

## Minnesota Statewide AIS Advisory Committee (SAISAC)

**November 30, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

**Teams Online**

**Members Present:** Charlie Brandt, Mike Sorensen, Holly Bushman, Shelly Binsfeld, Pat Brown, Kate Hagsten, Will Bement, Michaela Kofoed, Beto Garcia, Ryan Wersal

**Members Absent:** Chris DuBose, KorriRay Northrup, Chris Magnotto, Maggie Stahley

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Nicholas Phelps, Maddie Hayden

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

**DNR Staff Present:** Tina Fitzgerald, Doug Jensen, Adam Doll, Angelique Dahlberg, Erik Anthonisen, Major Robert Goreski

**Guests:** Camden Droppo (Chisago County), Susanna Wilson-Witkowski (Chisago County)

**H. Bushman called the meeting to order at 10:02AM.**

**Motion to approve agenda: First by S. Binsfeld, second by M. Kofoed.**

**Motion to approve Meeting Minutes from October 26, 2023: First by M. Sorensen, second by P. Brown.**

### Meeting Summary:

- The Committee learned about the DNR's 2024 invasive plant management grant program and discussed future directions.
- The Committee learned about the new permanent on-demand hot water decontamination station at the public water access in Big Bog State Recreation Area and associated outreach efforts in the Red Lake Area.
- The Committee learned how two counties work collaboratively with local law enforcement on AIS issues and discussed how to support local AIS enforcement efforts.
- DNR staff and Committee members thanked retiring members **P. Brown, K. Hagsten, H. Bushman, and M. Kofoed** for their energy and dedication to the committee over the last four years.

### DNR's Invasive Aquatic Plant Management Grants Program Update for 2024

**Angelique Dahlberg, DNR AIS Management Programs Grants and Research Coordinator**

- Started in October, getting up to speed, processing reimbursements and launching the program.
- **Program background slide**
  - Scope has varied, but underlying purpose has not changed
  - \$6.6M in 1,400 grants from 2012-2017, 2020-2023
  - Support invasive aquatic plant management of four species: Eurasian watermilfoil, curlyleaf pondweed, flowering rush, starry stonewort

- Broad eligibility for a large number and wide range of local entities (e.g., lake associations, local units of government, tribes)
- Funds are used for reimbursement of expenses directly related to a control project
  - Pretreatment delineation survey
  - Treatment under an IAPM permit
- **2023 Summary**
  - Received 191 applications and were able to fund 102 of them
  - We had \$400,000 to distribute and awarded grants between \$1,500 and \$10,000. The average grant was around \$2,280
  - Curly-leaf pondweed: 74, Eurasian watermilfoil: 39, Flowering rush: 1, Starry stonewort: 7, Combinations: 72
  - Spread across 37 counties, top applying counties got the most funded projects / funds as well.
- **Funding support for traditional control grants**
  - Similar to 2023: \$400,000 on-time complete applications selected by randomized order until funds are spent
  - Priority given to waterbodies that didn't receive funding last year and/or those addressing starry stonewort
  - 2021-2024 award formula: Under 10 acres: \$1,500; over 10 acres: \$1,500 + \$150 per acre above 10 acres; grant maximum of \$5,000 to \$10,000
  - It won't cover all project costs, but a source that helps; on average provides 30% of costs
- IAPM (Invasive Aquatic Plant Management) permit
  - Littoral is 15% limit, 50% for mechanical
  - Work with regional Invasive Species Specialists to obtain permits
- **Pre-treatment**
  - Done to make sure you are treating plants that are actually there
  - Must be done by a third-party contractor to avoid conflict of interest; a list of third-party contractors are available online
  - Delineations from 2023 can be used for 2024; work with Invasive Species Specialists to determine if that is sufficient; this is to help with curly-leaf pondweed early treatments, instead of waiting for the survey in the spring
- **Treatment**
  - Herbicidal, mechanical (harvest, hand-pulling, DASH) or some combination of treatment methods
  - Must be conducted under and according to an IAPM permit, which considers treatment selectivity and adverse nontarget effects
- **2024 Program Details**
  - Business as usual with \$400,000 in funds and earlier application period to allow for more planning
  - Award notices in January - IAPM permit application is part of the work plan, not grant application
  - Learning about strengths and weaknesses, didn't want to make large changes this year, since she is new
  - Communicating via listserv, press release, etc.

- **Ideas for 2025**

- What do you think works well with the current system?
- What do you think could be improved upon?
- Should we prioritize new infestations to jumpstart management in newly infested lakes?
- Genuinely want to hear your thoughts, since she is new

## Discussion

- **S. Binsfeld** asks, needing a survey ahead of time, has that been difficult? **A. Dahlberg** says they do not need a survey ahead of time. Surveys can get done in 2024. Some groups already have surveys. It was meant to expand the program, e.g., allow earlier treatment. **S. Binsfeld** clarifies, has that been a barrier – the cost of getting a survey? **A. Dahlberg** says if a lake has curlyleaf pondweed and needs a delineation, the delineation is done May 1<sup>st</sup> and then the applicator cannot come until the 30<sup>th</sup> – this is too late in some cases. Instead, they can have the delineation already done and treatment can happen in best conditions (50-60°F). The earlier it is done, the more effective the treatment. **S. Binsfeld** asks, does the award include the survey of the whole lake? Hard to do the delineation and the treatment for only \$1,500. **A. Dahlberg** responds, the amount of money is based on the size of the treatment, you are right it would not cover all of the cost. To the question is the delineation would be part of the award? Yes. Does not factor into how much is awarded, award amount is based on acreage.
- **C. Brandt** asks, can the work be done first and the grant reimbursement is done after? **A. Dahlberg** Yes. **M. Sorensen** clarifies that you have to apply for the grant before doing the work. Yes. **C. Brandt** What about applications that don't get fulfilled? Are most because the \$400,000 ran out, or not done correctly? Does there need to be more money or is it the right amount? **A. Dahlberg** says we have always had more applicants than we have funds. For most that receive funding, it covers about 30% of the project.
- **C. Brandt**, concerning the question "should we prioritize new infestations?" First need to know, are curlyleaf pondweed treatments annual or do treatments have more of a permanent solution? I wouldn't prioritize them if it is the same problem and not bigger. How it effects the future of curlyleaf pondweed in that lake. If it is detected early and new infestation is a jump start – does it knock it out or future of infestation to be a lot brighter? **D. Jensen** says IAPM is a long-term deal, not an expectation that herbicide alone is going to eradicate – no success in that respect. Likely treatment to sustain management, treatment likely to occur 3 to 5 years just to keep it the same. **A. Dahlberg** says the grant program function is to prioritize projects that were not funded last year as a way to help distribute the funds more broadly, but the downside is that does not support longer term management. **C. Brandt** says that was my concern.
- **D. Jensen** asks, would it take doubling to fund all projects? If someone wanted to advocate, would it require double the current amount? **A. Dahlberg** says we were just asked to come up with that estimate, don't know what the official answer was, but can look into it.
- **H. Bushman** says consistency is needed for management over numerous years, but there is deficiency in funding more so in some areas over others. Not every county or SWCD is as proactive. How can we rotate these funds? For instance, give a certain amount in each region, to see when they would get funded? SThis would be so they know they are getting funding, but more on a cycle? Just thinking out loud. **A. Dahlberg** says it is an equity issue – right now it is random, but you are right there are different capacities in some areas.

- **C. Brandt** says if something like that could be advocate for, look at projects not funding. Look at the goal of the program. **A. Dahlberg** that would be good to look at, not everyone applies either, especially those without organized lake associations.
- **P. Brown** says for prioritizing new infestations, maybe set aside 25% a year. They don't become discouraged because they apply and don't get it after year and trying to show more need. And it shows more need, which then show that to the Legislature. Problem with rotating – if legislator isn't going to get funded in their area, you may lose votes.
- **D. Jensen** says Region 3 issues way more permits than other regions, greater need in that area.
- **N. Phelps** (via chat): agrees, prioritize for the potential of success (but defining 'success' will be subjective).
- **A. Dahlberg** says she wants to see a grant cycle for a full year and then do some evaluation. Some groups are lucky and receive multiple years, maybe looking at their projects and how that changes the populations as a way to gauge “success.” Looking forward to talking to this group again. Wasn't able to talk before the grant launched this year, but next year can have more conversations with this group.
- **M. Sorensen** says he has applied and received these. Likes the program, things have been streamlined nicely. Like that you turn people away, you can keep the grant larger. If the pie is smaller and smaller, at what point the staff time doing the grant is that larger than the grant itself. **A. Dahlberg** agrees, it can be a lot of work.
- **B. Garcia** says for prioritizing new infestations, does research show jumpstarting newly infested lake management is effective? **A. Dahlberg** the idea stemmed from adding starry stonewort. Hoping to get applications for starry stonewort at accesses. Overall management success depends on how widespread it is in the lake, but treatment at accesses is a way to prevent the spread to other nearby lakes. Other thoughts? Know that small populations are also hard to manage. **T. Fitzgerald** will ask Wendy Crowell about research related to management of new infestations.
- **A. Dahlberg** – enjoys these conversations and is learning a lot!

## AIS Outreach Efforts, Tool Stations, and Permanent Decontamination Station in the Red Lake area

**Erik Anthonisen, DNR Northwest Region South District Manager EWR**

**Pat Brown, Fisheries Director for the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians**

- **E. Anthonisen** oversees watercraft inspection and invasive species specialist staff for DNR in the Northwest part of the state – 3 staff people – Mike, Mark, and Nicole
- Red Lake – the western 2/3 of upper and all of lower is within the Red Lake Nation reservation; Minnesotans don't have access, only members do, not many public water accesses; one main one in Big Bog State Recreation Area – one of the busiest launches for decontaminations and inspections in the state
- AIS in Red Lake – Starry stonewort confirmed in 2016, zebra mussel veligers (larval stage) in 2019, and concern about spiny waterflea in nearby Lake of the Woods; no zebra mussel adults have been found in the lake yet, Red Lake Nation and DNR were concerned
- In 2021, DNR received funding from the legislature \$300,000; shows it is a priority for the legislature, DNR commissioner, and Red Lake Nation; grant to Red Lake Nation for \$110,000 and DNR used \$190,000, funds expired June 30, 2023 – not a lot of time to get things done

- **It takes a village:**
  - Red Lake Nation
  - Beltrami County
  - MN DNR: Parks and Trails, Management Resources, Ecological and Water Resources, Office of Communications and Outreach, Commissioner's Office
- **Projects:**
  - CD3 machines for Red Lake Nation (cleaning station, not decon)
  - Outreach/education: AIS messaging on various items – fishing regulation handout, Swedish dishcloth, staff at Big Bog Days (700+ students), and Facebook posts (186,000+ impressions)
    - Some was going before the money came
  - Permanent decontamination station
- **Decontamination station types:** mobile unit, permanent building with water collection mat (Utah example is multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars), and permanent on-demand shed (Colorado example is about the same price as mobile unit); what kills AIS is not the high pressure, it is the hot water - portable units heat water to be around 140 – there is fluctuation whereas on-demand keeps the temperature really constant
- **What was involved?**
  - Site selection – ownership, archeology – selected homestead water access within Big Bog
  - Design – what was needed – this was done by late fall 2022
  - Construction – winter, fishing opener is between ice out and June deadline
- **Permanent decontamination station at the homestead access**
  - Challenge: Groundwater is variable, well is variable depending on location, therefore had to dig a well and route electric to the site
  - 8x10 shed, well water, electricity, propane, two on-demand water heaters, concrete pads, site grading, curb and gutter, seeding, parking, traffic, arrows on the pavement, etc.
  - Colorado said it was \$30,000, but not sure they are including all of the costs like site construction
  - Total cost was \$209,000 for design, materials, construction and well. Engineers estimated construction would be under \$100,000, but the low bid was \$126,000 by a local company, which was nice
  - Winterized it in about 15 minutes, can get it started in 2 minutes; portable ones you have to roll out the mat, get heater going, etc.
- **Next steps**
  - Signage on the building as well as flagging in the parking area/ramp
  - Get permission for Beltrami County staff to use the site. Use is really high at fishing opener, less so later in the summer
  - Continue education and outreach efforts
  - Continue monitoring for AIS
  - How can this design be utilized at other sites in Minnesota?

## Discussion

- **P. Brown** says thank you to **E. Anthonisen**. What Red Lake Nation did was small compared to this thing. The tribe wanted to prevent additional AIS coming in. The tribe gave some funds back. **T. Fitzgerald** was instrumental for outreach like dishcloths. **A. Doll** was a huge help. Continuing to monitor, still concerned about spiny waterflea for those lake hoping between Lake of the Woods and Red Lake later in the year.

Went with CD3 on the reservation, because we don't have lake hoping on the reservation. They have a decontamination unit where they buy permits for those that do move. Protect Red Lake and other area lakes – critical having Red Lake Nation as part of this. Beltrami County was hugely important too.

- **S. Binsfeld** asks, how much has it been used? **E. Anthonisen** says the site didn't get used last year, got finished at the end of June. Use tapers off by then. We will have it starting fishing opener this coming year. It is one of the busiest public water accesses, it ranks right up there with Minnetonka. It will get a lot of use. **A. Doll** adds that they get 8 inspections/hour at Greys Bay. Also, Mike's inspector is our top decontamination person and works at that site. **S. Binsfeld** asks, what would be success? The number of decons? Getting a certain percentage of boats? Any monitoring on how well it worked out? **E. Anthonisen** says every decon is recorded on a tablet – so we have that information. Every inspection is recorded too. Success for me, seeing something like this elsewhere in the state. We don't have any doubts this site will work, many boats will be inspected and decontaminated here. It is a Bemidji crew and have had difficulty hiring staff for this area, the drive is 1.5 hours one way. Now they don't need to take the decon unit. **P. Brown** adds the design cost could have been impacted by the ruralness of it. People would like to know where these stations are – there is a website, but they can more around. Now there is a place they can go any day. Now Colorado is putting the on-demand heater in a closed trailer, so they can move them around. **A. Doll** says success would be improving the efficiency of these. Number of decontaminations is hard. We want it easy to use and repeatable (whereas mobile units fluctuates a lot). Get the cost down and advance this technology. Colorado has a lot less red tape and more infrastructure than Minnesota does. Even the portable ones need a water tank, propane tank, and concrete pad on site. Build hybrid infrastructure and move some parts place to place. So far this has been a nice advancement. Get it to grow here.
- **S. Binsfeld** asks, what size shed? **E. Anthonisen** says Colorado used 8x4, but ours is bigger so it could be used for inclement weather. It does not have a high-pressure pump, we could add it here with the space. Space heater? It is an insulated shed, you could get one, but we did not do that.
- **P. Brown** adds they get 122,000 angler hours in just one month, then only have 12,000 later in the year.
- **B. Garcia** asks, how much time per decon, per boat? **A. Doll** says it varies a lot. University of Minnesota researchers observed staff doing decontaminations and saw 5-10 minutes as the low and over an hour for the highest. Trying to target areas is really helpful and at the same time being a little more flexible. Manual had a lot of steps and boaters may say no to that. Also, Colorado requires decontaminations, so that is comparing apples to oranges. Trying to be targeted – residual water flushes – flush live well and then send them on their way. The person up there has been really good at that, doing very targeted decontaminations that are relatively quick. Not a full decontamination, but hitting risky areas. Maybe 15 with the flush and hull, up to an hour if dealing with a wake boat. From a behavior change perspective, the more we get people doing decontaminations, the more people see others doing it, realize it is easy, a routine, etc. - a system like this is "less scary" than the mobile units.
- **B. Garcia** asks, how much power and propane does it use? **A. Doll** says we will monitor it. Colorado already said we could go half the size of the propane, could also use solar.
- **E. Anthonisen** shares this link: <https://www.rinnai.us/commercial>
- **C. Brandt** asks, where can this be elsewhere in the state? Is this not what the Boundary Waters AIS Collaborative was thinking? **D. Jensen** says yes for grant – more infrastructure – CD3 stations. Junction Y Store just south of Lake Vermillion – main entrances. A lot of talk of having sites – permanent decon stations

for folks entering that area. One of the few areas you could most of the weekend recreation traffic – get all or most of incoming traffic. **T. Fitzgerald** adds DNR will be involved in that grant, definitely keeping these and other stations in mind. Being more efficient and effective.

- **E. Anthonisen** says this is the first permanent decontamination station for a DNR site using on-demand. Hot water is key. There is one in Douglas County. **A. Doll** says Itasca County has a similar shed at Deer Lake, but they use an old-school hot water heater.

## Vote for 2024 Chair and Vice Chair

- **S. Binsfeld** elected as Chair, **M. Sorenson** elected Vice Chair

## DNR Updates

### Doug Jensen, AIS Prevention Planner, on behalf of Kelly Pennington, Invasive Species Unit Supervisor

- Signal Crayfish Confirmed: The Minnesota DNR confirmed [signal crayfish](#) (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), an invasive non-native species, in Lake Winona, Douglas County. This is the first confirmation of signal crayfish in Minnesota waters. A commercial harvester contacted the DNR after trapping two signal crayfish in Lake Winona. As of November 3, 2023, the harvester has found eight additional signal crayfish in Lake Winona. The DNR followed up with trapping in Lake Winona and in two adjacent connected lakes but did not capture additional signal crayfish. One female was among the 10 adult signal crayfish captured and removed from Lake Winona. As of November 2023, no eggs or juveniles have been found. Follow up monitoring is planned for next spring.
  - **W. Bement** asks where signal crayfish are native. **D. Jensen** replies that they are native to northwestern U.S., Washington, Oregon, part of Idaho, lower British Columbia, and Alberta. **W. Bement** understands that they can get quite large. **D. Jensen** replies that they can be much larger than our native or invasive crayfish up to eight inches long and that is the size that have been captured. It is unclear if this is from one or more introductions, but all specimens collected thus far are all about the same size. They have been found in different locations in the lake which is of concern. One other thing is that these crayfish usually reproduce in the fall so any females should be carrying eggs. That said, we do not know how signal crayfish respond to reproduction based on our lake habitats and climate. It could be delayed, or it could have happened earlier, we are really not sure without further evidence. **B. Garcia** asks is the DNR believes if they were intentionally released? DNR does not know; often there is no “smoking gun.” Possible pathways could have been from a local crayfish boil or biological shipment for live study specimens in schools, which for the latter seems a bit less likely because this species is quite limited in commercial markets and where they are shipped from. Other crayfish are a lot more readily available.
- Nonnative *Phragmites*: The Minnesota DNR continues to work with cooperators to implement a coordinated response to nonnative *phragmites* (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*) in Minnesota. In 2023, DNR contractors visited 420 nonnative *phragmites* sites in 38 counties. At 95 of the sites, no treatment was done because no nonnative *phragmites* was found at the site, largely due to previous years’ effective treatment. Effective treatments like these been seen in the Duluth area led by several community groups in the area. Most of the treated sites were very small. Of the 292 sites where treatment occurred, 210 of them were less than one tenth of an acre.



- **H. Bushman** asks if those treated sites will be revisited next year. **D. Jensen** says that he expects that those sites will be revisited, perhaps for a few years. Often, sites like these are revisited for five years, but he does not know what the current plan is. That would be a good follow up question for **K. Pennington**.

**Pennington.**

- Invasive Carp: Structured decision-making process is nearing completion, and that will be used to update our Invasive Carp Action Plan.
- Reporting: Working on DNR Invasive Species Annual Report for 2023.
- Staffing: Christine Hokkala-Kuhns serving in a work-out-of-class for the Watercraft Inspector Coordinator position, previously held by Adam Doll.

**Major Robert Gorecki, DNR Enforcement**

- Big media push underway concerning new Clean Water Laws regarding anglers illegally leaving garbage and sewage after ice fishing, which has gained a lot of media attention. Officers are really going to be pushing this year. It's both an environmental and human health issue. New law gives enforcement a new tool. Trash or empty beverage cans cannot be discarded outside of fish houses and must immediately be disposed of properly in a container or trash bag. In the first year, DNR is emphasizing education to help gain voluntary compliance. Misdemeanor fines can be issued on the spot. Sewage is being left in plastic bags which are being intentionally left or forgotten, which later wash up on shore. New law was a citizen led effort resulting in legislative action. **D. Jensen** says he is an ice angler and has witnesses an uptick in recent years of trash being left on the ice. Does this new law pertain to dumping of leftover minnows on the ice? **R. Gorecki** says it does, including the body of a dead animal. Therefore, discarding unwanted fish species is also illegal. **B. Garcia** asks what can the advisory committee do to help law enforcement? **R. Gorecki** replies that DNR now has an app so that anglers and other recreators to report illegal activity. 1) Promote that. 2) Talk with county commissioners. 3) Talk with county law enforcement to help make sure that they are aware that they have the authority to take enforcement action. Encourage them to help.

**Committee Member Updates**

- **B. Garcia:** As mentioned during last meeting, he has been working with the Tri-Lakes District in WI, who is working with nanobubbles to reduce blue green algae. He conducted deep dive into the research and is now working them to develop a proposal for a deterrent zone for potential use at boat ramps where a very hyper-oxygenated environment would destroy or limit the spread invasive zooplankton and zebra mussel veligers. This application has been successfully used in ballast tanks to destroy these types of organisms. It could develop into a new avenue for research. The Tri-Lakes District has approved \$12M for a nanobubble system for the entire lake to reduce blue green algae and improve water quality. Preliminary mapping of environmental endpoints shows promise. He mentions via chat: Moleaer is doing a presentation on that at the Minnesota Watershed Conference this week in Alexandria.
  - **M. Sorensen** asks if there are any reports available? **B. Garcia** says there is a PowerPoint presentation available with water quality data from sensor buoys plus more. **M. Sorensen** will follow up with him.
- **C. Brandt:** No update.
- **K. Hagsten:** Mostly report writing and planning for next season.
- **M. Kofoed:** Still working with area lake associations, winterizing stations, just getting ready for winter.



- **P. Brown:** No adult zebra mussels found in Red Lake, owners are pulling docks, and anglers are ice fishing.
- **S. Binsfeld:** No updates.
- **M. Sorensen:** Reports there were two times he was in the field at a location that he had not discovered *Phragmites* before. One was native and the other probably invasive. Good reminder that *phragmites* really pops out at this time of year, good time of year to look.
- **W. Bement:** Busy applying for funding for youth education AIS, dedicated AIS person to focus on this, rather than the part-time effort in the past.
  - **M. Sorensen** asks if this will be an annual full-time position? **W. Bement** says that they are hoping it will be terrestrial/aquatics full-time position. Waiting for tribal council approval.
- **H. Bushman:** Beginning a county AIS plan update by end of this year. Changes include a more formal request for proposals only for lake associations with the idea that these would become dedicated funds. Lake associations will have more say in how they want to spend the funds, rather than watercraft inspections; trying to open it up to many different things. Other counties and SWCD's have done this, so we hope that we will be equally successful to maybe fill some voids. There still will be a watercraft inspection program, but hours will be reduced. If lake associations want more inspection hours, but if they want more management, they can do that. They will be hosting an ice fishing workshop in January on German Lake targeting those who place their houses their emphasizing use and proper disposal of live bait. They plan to have banners, bait bags, and activities for children. Typically, there are 1,000 ice houses on the lake during the season. Trash bins will also be available along with bait bins.
- **Nick Phelps** via chat: MAISRC is hosting a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration next Thursday. Registration has closed, but if you would like to attend, please contact him. For project-specific questions, just let him know.

## Working with Local Law Enforcement on AIS Issues

**Susanna Wilson Witkowski, Chisago County Water Resource Manager** (presentation shared via email during meeting)

- Susanna introduces Camden Droppo, AIS Specialist, who handles AIS outreach and education, detection programs, and training watercraft inspectors
- Chisago County is located just north of the Twin Cities and borders the St. Croix River to the east. There are two major lake areas, one in the north, the other in the south
- Before sharing what they do with law enforcement, she provided an overview of what they do with AIS
  - Comprehensive program to prevent the spread, conduct watercraft inspection and decontaminations, outreach, and education (including a YouTube video (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=oAyrGsPx3GA>)), working with law enforcement, and early detection and rapid response
  - Chicago County is part of the One Watershed – One Plan for the St. Croix River Watershed put together through the Lower St. Croix Partnership
- **Zebra Mussel Veliger and Spiny Waterflea Monitoring**
  - For early detection efforts, Chicago County works with Wild Rivers Conservancy and National Park Service to conduct monitoring on 12 lakes and rivers county-wide
  - Zebra Mussel Watch Program:
    - 72 volunteers installed monitoring plates on their docks in 19 lakes
    - Volunteers observed no zebra mussels

- **Water Access Monitoring Program**
  - Monitored for new AIS infestations at public water accesses
  - AIS Specialist and Watercraft Inspectors
  - Followed shoreline protocol
  - Monitored 16 lakes (only Comfort Lake has zebra mussels)
  - No new observations of AIS
- **Starry Trek (2022)**
  - Participated in Starry Trek in collaboration with Wild Rivers Conservancy and MAISRC
  - 10 volunteers searched 12 lakes for starry stonewort and other AIS
  - None found
- **Communication and Outreach**
  - AIS Outreach – really try to reach out to our residents and youth county-wide
  - 23 AIS events
  - 1,825 residents reached
  - 425 children educated
- Handouts at boat launches, community festivals and 7 bait shops
- Displays at 12 festivals
- Information at 3 parades
- Presentations to 8 community groups
- Aquatic Plant Scientist and Boat Invaders sessions at Children’s Water Festival and North Branch Sunrise Elementary School
- **AIS Prevention Workshop (May 17, 2022)**
  - Wild Rivers Conservancy, with partners in MN & WI – offered widely to groups and individuals
  - 15 participants learned about invasive phragmites, flowering rush, starry stonewort, and how they affect waterbodies
  - Best management practices
  - Permits required
  - Treatments options to reduce infestations
- **Aquatic Plant Point-Intercept Surveys**
  - Four lakes surveyed in 2022
  - Methodology (goal is every 6 yr rotation, starting over next year)
    - Frequency of occurrence with goal of observing any changes in plant communities
    - Track trends over time
    - Compare within lakes
    - Floristic Quality Index
- **Invasive Phragmites Planning and Surveys**
  - Planning team:
    - Started in February 2022 with MAISRC, Wild Rivers Conservancy, Chisago County, Chisago Lakes Association Improvement District
  - Meets monthly to identify, map and implement treatment strategies; Chisago County has 20% of infestations state-wide

- **Surveys**
  - Partnership with Wild Rivers Conservancy - covered the entire county; most are within City of Chisago
  - Roadside populations identified and mapped in three municipalities and one township
  - Zero new
  - 1 Invasive hybrid discovered in Wyoming
- **AIS Prevention**
  - Watercraft Inspections
    - 24 accesses in Chicago and Northern Washington Counties
    - Inspections: 2022 = 16,000; 2021 = 19,000 – program ongoing
    - Highest Inspections: Forest West, Chisago/S. Lindstrom, Rush West, Forest East, Northern/South Center
- **Decontamination Blitz (August 5-7, 2022)**
  - Partners include Chisago County, Wild Rivers Conservancy and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
  - Stationed at public water accesses along the St. Croix River
- **AIS Prevention (2022)**
  - 34 Total Watercraft Decontaminations
  - 14 Exiting Decontaminations completed by DNR Watercraft Inspectors
  - Try to do as many courtesy decons too
- **AIS Prevention with Law Enforcement**
  - Enforcement Inspections – 3 Keys!
    - Since 2015, county provides \$10,000 for Sheriff Department Water Patrol overtime shifts for inspections
    - 2015, provided DNR Training for Law Enforcement – they learned their roles; county law enforcement are available to support DNR law enforcement – can call for assistance
      - ❖ Learn about AIS and role in enforcing state laws
    - 2019, developed Safety and Policy Procedures – “Safety Steps” - provide assistance
- **AIS Prevention with Law Enforcement**
  - Enforcement Inspections 2023 Statistics:
    - 37 overtime shifts
    - 120.5 hours worked
    - 154 boats/trailers inspected
    - 23 warnings (4 AIS or drain plug specific)
    - 0 citations
- **2020 Chisago County Sheriff’s Office AIS Activity Report (highest boating season ever)**
  - Total shifts worked: 27
  - Total hours worked: 157.5
  - Boats/Trailer Checked: 419
  - Warnings Issued (non-specific): 26
  - Citations: 1 – Transporting aquatic vegetation

- **AIS Prevention with Law Enforcement 2022**
  - Lucky to have this partnership due to work by her predecessors in 2014-2015; water patrol are out on the lakes and rivers, this connect to the citizens of the county has been very helpful
    - Citations – Transporting aquatic vegetation: 0
    - Warnings: 11
- **Chisago County Water Resources Facebook Page (@ChisagoCountyWaterResources)**
  - Upcoming water related activities, recent projects and programs in the LID and in Chisago County
  - How to protect water quality in Chisago County
  - 51 Total Posts:
    - 25 AIS
    - 26 LID and Water Resources
- Annual Reports: <https://www.chisagocountymn.gov/364/Water-ResourcesAnnual-Reports>

## Discussion

- **M. Sorensen** asks, do you think that boaters act differently with Law Enforcement present compared to county inspectors? **S.W. Witkowski** says inspectors have said that boaters are different, more responsive when sheriff's department is present.
- **T. Fitzgerald** asks, besides the DNR conservation officers training, is there any follow up training to your officers each year? So that everyone knows, DNR Law Enforcement officers offer training to county law enforcement for enforcement of AIS laws, really focus on what the laws are, what you can and cannot do, and different ways they can give out citations and warnings – very enforcement focus with little about what AIS are. Do you talk with sheriff's office employees so that they get that type of information? **S.W. Witkowski** says no, we do not follow up on that specifically, but that is a good idea so that everyone keeps on the same page. **T. Fitzgerald** says that current training includes how to conduct enforcement and not much more about other AIS issues or updates – idea behind this is about how to support continuous education and keep them engaged.
- **H. Bushman** asks that the safety training guidance be shared with her and the committee. **T. Fitzgerald** comments that anyone who runs an inspection program would be interested in this. **D. Jensen** responds by adding that DNR helps to coordinate the annual Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz. **H. Bushman** met with organizers to discuss her safety guidance which is now being incorporated into regional guidance by the Great Lakes Commission. **T. Fitzgerald** forwarded all the resources **S.W. Witkowski** provided, including this presentation, to the Committee. **S.W. Witkowski** adds that the guidance also provides dos/don'ts – sets expectations for watercraft inspectors which they sign. **H. Bushman** says that she plans to pull this information together for her water inspectors to use.

## Holly Bushman, Le Sueur County AIS Coordinator

- **Overview**
  - Introduction to partnership
  - Watercraft inspection program
  - Printing, publishing and advertising
  - Lessons learned

- Questions
- **Introduction to partnership**
  - State of Minnesota began the AIS Prevention Aid in 2014
  - In 2015-Present Day have involved Sheriff's Department with AIS Program
    - New funds - weren't sure what else to do with it, turned out to be a good investment
- **Inspection Data (2017-2022)**
  - Hours have declined, a reflection of a change in the county's role
  - In 2020, contracted with a hiring firm which is part of the reason; sheriff's department has also added new roles which leaves less time for inspections, many of them are not full-time and are volunteer "posse" members, which are a huge help; many are previous department employees with one deputy that dedicated to this effort – not any more than two staff work on this
  - Total number of accesses inspected by Sheriff's Department increased, especially in 2021-22.
  - They rotate their efforts around to different regions of the county, typical inspections are Thursday-Sunday, may vary due to holidays; rarely do they spend an entire day at an access, they'll move onto other accesses
- **Printing, Publishing and Advertising**
  - Radio ads, billboards, annual youth fishing outing (w/Vikings players), Le Sueur County Fair display and handouts, and fishing contests (presentation at rules banquet)
- **Areas of Success**
  - Increased watercraft inspections
  - Ability to provide enforcement at accesses and on roadways; ticketing authority – observed changes in boater behavior and compliance
  - Have proper training and the ability to handle safety issues (e.g., weather, certain disgruntled boaters)
  - Assist with raising awareness of AIS issues in other settings – good spokes persons on AIS issues, have a lot of relationships and know a lot of stakeholders
  - Having a partner to share responsibilities – having another individual helps a lot
  - At minimum, have annual meetings about plans for next fiscal year
- **Lessons Learned**
  - Create a set budget and stick with it!
  - Budget with Sheriff's office fluctuates a little each depending upon how much they charge based on the number of hours worked and wages
  - Keep AIS budget in one place/account - gave them a budget, rather than having two to track
  - Tracking efforts for two different departments is difficult
  - Having different inspection programs requires a little more coordination
  - Make sure inspector IDs are unique enough from other inspection programs
  - At minimum, have annual meetings about plans for next fiscal year

## Discussion

- **D. Jensen** asks about the Le Sueur County Fair; assuming that it is a multiday event, do you invite local partners and/or the Sheriff's Department help staff? **H. Bushman** says Sheriff's Department has their own booth which they staff Wednesday-Sunday. Who is there at the fair and who is knowledgeable is something she will follow up on to make sure someone who is there is knowledgeable. **D. Jensen** says

that he coordinated an AIS booth at the Duluth Sports Show and Arrowhead Home and Builders Show for many years. When a conservation officer co-hosted, the badge really attracted a lot more visitors with questions. For those multiday events, he asked local partners including the 1854 Treaty Authority, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Visit Duluth, university graduate students, and non-profits to co-host. Worked out well because it was a networking and learning experience for them too.

- **B. Garcia** asks if there is any program to enhance volunteerism? Budgets are tight, maybe volunteers from lake associations, maybe an ambassador program where a certain group of volunteers so that they can train others, rather than volunteering as an ad hoc basis? **H. Bushman** says that is something that they are planning to shift to, they have become more active, which has caused the program to be more active – a really important component of the county, very passionate about AIS. **T. Fitzgerald** adds that the University of Minnesota Extension has their Detectors Program with educators who conduct AIS training. By volunteering, trained Detectors are expected to volunteer for at least 20 credit hours each year to keep their certification. Some counties sponsor folks to attend the training session (~\$175). The coordinator can also send out announcements for Detectors that they can consider volunteering to help out like booths at events. **D. Jensen** adds that many Detectors have helped staff booths at events in Duluth and Twin Cities area. Often response was so good that he only needed to staff shifts for set up and tear down. He also paid for their entry passes, turn them in at the end of the shift for other volunteers to use during the event. **S. Binsfeld** responds that she is a huge fan of the Detectors Program and it is the reason why she is part of this committee! They host online AIS Detectors Connection which features updates and guest speakers on a variety of topics. She thinks that the group is underutilized.
- **T. Fitzgerald** suggests that we invite Megan Weber to speak about the Detectors Program and how to best engage volunteers at a future meeting. **B. Garcia** says he had not heard of the program before and feels it needs to be better promoted. **S. Binsfeld** says that a lot of the training is on identification. She attended in 2018. Detectors are valuable because they can make a preliminary identification, take a picture and submit it to a DNR AIS Specialist for confirmation; provides more feet on the ground to help DNR manage AIS infestations (see <https://maisrc.umn.edu/ais-detectors>). **D. Jensen** asks if members would like a presentation from Megan Weber on AIS Detectors at the next January meeting? DNR Planners will work with the new chair and vice chair on that.
- **T. Fitzgerald** mentions that she and **D. Jensen** get a lot of questions about law enforcement re: how to get them more involved? **H. Bushman** says a key is to find someone in the department who is excited about addressing AIS. Once officers are involved, they really like and see it as just another part of their enforcement responsibilities – they are still serving their community, but in a different way. A lot of times it just comes down to budget. If a county can supplement their budget with hours or overtime hours that can really help get an effort off the ground. **S.W. Witkowski** says she had been with the county since 2015. They approached it by expressing the need for help. Having the funding available (\$8-10,000/yr) was critical to tie into added enforcement inspections. Finding staff is important to lead the effort within the department. **D. Jensen** adds that in working with DNR Enforcement, finding that leader has also been important. **T. Fitzgerald** recaps that two key things are finding that one person and funding to elevate the issue and build those one-on-one relationships to get county AIS programs foot in the door. **D. Jensen** agrees that \$10,000 seem to be a standard amount. **K. Hagsten** is not aware of any funding to train tribal conservation officers. **R. Gorecki** asks if there are any questions that he can

answer? He mentions that they work closely with tribal officers. DNR Enforcement would be pleased to provide any AIS, EWR wetlands or Clean Waters training. DNR also has summer internships (5-6/yr) so for those who are interested or are interested in training, please contact him. **T. Fitzgerald** also suggests contacting county coordinators in your area to see if they and funds/interest in increasing enforcement.

## Discussion Time for Committee

- Invite Megan Weber to January or February meeting to discuss Detectors Program (e.g., what it is, how they are trained, where they located, and future of the program).
- Confirmed Sascha Lodge and Chelsey Blanke to discuss MISAC, the state plan update, implementation, evaluation, next steps along with how to establish a better connection with MISAC.
- Reminder concerning the list of priority topics generated during the October meeting can be found in the approved minutes (end of document).
- Other topics:
  - Success stories from elsewhere in the country.
  - Invite Tim Campbell, WI Sea Grant, to present results of a national survey to evaluation campaigns which shows success in raising awareness and behavior change and consistency when compared to previous surveys.
  - **T. Fitzgerald** and **D. Jensen** can work with new leadership to prioritize topics for upcoming meetings.

## Celebrating Retiring Members

- DNR staff and committee members thanked retiring members **P. Brown**, **K. Hagsten**, **H. Bushman**, and **M. Kofoed** for their energy and dedication to the committee over the last four years.
- **M. Kofoed** remarks that she really appreciated being able to meet in-person pre-COVID and encourages committee meetings to return to that format. Discussions were really great in-person. It was great to work with everyone!
- **M. Sorensen** expresses his appreciation for **H. Bushman's** leadership as chair, welcoming new members, and effectively facilitating discussions during meetings.
- **H. Bushman** responds that she really likes this committee, members are so motivated and passionate about AIS and she doesn't get that very often; all share similar issues and want to do good things. The committee is also so willing to learn about new things, she has learned a lot, excited for the knowledge gained. It's been a blessing and a great experience. She appreciates the time she had on this committee.
- **P. Brown** thanks everyone for allowing him to be on this committee, it's been a great learning experience from a diverse membership, who are all working towards a common goal. He has learned during his career that when people work together, they can achieve great things.
- **K. Hagsten** says via chat that she has learned a great deal from this committee and she will not be too far away.

***Adjourned at 2:30 PM.***

***Next Meeting to be held ONLINE ONLY on January 25, 2024.***