2025 Hubbard County
Aquatic Invasive Species & Watercraft Inspection Program

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Environmental Services

Overview

- AIS Updates, State & Local

- Watercraft Inspection Program Outlook

- AIS Public Outreach Objectives

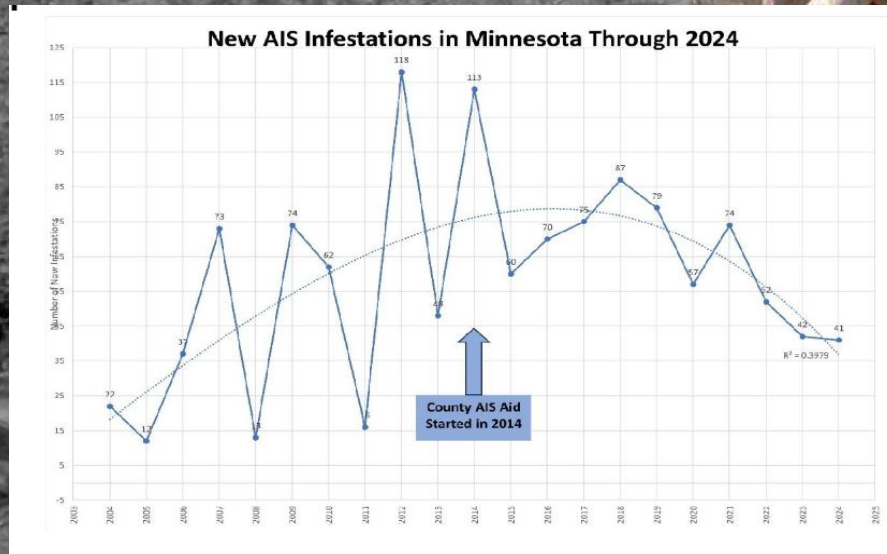- Decontamination Station

State AIS Updates – State budget

- Governor's Budget Recommendations: *(From revised budget forecast March 21, 2025)*
  - FY 2026-27 (7/1/25 – 6/30/27)
    - **5 million reduction (starting FY2027)**
  - FY 2028-29 (7/1/27 – 6/30/29)
    - **5 million reduction each year**
- **Funding may be significantly reduced starting 7/1/2026…. Stay tuned.**

State AIS Updates – State budget
- What would the impact be? -

- From the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC):
  - Research has shown a marked decline in the rate of AIS spread since Prevention Aid started in 2014.
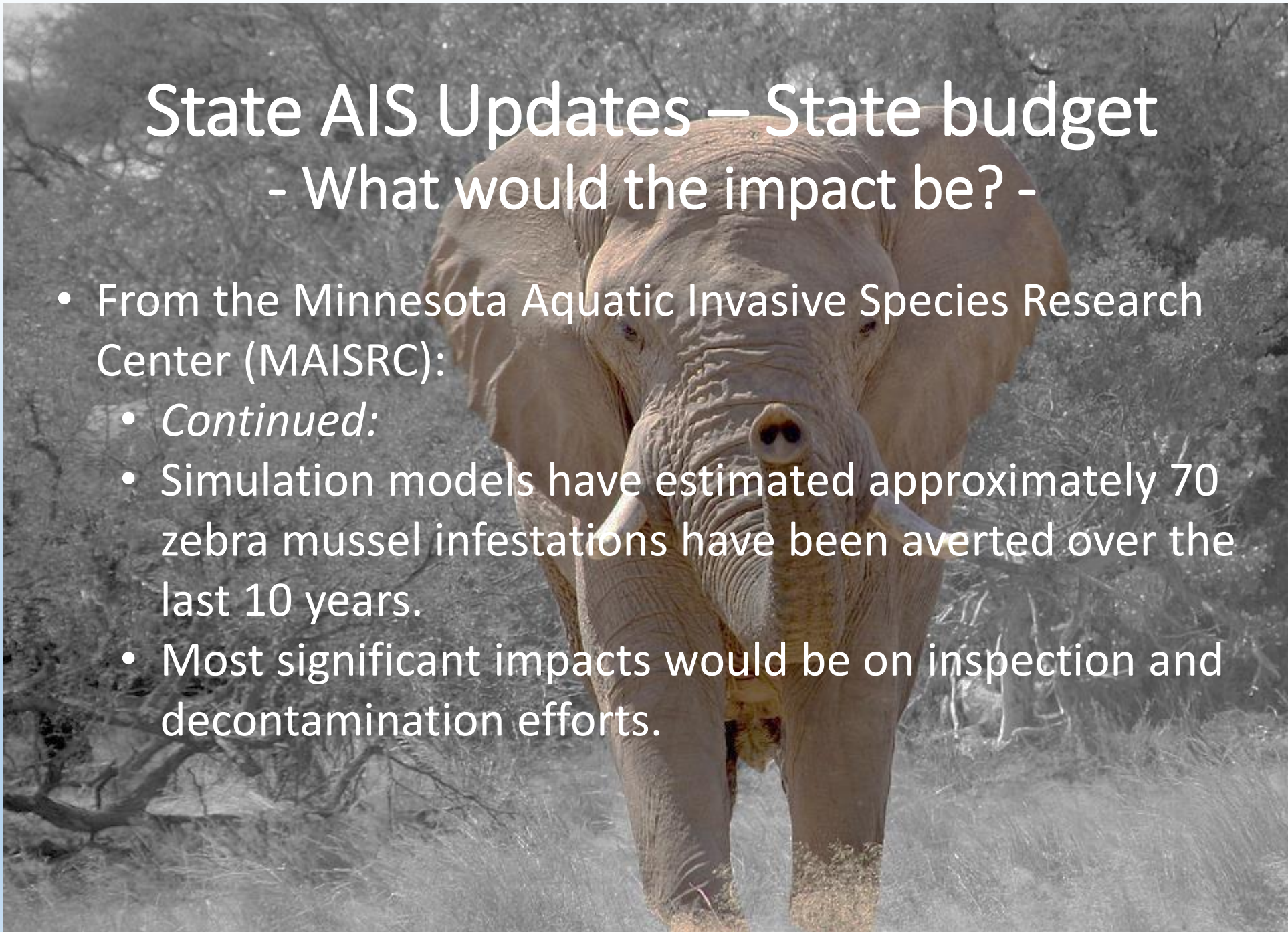

New AIS Infestations in Minnesota Through 2024

County AIS Aid Started in 2014

- The X axis is year
- The Y axis is the number of new reported infestations

Graph courtesy of MN Lakes and Rivers

State AIS Updates – State budget
- What would the impact be? -

- From the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC):
  - *Continued:*
  - Simulation models have estimated approximately 70 zebra mussel infestations have been averted over the last 10 years.
  - Most significant impacts would be on inspection and decontamination efforts.

State AIS Updates – State budget
- What would the impact be? -

Local impact with 50% State Aid:

- If maintaining current staffing levels, supplemental funding and inspection strategies:
  - We would still have enough hours to cover weekends, holidays and select weekdays.
  - Estimated 13,000 watercraft inspections/year at a rate of 1.60 inspections per hour.
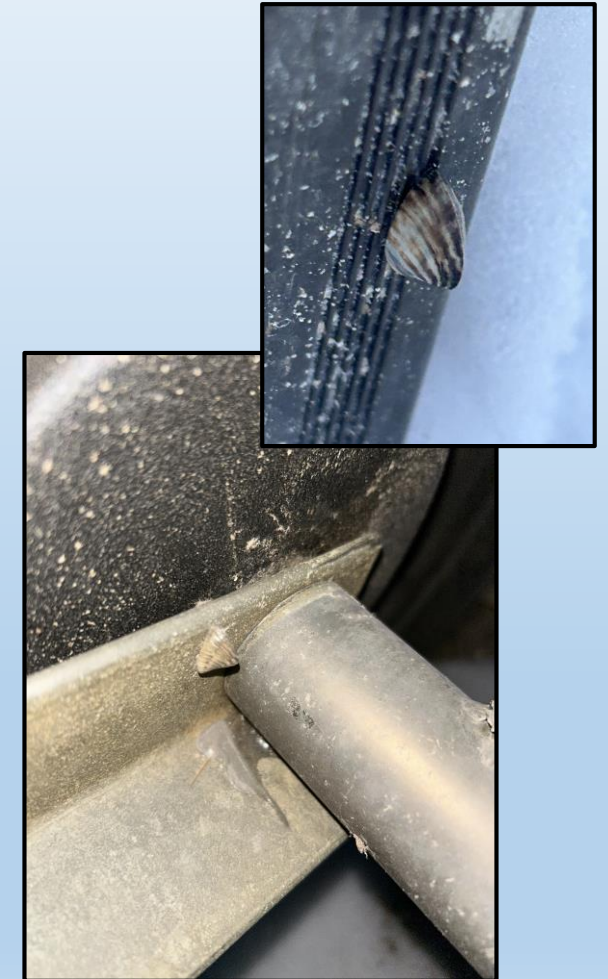   - *Down from ~ 20,000+ per year at 1.40 insp/yr.*

State AIS Updates – State budget - Response -

- Hubbard County Board of Commissioners voted to join as signatories in a letter sent to the Governor's office submitted by Wildlife Forever, requesting full funding for AIS Prevent Aid.
- AIS Operating Team members have continued to reach out to local representatives, receiving correspondence.
- 2025 Emphasis – *BE YOUR OWN INSPECTOR*
  - *TOOL USE AT THE ACCESS*
  - *WHAT TO LOOK FOR*
  - *WHERE TO LOOK*
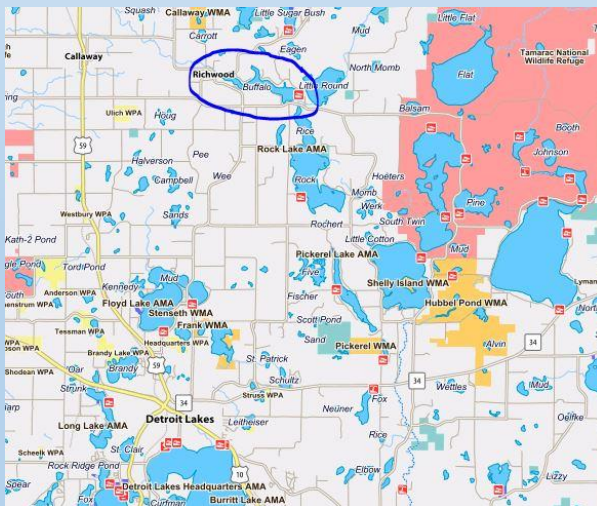
State AIS Updates – Close to home

- October 2024: ***Potato Lake – zebra mussels***
  - Adult mussels found in three locations across the lake.

- February 2025: ***Fish Hook Lake – zebra mussels***
  - Adult mussels found at multiple locations along north shore.

- As a precautionary measure…
  - Island, Eagle, Mud, and Upper Twin Lakes.
  - Hay Creek, Potato, and Fish Hook Rivers.
  - ***All have been designated as infested with zebra mussels.***
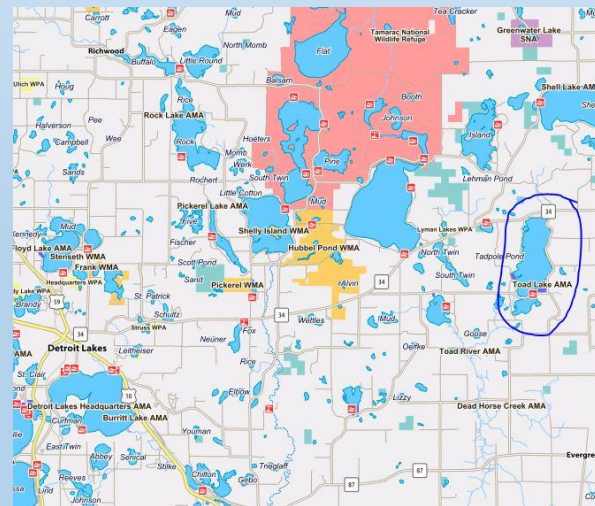   - ***No zebra mussels have been discovered at this time.***

Images courtesy of MNDNR
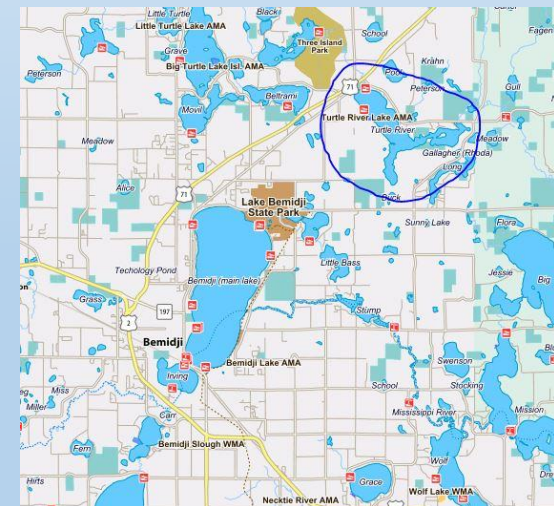
State AIS Updates – In the neighborhood

- ***New infestations, 2024***
  - **Buffalo Lake, Becker County – zebra mussels**
  - **Toad Lake, Becker County – zebra mussels**
  - **Turtle River Lake, Beltrami County – zebra mussels**

Buffalo Lake, Becker County

Toad Lake, Becker County

Turtle River Lake, Beltrami County

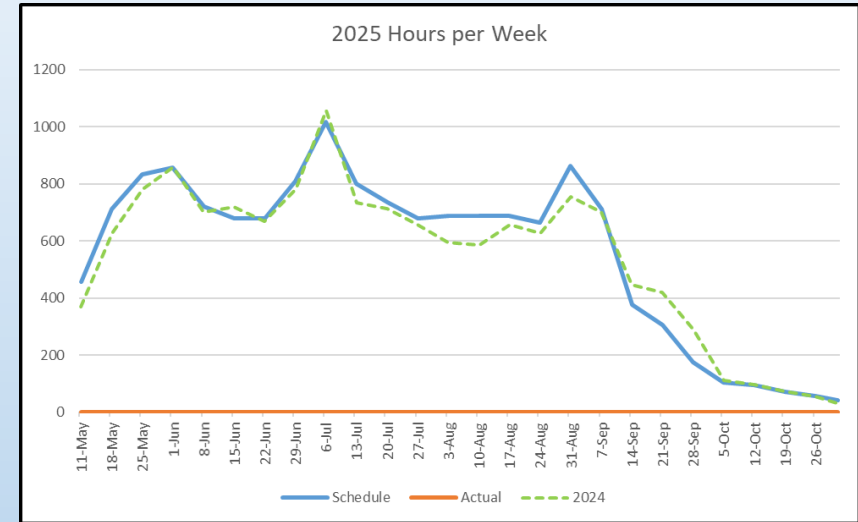# Watercraft Inspection Program Outlook

- **Funding:**
  - Lake Associations & Organizations
    - 22 donors
    - $158,443
  - Townships & Cities
    - 12 donors
    - $33,100
  - Total:
    - 34 donor organizations
    - $191,543

Watercraft Inspection Program Outlook

2025 Hours per Week

- **Inspection Schedule Basics**

  - **14,504** total inspection hours

    - 7,090 state-funded hours

    - 7,414 supplemental-funded hours

  - Inspection season runs from May 10th through October 31st *(175 day season)*

  - 36 accesses covered / 34 lakes & rivers

  - Inspection hours focused heavily on weekends and holidays

Watercraft Inspection Program Outlook

- **Staffing**:

  - Have 41 inspectors on staff thus far

  - 31 returning inspectors, 10 new inspectors

  - Conducting Level 1 & 2 DNR trainings on May 3rd

  - In-field trainings on Friday, May 9th

Know somebody who would be interested in becoming a watercraft inspector? Contact:

Always There Staffing, Inc.

Office: 218-444-6533

2024 Outreach Objectives

- Aqua Weed Stick program
- Starry Trek
- Resorts
- Radio & Newspaper
- Billboard
- Updated hand-outs

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

Clean ALL recreational equipment. It's the law.
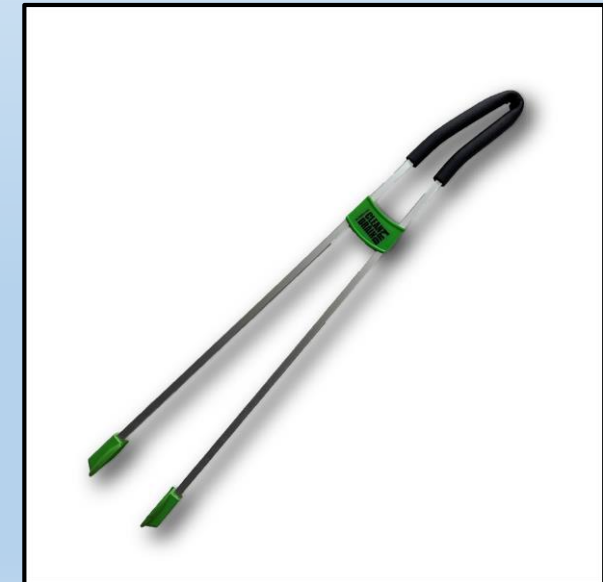
2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Aqua Weed Sticks –** *HCCOLA partnership*

  - Originally initiated by HC COLA in 2022

  - Will be placing weed-removal tools at nearly every access in the county again in 2025

    - Boaters can take a proactive role in AIS prevention

    - Create good habits!

  - 22 sticks went missing in 2023

  - 15 sticks went missing in 2024 – improvement!

  - Weed sticks will start being placed beginning of May

- Also being placed….

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **More Tools! –** *HCCOLA initiative*

  - Expanding the AWS concept

  - Boat plug wrenches

  - Weed grabbers

  - Brushes

- These items would be placed at select public accesses as a test-pilot project

Images courtesy of Wildlife Forever

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Starry Trek 2025 – *MAISRC partnership***

  - 2024 Recap:

    - 20 public accesses sampled

    - Chinese MS found in 6th CW, Eagle & Emma Lakes

    - Statewide, 297 accesses sampled – no new starry stonewort discoveries – good news!

  - 2025: Saturday, August 9th – circle your calendars!

    - Specific lakes TBD

    - Will be coordinating with HCCOLA and their *"Rake Toss Tuesdays"* initiative.

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Resorts –** *HCCOLA partnership*

  - Actively promote the AIS program to local resorts

    - Create and re-establish contacts

    - Promote resources and services available

  - 2025 focus on Eurasian watermilfoil

Four leaves per whorl with 12 – 20 leaflet pairs per leaf

Image courtesy of MN AIS Research Center & MNDNR

2025 AIS Emphasis:

Eurasian Watermilfoil

Keys to ID:

- Feathery looking, with four leavers per whorl
- Leaves have central axis, with 12-20 leaflet pairs
- Can grow up to 10 feet long
- Produces pink and white flowers on spike above surface
- Leaves become limp when removed from water (native milfoils remain rigid)

Eurasian watermilfoil is a submerged, rooted, aquatic perennial plant. These plants generally prefer slow-moving water, growing in depths of 3 to 10 feet but have been known to occur in depths up to 32 feet.

This plant spreads primarily through fragmentation, but may also spread by seed. Once established, Eurasian watermilfoil forms dense stands, impeding boating, fishing and swimming.

This plant is often mistaken for native species such as northern watermilfoil and coontail. Eurasian watermilfoil is known to hybridize with northern milfoil, creating more vigorous and aggressive forms.

If found early, Eurasian watermilfoil can be controlled and managed with herbicide treatments. Management can be difficult and expensive however. Prevention remains the most important and effective management option. Keep boats, trailers, water equipment and water toys cleaned, well-drained, and dry!

Let's work together to stop the spread of AIS!

Four leaves per whorl with 12 – 20 leaflet pairs per leaf

Images courtesy of Bugwood.org & MN AIS Research Center

Currently, <u>2</u> of Hubbard County's 185 lakes are listed as infested with Eurasian watermilfoil:

- Bad Axe *(2017)*
- Big Mantrap *(2020)*

<u>Only 1% of Hubbard County lakes have Eurasian watermilfoil.</u>

Other lakes in the neighborhood infested with Eurasian watermilfoil *(county, year)*:

- Leech *(Cass, 2005)*
- Town Line *(Cass, 2009)*
- Washburn *(Cass, 2009)*
- Girl *(Cass, 2017)*
- Lawrence *(Cass, 2023)*

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!
Clean ALL recreational equipment. It's the law.

CLEAN.DRAIN.DRY.
All Your Toys!
STOP INVASIVE SPECIES
Clean Drain Dry.org

Thanks for working hard to keep Hubbard County waters clean and healthy!

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Radio and Newspaper**

  - Radio ads promoting the decontamination unit & AIS prevention

    - Beginning the week leading up to fishing opener

  - Newspaper article series *"Say Hello To Your Boat"*

    - What to be looking for – and where – on your boat

    - Breakdown of the most common boat types

    - "How to be your own watercraft inspector"

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Billboard –** *HCCOLA partnership*

US HWY 71 (by Ken's Auto) May through September, 2025

2025 Outreach Objectives

- **Updated handouts –** *HCCOLA partnership*

  - *Provide updated decontamination options*

  - *Provide updated infested waters map*

  - *Provide AIS specie information*

  - *Provide information on what YOU should do*

  - **All at your fingertips!** (with a smartphone)

Decontamination Station

- Hubbard County FREE Decontamination Station – Open for fishing opener

  - Located between K-Bid and Transfer Station – follow signage

  - By appointment 7 days a week:

    - **218-616-1631**

    - **10:00 AM – 6:00 PM**

    - ***Opening May 10th***

FREE Watercraft Decontamination

May-September (exact start/end dates vary)
Available 7 days a week by appointment
Open 10:00 am — 6:00 pm
On-Call phone: **218-616-1631**

HUBBARD COUNTY
EST. 1883   MINNESOTA

Location:
812 Henrietta Ave. S, Park Rapids
(Between K-Bid and the Hubbard County Transfer Station)

Aquatic Invasive Species Program

Clean. Drain. Dispose.

Questions?

Contact information:

Aaron Anderson – Env. Specialist

301 Court Ave

Park Rapids, MN 56470

218-732-3890

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