

Minnesota DNR AIS Advisory Committee

September 26, 2024 Meeting Minutes

University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus and online via Teams

Members present: *In-Person* - Shelly Binsfeld, Nick Bluhm, Charlie Brandt, Beto Garcia, M. Mahmood Tajbakhsh, Carrie Ohly-Cusack, Patrick Selter, Mike Sorensen *Online* - Amanda Weberg, Ryan Wersal, Spencer McGrew

Members absent: Will Bement, Chris DuBose, Chris Magnotto, Christine Maxwell

Ex-officio Members present: *In-Person* - Maddie Hayden, Amy McGovern, Nick Phelps

Ex-officio Members absent: None

DNR Staff present: *In-person* - Rafael Contreras-Rangel, Wendy Crowell, Angelique Dahlberg, Camden Droppo, Jessamyn Foley, Christine Hokkala-Kuhns, Eric Kenney, Doug Jensen, April Londo, Kelly Pennington, April Rust, Tina Fitzgerald *Online* - Adam Doll, Don Eaton

Chair S. Binsfeld calls the meeting to order at 10:10am.

Motion to approve the agenda, with DNR updates and member updates after lunch followed by a lab tour.

First by B. Garcia and second by C. Ohly-Cusack.

Motion to approve the August 22, 2024 meeting minutes. First by M. Sorensen and second by C. Ohly-Cusack.

Meeting Summary

- Committee learned about the US Fish and Wildlife Service's AIS Program and discussed how Minnesota can get support from, provide support for, and be involved in national efforts.
- Committee heard from nine DNR staff about their work, including the many positions and projects funded through the federal programs mentioned previously.
- The Committee discussed how they can support the work of the DNR's Invasive Species Program.
- Members attending in-person received a tour of the Minnesota AIS Research Center's lab.

Motions and Action Items

- Invite R. Contreras-Rangel, former DNR AIS In Commerce Prevention Planner, to a future meeting to talk about organisms in trade work.
- Continue discussions about the DNR's Invasive Aquatic Plant Management Grant Program at the December meeting.

Overview of the USFWS Midwest Region's AIS Program

Amy McGovern, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Fisheries Program Supervisor, Aquatic Invasive Species, Midwest Region

Power Point shared via email with Committee members.

- The AIS program has grown in the last 10 years. The Regional office is located in Bloomington, MN. Mike Hoff was her predecessor. Invasive carp broadened and lumped in sea lamprey in too. She started in 2017.
- Program asst reg director – hatchery, fish and wildlife conservation office, AIS supervisors. Cross-cutting issues.

- Program aligns with invasion curve.
- 7 in AIS team – deputy, sea lamprey, EDRR and eDNA, prevention and risk, grants, ICRCC, Midwest fisheries center.
- Prevention
 - Risk screening and horizon scanning – work with partners – summaries. Different scales. Inform watch list, regulatory review, justification to promote things at a state level. Federal – lacy act – cannot import.
- Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR)
 - Great Lakes basin wide – core team with state and feds – TNC, GLC. Biologists at 26 hot spots across the US – traditional gear in the water to catch the needle in the haystack. \$3.5 million program. States compliment on inland waters.
 - Metabarcoding to compliment – to see all eDNA material in the sample. Partners get nervous about that, what might be found – science is ready, but communications piece is just as important.
 - eDNA for bighead and silver carp in Great Lake tributaries. Have picked it up in areas we don't have fish, communications are important about eDNA limitations. Found material, not sure where it came from. Do traditional sampling following positive finding.
- Species of interest
 - Moss balls – FL shipment to WA. Thought it was addressed, but a shipment that got through passed the protocols.
 - Snakehead – Range jump in Missouri, Mississippi river system. Mobility that other fish don't. Not much we can do about it.
 - Red Swamp Crayfish in MI – testing control in closed environment – Detroit. Lake Erie Sandusky, big population. Closed pond system can do more. USFWS has a law enforcement – commercialization. Good avenue for this. Working to list the ones that can clone themselves.
- Money! Grants
 - MN has done well getting grant funding for GLRI (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) and carps.
 - MN is a great partner and communicator and a progressive state. Helpful when MN sticks their necks out to try something new.
 - States say they cannot hire permanent people with the funds because we don't know if they get it again. Capacity is an issue.
- Control and management
 - Sea lamprey – innovation – endocrine, push pull technology. Social license for the chemical they use is waning – it is still the only thing that works the best – chemical treatment to kill larval stage. During COVID there was a lapse and there was an uptick in the population 2 years later – can't take the foot off the gas.
 - Invasive carp – takes most of her time and energy. Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) – authority to coordinate with states. States have jurisdictional management authority. Basin and subbasin scales. Coordinators for subbasins. Invasive Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ICRCC) is Great Lakes funded. Develop projects each year – knit together at an inter-basin level, even though there are local needs. Prevent spread, what are the high priority locations for that – MN is one. \$31 million for Mississippi River, \$20 million for the Great Lakes. Most to partners, some to USFWS.
 - Priority location for deterrents – lock and dam 5 project. National level approach would be nice.
- Connections
 - Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) and panels, Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA), Department of the Interior (DIO) National EDRR framework, GLRI, Great Lakes Water Quality Assessment, and the WRDA.

- DIO EDRR – separate program through AFWA includes infrastructure funding and pilot projects, including Great Lakes for inland waters.

Discussion

- **S. Binsfeld** asks about the grant **K. Pennington** is working on, how much and what portion does MN get? **K. Pennington** says for GLRI we get about \$800,000 out of \$4 million annually. For signal crayfish \$250,000. ANS Plans \$90,000 annually. And multiple invasive carp grants. There are also Inter-Jurisdictional GLRI grants to help work across borders better, identify things like crayfish that a majority concerned about.
- **A. McGovern** says it is an uncertain future with potential new administration. **J. Foley** says Trump tried to get rid of GLRI, could that happen again? **A. McGovern** says there was a lot of backlash from the states, so he is all in on GLRI because he needs support for those states. It will be around but depends on what level.
- **B. Garcia** asks is there growing support for invasives? **A. McGovern** says yes there is growth. 2012 there was \$189,000. Political support for southern states. FY20 all basins. Administration came out in 2025 \$20 million budget - \$26 million House and \$31 Senate for invasive carp. Invasive carp has been the driver. Cap at \$20 million in the Illinois River. 2010 GLRI \$300 million and went past \$400 million, then infrastructure adds on. MICRA is a powerful organization and influential, able to advocate for budget, USFWS can't do that.
- **A. McGovern** limitation is funding is for invasive carp. So how to fund crayfish (national rapid response) and snakehead (TBD – wildlife refuge program and forest service).
- Funding for research? Not USFWS, that's mostly US Geological Survey (USGS). USGS has a different pot of money for invasive carp to answer scientific questions. Needs to hone it in to management strategies.
- **B. Garcia** is there an Army Corps liaison? **A. McGovern** says USFWS works with them on the Brandon Road Lock and Dam Deterrent Project. They don't have AIS point person, there is a lot of turn-over there which is challenging. WRDA authority in southeast – MICRA is trying to apply that to the other subbasins, so the Corps could work on carp.

DNR Invasive Species Program Staff Meet and Greet

DNR Invasive Species Program staff were invited to attend the meeting to network with members. They answered the question: What is one thing you are most excited about / looking forward to in your work?

- **R. Contreras-Rangel** is the AIS in Commerce Prevention Planner addressing the newer pathways related to organisms in trade (OIT). Aquarium stores, water garden stores – aquatic plants and animals. Global economy, from all over the place. Also, online through stores and trade. OIT quick start pilot projects – outreach materials like poster, brochure, bags for fish with messaging about not releasing. Educate shop owners – what hobbyists buy can be regulated/prohibited. Also give to hobbyists – what to do with hobbyists don't want. Give back to shops, give a hobbyist or friend, or vet. Surrender events – option to surrender pets so they are not released. Partner with non-profit JR Aquatics to host surrender events for all exotics.
 - **M. Sorensen** asks, do other states have people doing this work to collaborate? Yes, MI has RIPPLE program – an Extension program going out to shops. Non-profit in WI. Counterparts doing similar work, planning to apply for interjurisdictional project next year. Fairly new, not all states have the position.
 - **K. Pennington** adds **R. Contreras-Rangel's** is a temporary 3-year position funded by GLRI.
 - **C. Ohly-Cusack** asks for the source of invasives, approaching people selling on Amazon? Stop at the source, seller, or customer? **R. Contreras-Rangel** responds that brick and motor stores are easier, there is more of a trail to follow. Enforcement would be able to check it out, trace to supplier. Difficulty with online, there is no trail, and sometimes sell anonymous.

- **A. McGovern** says he is doing great work, need that local jurisdiction and coordination. Federal folks can step in to prevent import. **R. Contreras-Rangel** worked with enforcement recently for the stores identified having a shipment of the moss balls potentially contaminated with zebra mussels, to do enforcement and education.
- **T. Fitzgerald** suggests having **R. Contreras-Rangel** back in a few months for a program overview and update.
- **D. Eaton** is an aquatic invertebrate biologist and lake ecologist doing natives too. Receives samples statewide – economically important lakes – monitor zebra mussel veligers and some adult surveys. EDDMapS verification, outreach about inverts, and signal crayfish discovery last fall in central western MN. Team developing response planning and actions and funding through USFWS. Delineation – if they are there, where, and abundance. So far since discovery by bait harvester, none have been found. Molecular stuff is exciting, eDNA. Mitochondrial DNA assessment found it the genetic strain is a widespread invasive signal crayfish. Find source and detect them in lakes where we don't have specimen records. Gets a lot of questions like “what's this blob” and “what's this bug,” lots of interesting photos and observations.
- **W. Crowell** is the AIS management consultant. Helps support the Invasive Species Specialists leading projects. Such as **A. Londo's** (Region 3 South Specialist) low dose fluoridone. In the late 1990s fluoridone found it can be selective for Eurasian watermilfoil, but if not done correctly it can cause a lot of non-target damage. Going lower and lower with the dose. N. Kovar's (Region 1 North Specialist) burlap management study on starry stonewort, finding that starry stonewort establishes near public water access and becomes risk for spread. We want to get a handle on that. First time tried in MN. Burlap over the starry stonewort, very small 10x10, working with Leech Lake Band. Has not eradicated, some areas around edges growing, but definitely suppresses growth. The barrier did not cause trouble, not allowed generally because they cause navigational hazard – since it is mesh, gas did not build up underneath and float up. Got a variance. Invasive phragmites project – MN is in the middle of the invasion curve, worked to stamp out very small (less than a bedroom in outstate – clear from counties). Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) crews looking. Treatments. Funding through GLRI. Julia Bohnen with the University of Minnesota is leading a project to help wastewater treatment plants transition from invasive phragmites to something else. There is a grower in WI using native phragmites – bedding plant, set up in reed bed, within a few months 5-6ft tall – exactly what they need.
 - **M. Sorensen** adds that at the MAISRC Showcase, **W. Crowell** has worked on this for 31 years and received a lifetime research partnership award.
- **A. Doll** is the AIS Prevention Consultant, new to the position and getting up to speed, just under a year. Permitting. Jumping worm language – prohibited aquatic – make the sale illegal to use as bait, first state to do this. Working with Laura Van Riper (DNR Terrestrial Invasive Species Coordinator) on all challenges with classifying a species like this prohibited. Landscape and nursery, general permits for yard waste disposal. Working with Grace Loppnow (Invasive Fish Coordinator) on ways for safe and eco-friendly disposal of invasive carp. Issued permit for raptor center – for disposal. Working on that again this year as well as someone who had sled dogs who feeds them fish.
 - **S. Binsfeld** mentions Dan Cibulka with Sherburne County is working with MAISRC on their “Lab to Lakes” project in Freemont on common carp – they are probably looking for creative solutions for disposal. **K. Pennington** clarifies that the permits that **A. Doll** is working on are for invasive carp – bighead, silver, grass – which are prohibited. Common carp are regulated – so from our program, you can already legally possess and transport – fisheries needs to issue the permits for common carp.
- **C. Droppo** is an Invasive Species Specialist based out of Region 2 in Brainerd. Started mid-June. Exciting, new starry stonewort in Crow Wing County. Scuba diving in Middle Cullen with Rich Rezanka (DNR Invasive Species Specialist Region 2 Grand Rapids) to monitor growth. Measuring height and distance from surface.

Seasonal progression. There is 1 acre in the bay area with defined edges. Whitefish Chain, Rush Lake is a working access, and the lake association is proactive. Meeting with lake association, MAISRC and DNR – combining forces. Surveying the area and so far, no other locations found in the chain. His work is funded by GLRI.

- **A. McGovern** asks if there are chemical controls for starry stonewort. **C. Droppo** says yes, but Ken Carol (macroalgae expert with the New York Botanical Garden) is finding that the best thing to do is to leave it alone.
- **J. Foley** is the Region 2 Watercraft Inspection Supervisor. She has been with the program since 2012 first as a Level 2, then program assistant, and now the supervisor for two seasons. She supervises 12 Level 1s and 12 Level 2s intern in 4 locations – Brainerd, Father Hennepin, Grand Rapids, and Duluth. Filled most of the positions for the first time in a long time. Also funded by GLRI. Shortfall for hiring last year. In Region 2, increased decons to 545 this year, which was 4.8% of boats; last year was 3%. Public outreach events with boat, table, inspections, etc. Coordinate with DNR Enforcement. Governed under Statute 84D can require inspections and are authorized to deny launch. Roadside Check stations are where DNR Enforcement and the watercraft inspection program work together – anyone hauling watercraft are required to stop. Saw a 21% violation rate, which is much higher than what we see at the public access – a different snapshot.
 - **S. Binsfeld** asks if there have been any violations. **J. Foley** says at the one in her region, there was one zebra mussel violation. It was found with the zebra mussel dog and inspector, drain plug, large amount of aquatic macrophytes with citation. **K. Pennington** adds that the zebra mussel dogs are federally funded through State ANS Plan. **C. Ohly-Cusack** asks, are the grants yearly? **K. Pennington** says yes. **J. Foley** adds the zebra mussel dogs have found them inside lower unit that no human could have found.
- **C. Hokkala-Kuhns** is the Region 3 Watercraft Inspection Program Supervisor. She has 4 crews but did not fill all spots this year. Small crew this year but did a great job. They work the busiest access – Minnetonka, White Bear, Forest Lake. They did 300 decons and 12,000 inspections. Working with county partners – helped Carver with safety project to address incidents at Waconia. Developed a safety plan and worked with Parks and Trails who will be improving the access. Prioritize keeping the boaters and inspectors safe. Internal project – yellow belt continuous improvement – survey that the inspection program uses for tracking hours. Did 3 roadside checks – always successful. Had the most drive bys, 1/2 drove by at one. DNR Enforcement sets up signs on roadway – only inspect traffic from one direction – turns in to station – they inspect and decon. The signs don’t seem to catch people’s attention – roadwork signs or not specific enough, such as “water related equipment.” She suggested “watercraft” as well as where to set up in future. DNR Enforcement used to have a chase vehicle, but don’t do that anymore – do watch for violations – would pursue if obvious.
- **A. Rust** is the AIS Training Coordinator primarily working with Lake Service Providers. Also helping with collaborative stuff like the Lock and Dam 5 invasive carp deterrent project. Working with **C. Hokkala-Kuhns** on new employee orientation – how to keep good employees, when it can feel like drinking from a firehose. Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program is the most fun.
- **A. Londo** is the Region 3 South Invasive Species Specialist covering the 7-county metro and south along Mississippi. In the position for 2 years. Purple loosestrife – concerned citizens making more reports – so we brought back the beetle collection and rearing workshops. Partners and stakeholders – local rearing effort. Native aquatic plant propagation work – usually paired with invasive aquatic plant management or common carp management. Working with the University on that. Being innovative with starry stonewort in Medicine Lake using Hydrothol 191 and copper combo called Komeen Descend. It goes to the benthos, targeting bulbils. New copper-based product for Minnetonka mesocosms for zebra mussel control. Matrix is a new molluscicide. High rate and lower rate and replicates. Low dose fluridone treatment works.

How can the Committee support DNR?

- Address rising costs – e.g. increasing registration fees.
- Partnerships between counties and DNR inspections – not duplicating efforts.
- Ambassadors in our communities – ask – how are you partnering with DNR inspection to make the best use – what is the best strategy. Counties visiting committee – ask them how it is going.
- **S. McGrew** says there is DNR-bashing for some people – rising above it as individuals. They are good people, going to bat for them. At the higher levels too, legislatively.
- **S. Binsfeld** says this is volunteer work, seeing great things happen with DNR.
- **B. Garcia** is there a way to promote coordination between groups? **D. Jensen** says reach out to county coordinators, build relationships, tell them about this committee and what the DNR is doing.
- **A. Londo** for funding for invasive aquatic plant management (IAPM) right now is based on a lottery. A small amount – a lot of people get it. But sometimes we need 3 years of consistent management depending on target plant, don't have the capacity for that. Feels like wack-a-mole. Funds for larger projects or research projects?
 - **S. Binsfeld** says what if that was portioned out with purpose for long-term, research, or small associations. **K. Pennington** mentions the surcharge increase – that would have more space and resources to think about that, more flexibility. **A. Dahlberg** adds, she will be back in December to talk about this again. Provided an overview of grants as it has been. Internally talking about 2025. At the December meeting, started talking about potential changes in 2026 and beyond. Inflation is a thing. Last year there were 263 applications. We funded 99 with an average \$4,000 award. \$1,000 can go to delineation. Often grants only cover part of a project. Looked at increasing the \$2,500 base to \$15,000 – that would only be 60 grants.
 - **J. Foley** asks if we could select grants based on beneficial impact of the lake and greater good of the waters in the state? **K. Pennington** says we could do a range of things, looking forward to the conversations in December. What are we obligated to do versus what we want. **J. Foley** says to consider the cost benefit, e.g. if curly-leaf pondweed exists, but is not causing damage or should we look at starry stonewort? **S. Binsfeld** suggests having emergency/contingency funds like some counties do.
 - **B. Garcia** asks if there is anything to do for this legislative session? The upcoming one is a budget year.
 - **C. Ohly-Cusack** says what if it was not annual funding, but funding over a period of time. If they end up not using it, they can return it.
 - **D. Jensen** asks if DNR has data bases funding a grant application based on what the need is? For example, a particular lake would need 3 years – how much of a savings would it be? Bring it to a certain level to capacity. **A. Dahlberg** says we don't have that data. **A. Londo** adds we do know what is needed for specific species. Some groups could do 2 years, got that funding a few years ago. Wanted to use a newer product for a 3rd year, but the lake association couldn't afford it. **P. Selter** says the expensive products are way better than the products that are cheap. Grant money is being used for cheaper ones – because they can treat larger areas, but then they will have to treat the large area because the product doesn't work as well as the others they couldn't afford. Would like to see the grant program shift to ecological benefit. Curly-leaf pondweed is not on the infested waters list. It is predictively unpredictable, the only species we haven't been able to tackle. Do a few years of successful treatment, stop, then it comes back. **A. Londo** says we would get so much pushback from the public. **P. Selter** says for the Galleon projects – prove % occurrence, then go into tier two. One treatment doesn't make a difference, they only treat when they get a grant for.
 - **A. Dahlberg** appreciates this conversation – keep thinking about the grants program to discuss in December.

DNR Updates

Kelly Pennington, Invasive Species Program Supervisor

- Legislative session starts January 15th – most goes through the Environment and Natural Resource Finance and Policy Committee.
- DNR has a proposal to increase the AIS surcharge.
- DNR has a policy proposal about prohibited invasive species – right now they are illegal to possess transport including invasive carp in Minnesota such as silver, bighead, and grass. We have to issue permits to the raptor center to give them dead carp. A fillet of silver carp – that would be illegal – dead or alive. In the past people challenged – I’m not transporting a zebra mussel because it is dead, so 10 years ago added “dead or alive.” Proposal changes the law to allow dead and eviscerated (gutted or gills removed) to be possessed and transported, just for the 3 species. The reason is the time it takes to administer current regulation for good uses and getting more inquiries from people about processing invasive carp. **M. Tajbakhsh** has seen at Asian and other markets frozen fillets of those species. Not easily angled for, so not worried about guts at public water accesses. They can keep it if they snag one. Internal processes to work through, we’ll see if it makes it.
- Lock and Dam 5 Invasive Carp scoping project – working with federal partners.
- Tomorrow the application deadline for this Committee closes! You do have to reapply if your term is ending.
- Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference 2024 – opportunities for field trips! Nov 12-14, Duluth.

Member Updates

- **S. McGrew** – 12,000 boats, down a little bit due to rainy June. 38 decons on new lake. Found a ZM in it. MAISRC showcase – excited and positivity. MRNA research – less than a year away to feeding it to the carps in the tanks. Excited new technologies. Working on strategic road – they need a well – so it’s a nice site for a rinse station.
- **C. Brandt** – Sherburne County AIS Task Force meeting. Learned a few things, discussion about state grant money and how Sherburne should allocate funds, prioritize. Boating cleaning exit vs entrance, tool stations. Another one in Oct.
- **A. Weberg** – forest service let her borrow a staff member and boat. Inspections.
- **P. Selter** – Lottery is going to be on a ballot – nick: ENRTF to renew – if you don’t vote, it’s a no. Vote yes – only educating. Funds really important conservation projects every year. A lot of DNR is on LCCMR too.
- **M. Sorensen** – lawn signs? There is a non-profit – late surge campaign. Portion of the state lottery dollars.
- **S. Binsfelt** – task force was really good meeting, good combo of people. Day at the lake event.
- **N. Phelps** – thank you for everyone that was at the showcase!

Members attending in-person received a tour of the Minnesota AIS Research Center’s lab, led by Nick Phelps and Maddie Hayden.

Next Meeting October 31, 2024 online via Teams.