

Minnesota DNR AIS Advisory Committee

October 31st, 2024 Meeting Minutes

10:00-Noon Online via Teams

Members Present: Will Bement, Shelly Binsfeld, Spencer McGrew, Carrie Ohly-Cusack, Patrick Selter, Mike Sorensen, Amanda Weberg, Ryan Wersal

Members Absent: Nick Bluhm, Charlie Brandt, Chris DuBose, Beto Garcia Chris Magnotto, Christine Maxwell, M. Mahmood Tajbakhsh

Ex-officio Members Present: Maddie Hayden, Amy McGovern

Ex-officio Members Absent: Nicole Lalum

DNR Staff Present: Rafael Contreras-Rangel, Doug Jensen, Eric Kenney, Kelly Pennington, Scott Staples

Vice Chair Mike Sorensen chaired meeting

Motion to approve Agenda: A. Weberg motion, W. Bement, seconded

Motion to approve September meeting minutes tabled to December meeting because they have not been drafted yet.

Meeting Summary

- **S. Staples** from DNR's enforcement gave an overview of the program, including their routine patrols, check stations, aviation unit, and K9 units; if anyone wants a K9 to come for an education event you can request it
- **K. Pennington** gave a DNR update. **R. Contreras-Rangel** filled **T. Fitzgerald's** previous position as southern AIS Prevention Planner, working on filling new positions such as AIS Specialists vacancy and a new position to coordinate the Lock and Dam 5 project; working on the annual report and had a program meeting and AIS Specialist meeting to debrief for the year
- Discussion led to identifying a need to keep track of ideas the committee comes up for the DNR to prioritize regarding AIS. Committee decided to create a subcommittee to make specific suggestions/recommendations to the Commissioner to help

Action Items

- **S. McGrew** and **A. Weberg** volunteered to reach out to **T. Fitzgeralds** to find meeting where committee priorities were discussed
- **S. McGrew** motioned for **A. Weberg** to chair a subcommittee to establish priorities the committee would want the DNR to focus on. **C. Ohly-Cusack** seconded, and **M. Sorensen; D. Jensen, P. Selter, S. McGrew** and **S. Binsfeld** volunteered to join this sub-committee
- **S. Binsfeld** suggests getting in contact with Dan Cibulka from Sherburne County if any members are getting ready to develop or update their 5-year plan for AIS because they came up with a remarkable group
- **W. Bement** is seeking feedback on decontamination stations; **C. Ohly-Cusack** offered to get in contact and provide information; DNR can identify a speaker if there is interest.

Today's Meeting Expectations

- Everyone has the responsibility to contribute.
- Be an active listener and speak honestly.

- Share information in ways that can help others be successful.
- Be respectful and open to new ideas and new ways of doing things.
- Everyone participates, no one dominates.

Overview of DNR AIS Law Enforcement Program

Scott Staples, DNR Law Enforcement

Presentation title: Overview of enforcement and AIS for the DNR

- Role: Operations Major Oversees NW Region 1, aviation unit, animal health unit liaison with other 3 other divisions and tribes; EWR is one of them that helps with AIS work; works with Kelly Pennington with the IS Unit
- Conservation Officer duties, enforce state laws and rules regarding AIS as continue support through education
- Examples of work include routine patrol check stations, saturation details aviation unit education:
 - Routine patrol - encourages distribution of education about AIS when doing patrols on and off the water
 - Check stations - Set up throughout state and counties that allow them; some counties do not allow them; work together with EWR, supervisor needs a checklist before it comes to fruition; all logistics need to come together in one day; safety is essential and need to get all the required permits to be able to have the check station; results need to be captured and be passed on higher; 12 events are the target each year
 - Saturation details - Look for high violation rates and the put extra effort in those areas to make sure rules are being followed
 - Aviation Unit - Overseen by enforcement division, spraying invasive cattail is an example of the work being done; education is conducted at sports shows, state fair, etc.
 - Special Support from K9 UNIT - Spent 12 years on the K9 unit, been using them since 2013 for zebra mussels and was adapted from California Fish and Wildlife; one of three state natural resource agencies in the nation who do this; canines can also be trained to detect wildlife, firearms, evidence, and aid in location lost or missing people; dogs not only find zebra mussels, but they help finding many other things, not just AIS; 3 currently working in the state
 - Other odors K9 are trained to detect - Venison, pheasant, wild turkey, etc.; sometimes K9s get cross contamination of these odors and they give the same signal regardless of the odor, which can confound detection
 - Types of searches include boats, docks/lifts/water related equipment, open areas, buildings; also bring them to check stations
 - Next year, planning to add three new teams for zebra mussel detections; training will take about 12 weeks and will happen in house by the DNR, hoping to be operational by summer and be present at Detroit Lakes, Rochester, and Worthington

Questions:

A. Weberg: Attorney in Cook County said no to roadside checks, but current ones is on board, and they are looking to start this process. **S. Staples:** Aware of that, supervisor is vacant right now but once supervisor for that area is filled, the process will move forward.

W. Bement: Asked how education and outreach is used during work. **S. Staples:** Intertwined with all the work, example shared about waterfowl hunters - telling them to remove plant material from boats. Also attend career fairs. **W. Bement:** White Earth holds ice fishing events, wild rice camps, etc. - can enforcement come up to show the kids? **S. Staples:** Yes, all you need to do is request and LE would be happy to do it. Just request and can be put on their calendar. Leech Lake has requested dogs for their events. **W. Bement:** That would be great, kids respond well to the dogs.

A. Weberg via chat: What is the best way to reach out for outreach assistance? **S. Staples:** Get a hold of him or any officer in the area to ask for outreach.

A. McGovern: Do you get requests from other states to help with K9s? **S. Staples:** Get requests from other states and Canada to help with ID's and/or train their dogs for zebra mussels. There's red tape on that, but they do their best to help. For example - Wolf got killed with an arrow and the dog found the arrow which led to finding the source of the arrow.

D. Jensen: How many roadside checks do you do each year? What are some of the greatest challenges and limiting factors to do those roadside checks? **S. Staples:** Not a set number but try to do 12, hard to do more because of the effort required to do them. Challenges include locations and changing of county attorneys. When they do them, they just try to get them done and minimize the amount of time taken. Only focused solely on AIS check and do not look for other violations. County attorneys are biggest challenge. During elections things change and they must adapt.

S. McGrew: Kid public safety open house where officers come for 1st graders. Going to ask for **S. Staples** to attend. **S. Staples** says education works a lot better than penalty side. Just increased fines but there was no change in people's behavior. **S. McGrew** says glad to see the DNR is also focusing on education. When having a dog to checks it is good to have the dogs and it's great for education. If a zebra mussel is found, having the dog there will make them more likely to remember the education.

D. Jensen: Reminds group we're at 10:45 am. What can this committee do to help enforcement do AIS efforts? **S. Staples** says continue to support us in our areas. You talk to people enforcement doesn't get to talk to. Enforcement gets a bad reputation but they're trying their best. They are doing what they think is best for the state. If you hear gossip of what enforcement does, tell them what you just heard of everything they're doing. They are not trying to ruin people's day, they are just making sure everyone is doing the right thing.

A. McGovern via chat: How do you confirm presence/absence when the dog alerts? **S. Staples** says must do a walk to check. Sometimes there are false positives. K9s get a reward if they find something, which is why they want to alert if they find something. Importantly, any change of behavior by the K9s is what can be used in court, not just the signal of sitting. The handler gets to know the action of the dogs intimately.

K. Pennington: Program has been able to fund through GLRI grants. Dogs have attended SAISAC meetings previously and they could come again. They have also attended the state fair – those events have been popular. They are also a key prevention tool because they find vegetation on hard-to-find places, like bunks and boat motors.

D. Jensen: If you want a dog to bring to UMISC (Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference), we would love having them there. **S. Staples:** There will be a dog at UMISC, but difficult because it's right during deer season.

S. Staples via chat: Major Scott Staples 218-380-6866 cell, 651-259-5061 office, scott.staples@state.mn.us

DNR Updates

Kelly Pennington, Invasive Species Program Supervisor

- **T. Fitzgerald's** former position has been filled by **R. Contreras-Rangel**; he used to work as the AIS Prevention Planner and will be great to continue in this position
- Nicole Kovar has left Park Rapids position, and we are in the process to fill it in
 - **W. Bement**: Who to contact while she's out? **K. Pennington**: Contact Mark Ranweiller or Kelly if Mark is not available; if you can't get in touch with M. Ranweiller, Erik Anthonisen <erik.anthonisen@state.mn.us> supervises the Invasive Species Specialists in the NW DNR region
 - If you ever need to find a contact in the program, this is a good resource:
<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/ais/contacts.html>
- Had a entire program meeting in St. Cloud to debrief on how the season went; also scheduled the level 2 staff who deal with decontamination; it was great to hear their input on the meeting
- On Monday, a working meeting was held with AIS specialists, they talked about the upcoming permitting season to coordinate and longer-term projects like data managing; we collect a lot of data and we there were a lot of questions on how to move forward strategically
- Working on Invasive Species Annual Report 2024; past reports are posted on our website
- Lock and Dam 5, there is \$12 million over the next 5 years to scope potential deterrents for the dam; toured and met with the project team at Lock and Dam 5 to determine how to better deter invasive carp
- Hiring an Invasive Carp Lock and Dam 5 Deterrent Project Coordinator for lock and dam projects

Members and Ex-Officio Updates

W. Bement: Getting additional staffing on AIS at White Earth. There have been more infestations so it's great to have more staff; pulling out docks at parks and resorts; asking members of White earth if they can look at their docks and getting ready for next year

R. Wersal: Wrapping up field work with surveys and starting to start new lab projects heading into the spring; spending time advising student to get ready for next semester

S. McGrew: Success story, pleased with the MAISRC research on genetic kill pellets on invasive grass carp; shared local success story, Battle Lake station was installed; **N. Phelps** invited them to gather feedback on how to improve the big AIS data project they are working on

P. Selter: Packing up equipment; got a lot of fall EWM treatments and trying to protect natives by going later in the season; have found success treating later in the season for EWM

M. Hayden: MAISRC is working on end of the year reporting, trying to get new research projects into the lab and start on the new calendar year; conducting a cooperative project with the DNR to get a phragmites cohesive story map out to the public; will be a big push for the legislature to show them the effort to do statewide work; strategic planning is wrapping up, new strategic plan is on schedule and should be available to the public in the next few months; there is a large group from MAISRC heading to UMISC; have been talking to family to tell people to vote ENRTF.

- **M. Sorensen**: Can you elaborate on that? **M. Hayden**: The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Renewal funding come from Minnesota Lottery and has funded thousands of projects on natural resources; it is up for 25 year renewal after initial passage in 1989; if you do not vote, then it is considered as a "no." **S.**

Binsfeld: Where is a good site to send people to understand this issue more? **M. Hayden:** There is a group that was creating a website just for it. Provided link in the chat: <https://www.mngreatoutdoors.org/> **K. Pennington:** We don't know either and as state employees we are limited on what we can do for the outcome: **M. Sorensen:** MPR has talked about it and other news organizations as well. That's a good place to look. Provided link in the chat: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2024/10/23/renew-it-or-lose-it-lawmaker-asks-voters-not-to-skip-ballot-question-on-lottery-amendment>

E. Kenney: Will reapply for another CCMI year term

D. Jensen: The Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Committee (MISAC) met earlier this month; also met with Sherburne County AIS Task Force who are planning to revise their county plan; at UMISC, there will be a session cochaired by me and **T. Fitzgerald** which will be a "Celebration of 10 years of AIS Prevention Aid" on Wednesday afternoon; three counties have been asked to tell their stories on how the investment of state funding has benefited their programs

R. Contreras-Rangel: No update

C. Ohly-Cusack: ABC group is working on a proposal for funding with St. Louis County, partnering with Wildlife Forever

A. Weberg: Increased interagency collaboration, including with Grand Portage Band, it's great to have an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)

M. Sorensen: Lake specialist left Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board so they're trying to fill position which includes AIS work; trying to get hired before end of year; in October they have over 100 buoys to put their sailboats and in October they come off the lakes; they are arranged in a grid, so it is a good opportunity to inspect boats and buoys to look for zebra mussels; so far, they haven't found any zebra mussels, so that is a success

S. Binsfeld: MAISRC showcase was great

Discussion

December meeting:

D. Jensen: Speaker line up Angelique Dalberg from DNR will talk with us to get new ideas for the direction of the grants program; otherwise, we are open for speakers and contacts.

A. Weberg asks what is the role of this committee? It's understood that we can make suggestion to the DNR Commissioner for prevention efforts we are passionate about. How do we move forward with that? **M.**

Sorensen: What are you hoping for on this? **A. Weberg:** We had priorities before, and we should go back and see which we can pursue. **D. Jensen:** These can be found on the notes for the meeting where this was talked about.

M. Sorensen: **D. Jensen** we should talk about this. **S. Binsfeld:** We should reach out to **T. Fitzgerald** to learn where we can find this list. It is a great idea to bring up this list again to figure out what we want to advise, support, encourage the DNR. We had some great discussion but then summer happened, then we took a break. We've been busy with other events since then, so we should get back that and need people to step up to bring these things up. **S. McGrew** and **A. Weberg** volunteered to help lead. **S. Binsfeld:** Supports a tax increase to support the work that is done and maybe a support open letter should be written. **M. Sorensen:** There are some open letters on the DNR website. Do we have to worry about open meeting laws if we do some side meetings to

talk about some of these topics? **D. Jensen:** If we have a separate sub-committee, it's fine but we encourage to committee to be transparent. **K. Pennington:** Clarified the DNR is not proposing a tax increase, but an AIS surcharge increase. AIS surcharge increase proposal is still in review. The committee has taken positions to support these before (more info on this below). **S. McGrew:** Proposes A. Weberg to be chair of a subcommittee to help give suggestions to the DNR. **C. Ohly-Cusack:** Seconded. **M. Sorensen:** By counting hands, **M. Sorensen** identified **D. Jensen, P. Selter, A. Weberg, S. McGrew** and **S. Binsfeld** as interested in joining this sub-committee. **Action Item:** Reach put to **T. Fitzgerald** to find meeting where committee priorities were discussed, **S. McGrew** and **A. Weberg** volunteer to keep track of these. **Action Item:** Create a subcommittee to establish priorities the committee would recommends DNR to focus on.

W. Bement: Seeking feedback, met with Beltrami County regarding decontamination stations. Some decontamination stations only use hot air, wondering if the water ones are better. **D. Jensen:** Depends on location and type of AIS, some places use vacuums, blowers, or pickers. **W. Bement:** one we had seemed to be a vacuum, but we are looking for alternatives for places we do not have access to water. **M. Sorensen:** It sounds like you are looking for a CD3 station and **C. Ohly-Cusack** might be able to help. **C. Ohly-Cusack** is happy to follow up. **D. Jensen:** More people are using tool stations, regardless of what is used, so any way we can increase compliance is great. **C. Ohly-Cusack:** Depending on the area, you might want a different tool, for example the pickers are not the best for spiny waterfleas. **D. Jensen:** Vacuum is great for spiny waterfleas. **K. Pennington** offered the following resource on the chat: DNR contracted this report, completed in 2023, which details use of tool stations in an observational study: <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/boating/dnr-access-observations-report-bolton-menk-final-dec2023-accessible.pdf> **Action Item:** DNR could invite a speaker to talk about decontamination stations.

S. Binsfeld: Sherburne County, who is revising their 5-year AIS plan, has a remarkable group working on it. There were great dialogue and people from all different parts, including DNR who were there. County commissioners, people from this committee, and other lake associations attended. There were some great conversations. Are any other members coming up to plan their new 5-year plan? Reach out to Dan Cibulka to ask how he put that together because the work he did was remarkable: **M. Sorensen:** Can you drop Dan's info on the chat? dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org

S. McGrew motioned to adjourn, and **A. Weberg** seconded.

Adjourned 11:48 AM. Next Meeting December 5, 2024 online via Teams.

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AIS Surcharge Increase Proposal

The DNR is considering a proposal to increase the aquatic invasive species (AIS) surcharge on watercraft registrations to \$20 for a three-year registration among its many proposals and significant list of funding needs.

Since 1993, watercraft users have supported the DNR's AIS prevention and management efforts through this surcharge, which was last increased in 2019 from \$5 to \$10.60. The proposed AIS surcharge increase would address the structural deficit in the Invasive Species Account and make needed investments in AIS prevention and management. Specifically, we would propose increasing funds available each year for invasive aquatic plant management (IAPM) grants from \$400,000 to

\$800,000. In addition, it would increase the DNR's ability to respond to new and existing AIS populations, address pathways of AIS introduction in spread including recreation and trade, increase outreach and engagement of traditionally underrepresented and new audiences, and provide technical assistance to lake associations and other stakeholders on long-term lake vegetation management plans.

As we continue to consider and prioritize the potential legislative proposals, we wanted to share this with you as a key stakeholder group for the invasive species program. We will make time at the August AIS Advisory Committee meeting to discuss this further.