
Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee

2017 Annual Report

“The strength of this committee lies solely with its membership. We bring together years of knowledge, experience and commitment dealing with aquatic invasive species, and we're all focused on the common goal of preventing any further infestations. Over the past five years, I've gained an immense amount of respect for my fellow committee members and am proud to have been able to participate.” Jay Green, Committee Chair

Summary of Committee Accomplishments in 2017

In 2017, the Committee worked on a multitude of aquatic invasive species (AIS) topics in collaboration with, and with support from, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). It was in the spirit of a multi-pronged approach that the Committee took on these local, state, and federal initiatives:

- **Hosted an “AIS Legislators Aquatic Invasive Species Summit” at the State Capitol** with a presentation on “Building Consensus in the West: Developing a model legal framework for state watercraft inspection and decontamination programs” to the Committee, legislators and staffers.
- **Supported increasing the watercraft registration surcharge** to resolve the DNR Invasive Species Program’s budget deficit.
- **Supported the AIS Prevention Aid program** by continuing to review and identify successes and address challenges encountered by counties since the start of the aid program in 2014.
- **Advocated for support of federal programs** including the National Sea Grant College Program, Environmental Protection Agency and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- **Provided review and feedback on DNR Invasive Species Programs:**
 - AIS Communications Plan
 - Fishing Tournament Permits
 - Minnesota’s Rapid Response Plan for AIS
 - Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination
 - Online training for Lake Service Provider business owners
- **Individual actions of members between Committee meetings.**

Looking forward to next year

The Committee will develop a list of priorities within each of the four main strategies for 2018. The most important initiative will be to support sustainable long-term funding for the DNR’s Invasive Species Program, the University of Minnesota’s AIS Research Center and continuation of the county AIS Prevention Aid. Sustainable long-term funding is needed to support an effective and efficient program.

The Committee



The 15 stakeholders appointed as members of the Committee have a range of personal and professional experiences with AIS issues, represent different parts of the state, are demographically diverse with various recreational interests, have diverse educational backgrounds, and represent a range of private, nonprofit and public sector organizations actively engaged in AIS issues.

Members are dedicated to finding solutions. Each meeting sparks spirited discussions. Through discussion conflicting views move to general consensus on complex and sometimes contentious issues. Based on their continuously evolving work plan, the Committee’s initiatives are categorized into four main strategies:

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

Members value the opportunity to share their thoughts with the DNR. This local, on-the-ground input from members representing a diversity of Minnesota communities is essential to running a successful statewide AIS program.

DNR Invasive Species Program Budget Background

The DNR Invasive Species Program is funded through state and federal funds. One of the primary funding sources is a \$5 aquatic invasive species surcharge on three-year watercraft registrations. The surcharge was first established at \$1 in 1990, \$2 in 1992, \$3 in 1993 and was last increased in 1994 to \$5. In recent years, there have been multiple attempts at the legislature to increase the fee, without success.

The Program seeks to continuously improve efficiencies while still accomplishing legislatively-required functions. While the surcharge has not increased in 23 years, costs have risen significantly over this time. The introduction of new AIS has further stretched the Program's capacity. Budget realities have required the program to reduce expenditures at a time of increased need for these centralized services.

After significant discussion and deliberation, the AIS grants program was reduced in 2016, and no grants will be available in 2018. The Committee and the DNR are exploring opportunities to find solutions to resolve the Program's budget deficit.

2017 Legislation and Public Policy

The primary legislative priority for the Committee was to secure sustainable funding streams for AIS work in the state. The Committee tracked legislative priorities and stayed informed on AIS-related policy changes.

Held an "AIS Legislators Aquatic Invasive Species Summit" at the State Capitol

On February 23, 2017, Stephanie Schowalter Otts, J.D. with the National Sea Grant Law Center gave a presentation on "Building Consensus in the West: Developing a model legal framework for state watercraft inspection and decontamination programs" to the Committee, legislators and staffers at the State Capitol.

"Building consensus" is a western states initiative to develop a model framework for state watercraft inspection and decontamination programs. They work with AIS Coordinators, Assistant Attorneys General and Law Enforcement to enhance intra-and interstate cooperation and communication. Goals are harmonized laws and policies, reciprocal agreements and coordinated messaging.

Continued to advocate for statewide AIS funding

- Increase watercraft registration surcharge from \$5 to \$12 to support the DNR Invasive Species Program.
- Preserve the county AIS Prevention Aid.
- Sustainable long-term funding for the University of Minnesota AIS Research Center.

Continued to advocate for a mandatory boat operator certification

The Committee has long advocated for adjusting the current Watercraft Operator's Permit so that the permit would be required for anyone born after January 1, 2000 and includes an updated and enhanced AIS training module as part of the current course. It appeared in the DNR Parks and Trails Division's legislative request early in the 2017 session, but did not pass.

Sent letters to State Representatives:

Letter supported DNR concerns regarding the proposed bills that would eliminate the ban on importation of minnows into Minnesota – support DNR recommendation to leave the ban in place. Sent to State Senators Bill Ingebrigtsen and Carrie Ruud on March 30, 2017.

Sent letters to support federal AIS programs:

- Recommendation to make an \$80 million programmatic request to the United States Senate Committee on Appropriations to fund the work of the National Sea Grant College Program, which includes Minnesota Sea Grant, in fiscal year 2018.
- Recommendation to support funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million.
- Recommendation to support Environmental Protection Agency funding at its current FY 2016 Budget.
- All three letters were sent to Senator Franken, Senator Klobuchar and Representative Nolan on March 28, 2017.

On the Ground Strategies

The Committee as a whole, as well as individual members, took actions to promote AIS prevention innovation in government and private sectors.

Provided recommendations on DNR AIS program activities

Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Program

- Recommended exploring “pinch-point” inspections in a county or multi-county region.
- Expressed a need for a standardized symbol and signage for decontamination stations.
- In favor of County Attorneys increasing prosecution of AIS violations and to explore a tagging system to ensure violators follow up with mandatory inspection and decontamination.
- Expressed a need to address private accesses.
- A comprehensive program review will occur in 2018 of inspector training, local government program coordination, and budget.

Minnesota’s Rapid Response Plan

- Reviewed state and local early detection and rapid response plans.
- Reviewed rapid response actions taken by DNR for eight starry stonewort infestations.
- Recommended sharing new information and lessons learned between lake managers and DNR staff.

New Online Training for Lake Service Provider Business Owners

- Individual members reviewed training structure and content.

Enforcement of AIS Laws

- Received regular updates on progress towards compliance.
- In favor of face-to-face interactions to boost compliance.
- Recommended exploring a tracking system to better enforce the 21-day dry requirement for docks, lifts, and water related equipment.

DNR’s AIS Communications Plan

- Reviewed the updated DNR AIS Communications Plan which incorporates community based social marketing concepts to promote and foster sustainable behavior changes to prevent the spread of AIS.
- Expressed a need for consistent messaging at all levels within the agency as well as statewide.

Zebra Mussel Delisting Process

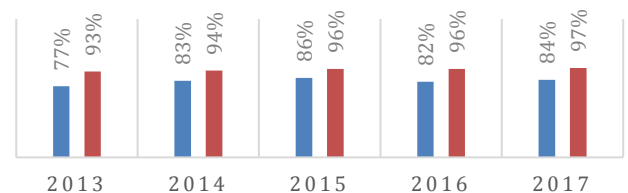
- Reviewed the draft DNR process for removing a waterbody from the infested waters list (delisting), specifically for zebra mussel infestations.

Fishing Tournament Permits

- Reviewed history and permit process, which includes AIS laws and best management practices. Tournaments smaller than 25 boats do not require a permit and could be the focus of additional outreach efforts.

Clean In, Clean Out

COMPLIANCE WITH AIS LAWS



■ Compliance at Check Stations (approximately 15 stations and 400 inspections per year)

■ Drain Plug Compliance (at all inspection locations)

Compliance with AIS laws continues to increase. The DNR and partners’ enforcement and education efforts have helped to push compliance above 95%, based on more than 450,000 watercraft inspections in 2017. Minnesota Sea Grant surveys continue to show that 97% of boaters and anglers are willing to take action.

Minnesota law requires boaters and anglers to:

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

AIS Innovation Examples



DNR K9 Shelby gives a demonstration at the Metro Children’s Water Festival. She is trained to detect zebra mussels on water-related equipment.



Eye-catching sign design prompts boaters to take AIS prevention actions.



Initiative Foundation pilot project “Deploying Watercraft Cleaning Stations to Empower Clean Drain Dry Actions.” Led by Wildlife Forever and CD3 General Benefit Corp., five waterless “Clean, Drain, Dispose, Dry” (CD3) stations provide tools for boaters to use at water accesses to help prevent the spread of AIS.

On the Ground Strategies Continued

Worked with the private sector - watercraft manufacturing to reduce the risk of AIS transport.

Since 2015, key Committee members, including a major boat manufacturer and marina operator, have been instrumental in working with the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and major watercraft manufacturers to promote design changes to watercraft and trailers that can reduce the risk of transporting residual water and AIS. The technical document “Boat Design and Construction in Consideration of Aquatic Invasive Species” for ABYC is up for consensus ballot. If all members approve, it will be published in 2018.

Became familiar with the Wright County Regional Inspection Program

Authority for regional watercraft inspection is written in Minnesota Statute 84D.105, Subd. 2(f). Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District was the first local government to implement this authority. After county-facilitated public input and DNR review, the DNR Commissioner approved the plan. The County has taken on all liability and in October 2017 piloted a centralized station for three lakes. Committee members shared concerns they have heard. The DNR will continue to work with the county to understand the successes and challenges associated with regional inspection.

Remained engaged in the AIS prevention aid program

The MN DNR AIS Prevention Planners updated the committee on local AIS prevention efforts, including reporting on regional AIS meetings and workshops held for county AIS Prevention Aid program staff. The committee reviewed and provided feedback on an annual program template to help standardize county AIS prevention aid reports and financial expenditures for voluntary use by LGUs. The Committee will continue to track accomplishments, provide guidance as challenges arise and advocate for regional collaboration and coordination.

Research

The Committee views research on AIS prevention and management as a critical component of preventing the introduction of new invasive species and preventing the spread of existing AIS within Minnesota. We advocate for a holistic approach to research that integrates biological, environmental, economic, and social sciences.

- Maintained a close connection with the University of Minnesota's AIS Research Center (MAISRC) by receiving updates and discussing topics of concern with the ex-officio representative at each meeting.
- Supported sustainable long-term funding for MAISRC.
- Advocated for more research to inform starry stonewort management and prevention decisions and actions. Multiple starry stonewort research projects are now underway.
- Advocated for research on the economic impacts of AIS. Evaluation of the economic impact of AIS introductions and establishment are research priorities specified in MAISRC's fall 2017 request for research proposals.
- Many members attended MAISRC's Showcase to gain insight on current projects and new findings which will improve AIS management.

Communication and Outreach

The Committee's overarching goal for communicating AIS prevention is to promote a clear, consistent, positive message to all water resource users in the state and across the region.

- **Members share Committee activities and information gained through Committee meetings to the organizations and constituents with which they are involved.**
- **Engaged in Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM):** Four members attended a workshop organized by the DNR and continued to bring up things they learned at subsequent Committee meetings. They advocate that the DNR implement AIS prevention strategies using CBSM.
- **Worked to understand fishing tournaments and participants:** Tournament anglers are perceived as long-distance lake hoppers, but a closer look shows that most tournaments are unconnected with one another and are attracting local anglers. Risks for spread by smaller tournament anglers are no different than the average weekend angler.
- **Provided input to organizations (outside the DNR) working on AIS issues, as requested, such as:** MAISRC, Minnesota Sea Grant, Initiative Foundation, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, Association of Minnesota Counties, etc.
- Provided input on streamlining and **improving communications with new infestations** at local, regional and state levels with impacted organizations and agencies.
- **Promoted the work of the Committee:** shared agendas, meeting notes, letters, etc. on the Committee's DNR webpage.

Community-Based Social Marketing



Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) is a way of communicating that encourages behavior change. It can be used to promote adoption of desirable AIS prevention behaviors and create positive social norms around AIS prevention actions. In a nutshell, CBSM involves:

- Step 1:** Selecting behaviors
- Step 2:** Identifying barriers and benefits
- Step 3:** Developing strategies
- Step 4:** Piloting
- Step 5:** Implementation and evaluation

The DNR Invasive Species Program organized a two-day CBSM workshop in October, 2017. Fifty AIS representatives from 34 counties, 23 DNR staff and four Committee members attended.

2017 Committee Members

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

Members Barten, Forester, Green, Grob, Jabbour, Olsen, Stratton and Thiede terms of service come to an end at the end of 2017. New members will be appointed to fill their seats in 2018. The DNR is beyond grateful for their years of service on the Committee. A sincere **THANK YOU** to each member for the dedication, time, ingenuity and enthusiasm you contributed to this Committee. Your enthusiastic contributions reflects the passion of Minnesotans and the importance of protecting the state’s legacy of water.

2016 Ex-Officio Members

Name	Location	Title
Carol Altepeter (Jan. only)	Brainerd	Northwest and Central Region Manager, Explore Minnesota
Nicole Laulam (Aug. to present)	Brainerd	Northwest and Central Region Manager, Explore Minnesota
Norman Deschampe	Grand Portage	Chair, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Vacant		U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Douglas Jensen	Duluth	AIS Program Coordinator, University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program
Becca Nash (Jan. to Aug.)	St. Paul	Associate Director, Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center
Nick Phelps (Oct. to present)	St. Paul	Director, Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center