public Policy
- On the Ground Strategies
- Research
- Communications & Outreach

Major initiatives were accomplished through a variety of Committee actions, including: discussion of issues brought forward by the DNR, review of programs /documents, presentations to the Committee from DNR staff and other organizations, hearing from concerned citizens, writing letters, and meeting with DNR Commissioner Landwehr.

Major 2016 initiatives (local, statewide, and national):

- **Met with DNR Commissioner Landwehr on January 14th, 2016.**
 - **Provided feedback to the DNR on its AIS programs**, such as the: webpage, communications plan, processes for communicating the confirmation of new infestations, infested waters list in the fishing regulation booklet, and legislative policies.
 - **Provided specific research recommendations to the University of Minnesota's AIS Research Center**, as part of the Center's biennial Research Needs Assessment.
 - **Provided feedback to the University of Minnesota Extension on its AIS Detectors and AIS Trackers programs.**
 - **Supported local AIS Prevention Aid program** – Worked to understand successes and address challenges encountered by counties since the start of the aid program in 2014.
 - **Engaged the resort community on AIS issues** – Worked to understand how to better engage and educate resort owners on AIS and help them distribute information to their guests, without impeding their business operations.
 - **Supported the American Boat and Yacht Council's (ABYC) work** on boat design to reduce or eliminate the risk of transporting residual water and AIS. Individual members and the DNR participated on a national task force to develop national guidelines. Members reviewed draft document "Boat Design and Construction in Consideration of Aquatic Invasive Species."
 - **Advocated for the requirement of a boat operator permit in Minnesota** and to include substantial AIS training in the course.
 - **Advocated for federal support of AIS prevention activities:** (1) federal invasive fish and wildlife act, (2) supporting funding for state and inter-state AIS plans, and (3) federally listing starry stonewort as noxious species.
- **Individual members facilitated information-sharing and partnership building** by organizing and/or participating in the Aquatic Invader Summit II and the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference both in October 2016.
 - **Coordinated and participated in field visits** of a decontamination station in Kandiyohi County and boat tour of starry stonewort management on Lake Koronis in Stearns and Meeker Counties.
 - **Individual actions of members between Committee meetings.**

Legislation and Public Policy

The primary legislative priority for the Committee was to secure a sustainable funding stream for AIS work in the state. The Committee:

1. **Tracked legislative priorities and stayed informed on AIS-related policy changes.**
2. **Advocated to preserve the AIS Prevention Aid (county funding).**

3. Sent letters to DNR Commissioner Landwehr and Governor Dayton emphasizing the following:

- **Recommendation to increase the boat registration surcharge to support the Minnesota DNR's Invasive Species Program** *"to restore funding to the MN DNR's AIS grant program, as well as enhance the DNR efforts with shielding at-risk waters, containing AIS in infested lakes and rivers, and expanding AIS enforcement. Adequately funding MN DNR AIS programs is critical to Minnesota's statewide AIS efforts."*
- **Recommendation for sustainable long-term funding for the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC)** *"The MAISRC is a critical component for the long term prevention and management of AIS and serves to greatly assist MN DNR staff, local AIS resource managers, and citizen volunteers in their work to prevent the further spread of AIS and cope with already infested waterbodies."*
- **Recommendation to contact the MN Congressional Delegation concerning matters related to the U.S. Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act** *"to establish an improved regulatory process to prevent the introduction and establishment in the United States of any injurious wildlife."*
- **Recommendation to support listing Starry Stonewort as a Noxious Weed under the Federal Noxious Weed Act** *"Presently, there is no Federal regulation preventing the importation and interstate transport of the Starry Stonewort, and we advise you to advocate for a Federal rule that stops the importation and interstate transport of Starry Stonewort."*
- **Recommendation to support state and interstate Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management Plans** *"We believe that funding to support activities by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and its grantees and partners should include a much greater amount of Federal funds."*

4. Geared up for the 2017 legislative session:

- Requested the DNR include a mandatory boater operator permit in their 2017 legislative agenda.
- Plan to meet with local sportsmen and commercial fishing industries about AIS strategies, obtain feedback, and compromise to develop proposals based on these conversations in order to approach the legislature with recommendations as united front.

Starry Stonewort Response on Turtle Lake



The state's second known infestation of starry stonewort, an invasive macro-algae, was confirmed in Beltrami County's Turtle Lake on August 10, 2016. The Committee reviewed the actions taken and was impressed with the DNR's response. Using lessons learned from the first infestation in Minnesota discovered just one year prior, the DNR led the response effort with significant support from many local partners. Actions included:

- Completed an assessment showing that the population was confined to one acre of the 1,600 acre lake near the public access
- Temporarily closed the access with an alternative public access provided by a nearby resort owner
- Installed a curtain to confine the affected area for treatment
- Contracted a company to suction vacuum the vegetation and substrate (pictured above), and applied a copper-based herbicide treatment

While the treatment results are still pending, the efforts and coordination between the DNR and local partners so far is an essential component to the ongoing response effort.



Docks & Lifts Pathway



Movement of boats is not the only pathway by which AIS can be spread. Sale of used docks, lifts and associated equipment is another pathway of concern. Lakeshore property owners should carefully check all water-related equipment for invasive species before selling it and should inspect newly purchased equipment before installation. If you plan to move a dock, lift or other piece of water equipment from one lake or river to another, Minnesota law requires that:

- All visible zebra mussels, faucet snails and aquatic plants must be removed (whether they are dead or alive) before transporting equipment. You may not transport equipment with prohibited invasive species or aquatic plants attached.
- Docks, lifts, and associated equipment must be **kept out of the water for 21 days** before it is placed in another body of water.

On the Ground Strategies

The Committee as a whole, as well as individual members, took actions to promote AIS prevention innovation in government and private sectors. They tackled the following initiatives:

1. Provided feedback on DNR AIS programs and activities

- Provided feedback to continuously improve the DNR's communications process when a new infestation is confirmed.
- Reviewed the DNR's 2015 Invasive Species Annual Report.
- Gained knowledge on the DNR's updated AIS Communications Plan and learned how to use Community Based Social Marketing strategies in their own AIS communications.
- Provided recommendations to improve the DNR's AIS Communications plan and AIS webpage.
- Individual members provided review of the structure and content of the DNR's new online Lake Service Provider permit training to be launched in 2017. Previously trainings were only offered in-person.
- Conducted a site visit of a decontamination station in Kandiyohi County to discuss the feasibility of centralized decontamination.

2. Worked with the private sector

Promoted changes to watercraft manufacturing to reduce or eliminate the risk of AIS transport.

- Key committee members, including a major boat manufacturer and marina operator, have been instrumental in working with the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and major watercraft manufacturers to promote design changes to watercraft and trailers that can reduce or eliminate the risk of transporting residual water and AIS.

- Members and DNR staff heavily represented Minnesota on a national task force that developed a technical document "Boat Design and Construction in Consideration of Aquatic Invasive Species" for ABYC.
- Participated in and facilitated partnerships between MAISRC, DNR, the Committee, and private businesses to initiate a research project on zebra mussel veliger transport via recreational watercraft and residual water.

Continued to learn how to best engage resorts and their guests in AIS prevention practices.

- Presentation by Dr. Pat Welle on Enhancing the Role of Resorts and Fishing Guides in Preventing the Introduction and Spread of AIS – to better understand how to reach out to the resort community and their guests about AIS prevention.
- Key members are working at the county level to engage resorts, including raising awareness about required lake service provider training and permits, and developing AIS materials for owners and their guests.
- Continue to build on these relationships to help the industry participate in AIS prevention efforts.

3. Remained engaged in the AIS prevention aid program

- Provided feedback on successes and challenges encountered in the program, which started in July 2014 (\$10 million per year, Minnesota Statute 477A.19).
- Received updates from DNR AIS Prevention Planners, who provide technical support to AIS leads in 83 counties.

- Will continue to track accomplishments of counties and provide guidance as problems arise.
- Will continue to advocate for regional collaboration and coordination – facilitated by DNR Planners as well as gatherings and projects initiated by the counties themselves.

Research

The committee views research on AIS prevention and management as a critical component of preventing the introduction of new invasive species and preventing the spread of existing AIS within Minnesota and advocates for a holistic approach to research. During 2016 they pursued and reviewed their research priorities and are revising their list. Initiatives include:

- Advocated for more research on key issues to inform starry stonewort management and prevention actions. In reviewing recent response efforts, it became clear that there is a lack of published research on starry stonewort.
- Gained knowledge on the University of Minnesota’s AIS Research Center’s research strategies through a presentation by co-director Dr. Nick Phelps. Discussed and prioritized specific research recommendations to MAISRC, as part of the Center’s biennial Research Needs Assessment. The four research categories included: Prevention, Integrated Control and Management, Invasive Species Ecology and Impacts, and Economic and Social Impacts.
- Sent a letter listing the Committee’s priority research topics to MAISRC.
- Sent a letter to DNR Commissioner Landwehr, stating the Committee strongly supports the concept of establishing an invasive carp deterrent at Lock & Dam #5 on the Mississippi River, supports renewing the funding for the University of Minnesota invasive carp deterrent research program, and supports completion of the ongoing DNR study to determine the feasibility of constructing a deterrent at this location using best available technology.

Communication and Outreach

The Committee’s overarching goal for communicating AIS prevention is to promote a clear, consistent, positive message to all water resource users in the state and across the region. Highlights of this work include:

- Provided feedback to the University of Minnesota Extension on its AIS Detectors and AIS Trackers programs.
- Facilitated information-sharing and partnership building by organizing and/or participating in the Aquatic Invader Summit II and the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference.
- Provided input to organizations (outside the DNR) working on AIS issues, as requested, such as MAISRC, Minnesota Sea Grant, Initiative Foundation, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, Association of Minnesota Counties, etc.
- Input on streamlining and improving communications with new infestations at local, regional, and state levels within and amongst all potentially impacted organizations and agencies.
- Promoted the work of the Committee – sharing agendas, meeting notes, letters, etc. on the Committee’s DNR webpage.
- Members disseminate Committee activities to the organizations and constituents with which they are involved.
- Several members of the Committee participated in the review process for the Initiative Foundation’s AIS pilot projects.

Clean In, Clean Out



Compliance with aquatic invasive species laws has been steadily increasing. The DNR and partners’ enforcement and education efforts have helped to push compliance above 95%, based on more than 417,000 watercraft inspections in 2016. Minnesota law requires that you:

- **Clean** aquatic plants and prohibited invasive species from watercraft.
- **Drain** lake or river water from all equipment and keep drain plugs out during transport.
- **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash, not in the water.

2016 Committee Members

Name	Location	Title
John Barten	Delano	Retired, previously Natural Resource Director of Three Rivers Park District
John Deurr	Wyoming	Premier Marine, Inc.
Jeff Forester	Minneapolis	Executive Director, MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates, Writer
Jay Green – VICE CHAIR	Mound	Anglers for Habitat, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District
Ken Grob	Park Rapids	Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations
Tera Guetter - CHAIR	Detroit Lakes	Watershed District Administrator
Scott Hagebak (Feb – July 2016)	Madison Lakes	Madison Lake Watershed and Lake Association
Barb Halbakken Fischburg	Detroit Lakes	Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations
Paul Hamilton	Orono	Curriculum and Development Leader in the Orono Public School District and President of the Norway Lake Association of Cass County
Gabriel Jabbour	Orono	Owner, Lake Service Provider
Tom Kavanaugh (Feb – July 2016)	East Gull Lake	Co-owner, Kavanaugh's Sylvan Lake Resort
Robert E. Olsen	Canby	Lincoln County Environmental Administrator
Jim Stratton	Alexandria	Douglas County Commissioner
Donovan Strong	Tower	Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Lake Service Provider, Wild Rice Harvester
Paul Thiede	Pequot Lakes	Crow Wing County Commissioner
Jen Wahls	Wabasha	AIS Coordinator, Wabasha County Soil and Water Conservation District

2016 Ex-Officio Members

Name	Location	Title
Carol Altepeter	Brainerd	Northwest and Central Region Manager, Explore Minnesota
Norman Deschampe	Grand Portage	Chairman, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Mike Hoff	Eagan	Regional AIS Coordinator, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Douglas Jensen	Duluth	AIS Program Coordinator, University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program
Dr. Michael McCartney	St. Paul	Professor, University of Minnesota AIS Research Center