

DNR Invasive Species Prevention Update

March 29, 2012

Implementation of the Watercraft Inspection Program in 2012

The watercraft inspection program continues to undergo significant growth and will face several changes in the 2012 season. The program has been regionalized, which means the addition of four regional watercraft inspection supervisors. We are interviewing and hiring approximately 100 Level 1 watercraft inspectors who will be trained to inspect watercraft and 46 Level 2 watercraft inspectors who will be trained to inspect and decontaminate watercraft. Multiple inspector training sessions are scheduled starting in mid-April and running through early-May. Inspectors will be deployed as soon as they are trained and authorized.

Inspection efforts will be carried out primarily at high-use zebra mussel infested waters, destination lakes where boaters travel to following boating at zebra mussel waters and DNR Enforcement checkpoints on roads near water bodies. Criteria for allocating level one and two inspection hours and a list of allocated hours for specific accesses is available at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/jobs/watercraft/index.html>. The list shows the allocation of level one (watercraft inspections without a decontamination unit available) and level two (watercraft inspections with a decontamination unit available) inspection hours at specific accesses around the state. Level two watercraft inspections include both a Level one and Level two watercraft inspector to accomplish this work.

The 20 new decontamination units have been ordered and will arrive in April which will bring our total number of units to 23. The units will be stored at DNR and LGU owned offices around the state but will be operated at the accesses as described allocation plan. Our goal is to run the units 70-80 hours per week from April 20th, (the first day after our first Level 2 training session) through October 31st.

Inspection Manual for Authorized Inspector – We have revised the inspection manual for authorized inspectors. The manual is available at:

We are completing the first review draft of the decontamination manual.

An new AIS volunteer manual, similar to the inspections manual, is under development. Once completed, it will be made widely available.

Lake Service Provider Permit

In 2011, the Legislature passed a law requiring Lake Service Providers to attend Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) training and obtain a permit prior to working in waters of the state. Additionally, the employees of Lake Service Providers are required to obtain a certificate stating that they have had AIS Training. In 2012, DNR has begun the process of issuing these permits and certificates. The [Lake Service Provider Training and Permit](#) webpage provides information on the process and requirements.

Lake Service Providers are individuals who install or remove water-related equipment or structures from waters of the state for hire. "Service Provider" does not include a person working under the supervision of an individual with a valid service provider permit. Water-related equipment includes a motor vehicle, boat, watercraft, dock, boat lift, raft, vessel, trailer, tool, or other equipment or container that is capable of containing or transporting AIS, aquatic plants, or water.

Invasive species are a threat. DNR is working hard on the issue. Citizens have an important role to play.

Owners of Lake Service Provider business are required to attend an in-person AIS training course, pass a test, apply online for a permit, and pay a \$50 permit fee. When these tasks are completed the business is issued a permit. The in-person training courses are currently being held throughout the state (see [list of training locations](#)). Twenty-three trainings have already been held and eight more are scheduled for the end of March and April. More than 550 people have attended the in-person trainings.

More than 400 Lake Service Providers have completed the permit process and have been issued permits as of March 29. See the [List of Permitted Lake Service Providers](#) to see the companies that have been permitted at this time. This list will be updated frequently as applications, course attendance, test scores, and payments are processed. Please note that Lake Service Provider training courses and permit applications are on-going. DNR is following up with people who have attended courses, but have not yet applied for their permits. Others have attended out of curiosity and to be informed, but are not getting permits.

Employees of Lake Service Providers are required to take a one hour online AIS training course and receive a certificate. This employee [online training](#) is now available. There is no charge for the online training. As of March 29, there have been 744 employees who have completed the training and received their certificates.

For more information on the Lake Service Provider trainings, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/lsp/index.html.

AIS Rules Decal

The AIS Rules Decal has been printed and is currently being distributed to DNR offices and Deputy Registrar offices statewide. Decals have been available at boat shows and sport shows. Next step will be to deliver decals to key businesses around the state, such as Cablela's.

Enforcement

The Division of Enforcement continues to target their efforts towards enforcement and education which have been proven as critical roles in reducing the spread of aquatic invasive species. We will continue to monitor and evaluate our actions to provide the most effective measures available. We will work with the public and private entities on legislative issues to provide enforcement with the tools necessary to assist in controlling the spread of AIS. We emphasize this as priority work and it is now included in Enforcements core responsibilities.

Water Resource Enforcement Officers (WREOs) are developing plans for education and enforcement of invasive species laws that are customized to the geographic areas they patrol. These plans focus on both species and activities that are unique to these areas. Other tasks include developing protocols and obtaining the equipment to safely and effectively administer AIS checkpoints and to plan training for law enforcement agencies. WREO's and other officers have been staffing the Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker booths at major boat and sport shows this winter and spring.

Local training- Local, County, Tribal and State law enforcement agencies have been offered AIS enforcement training and classes will continue to be offered statewide. Numbers of officers trained so far is over 100. All enforcement educational efforts are directed toward the goal of compliance to prevent the future spread of AIS.

Enforcement's goal for this open water season is to set the expectations early for those who are utilizing our water resources. Water recreation users can anticipate that they will be checked by Conservation Officers and will be held responsible for following all laws relating to AIS.

Prevention Grant Programs

Watercraft Inspections Administered by Local Government Units: These grants are intended to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels into Minnesota waters. These offers are an opportunity for local government units (LGUs) to hire watercraft inspectors to work at water accesses in their area. The DNR also provides training to watercraft inspectors hired by the LGU.

Funds offered: \$125,000; Grant applications: 14; Grants awarded: 14

Watercraft Inspections by DNR Staff: These grants are intended to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels, into Minnesota waters. This grant program is designed to assist local organizations that would like additional watercraft inspections (beyond what is done by the DNR Watercraft Inspection Program) at particular water accesses. This is an offer to split the cost of additional watercraft inspections with cooperators.

Funds offered: \$77,000 (10,000 inspection hours)
Grant applications: 62 (35,000 inspection hours requested)
Grants awarded: 27

Public Awareness Projects: These Grants are intended to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels, into Minnesota waters. These offers are an opportunity for local entities, such as lake associations, COLAs, watershed districts, and counties to receive state funding and/or partner with the DNR on public awareness initiatives.

Funds offered: \$75,000; Grant applications: 27;

Public Awareness

- Web – the DNR's invasive species web page has been continually modified to make it easier to access information related to aquatic invasive species. Key categories of information include DNR contacts, news and announcements, Identification and Management, Make a Difference (How you can help), programs and other information. Specific new pages include info for lake service providers, watercraft inspection and invasive species management. We have also a new link on the DNR homepage under "find it fast." More edits and additions are ongoing and planned for this winter.
Go to: www.mndnr.gov/invasives
- The 2012 Fishing Regulations have been revised with new information including a new listing of infested waters by lake-name. There are 11 pages in the fishing regulations for invasive species information including a back page color ad showing zebra mussels in a lake. Now available.
- Conservation Volunteer Article in March/April issue. Copies available.

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- **Mass Media** – Statewide placement of AIS billboards will occur again in 2012 in conjunction with Wildlife Forever, MN Sea Grant, USFWS and local partners. We will resume our targeted ad campaigns in newspapers, radio spots and limited TV during high use times such as Memorial weekend and Fourth of July. Both purchased and free PSA's are utilized. The 11 new PSA's developed by XXX as part of the DNR grant will be used and promoted.
- **AIS Documentary** – The 2011 Legislation required DNR to issue a grant for the production of a documentary on AIS for boaters. Through a competitive grant process, the DNR awarded a \$50,000 grant to Lindner Media Productions to develop a documentary on aquatic invasive species. The grant requires three products to be developed including a 20 minute documentary, a shortened 11 minute version and a one minute trailer for the documentary. The documentary will cover the problems associated with invasive species and what boaters and anglers can do to help prevent their spread. Zebra mussels, quagga mussels, Asian carp and Eurasian watermilfoil will be the focal species. The final products are due on May 1st, 2012. One thousand DVDs will be available for distribution and the products will be posted on the DNR website.

Training for Bait Harvest employees

New online training has been developed for employees of bait harvesters who are permitted to work in infested waters. It is scheduled to go online in early April.

Legislative initiative for 2012

The DNR put forth a policy bill that continues to improve upon the legislation passed in 2011. Key elements of the proposal include:

- Requirement for dock, boat-lift and swim rafts to be out of the water for minimum of 21 days before moving to a new water body;
- Additional authorities for Conservation Officers to require removal of water-related equipment from a water body to implement invasive species control measures;
- Increased civil penalties;
- Ability to delegate authority for inspection to LGU's;
- authorities to require inspections at offsite location for DNR and LGUs;
- Exemption from requirements to drain portable bait containers when fishing through the ice; and
- AIS training and testing for persons that use trailers and transport water related equipment.

There are multiple bills in the house and senate which include policy and funding initiatives. This includes a proposal by the Governor to increase the surcharge on boat licenses for AIS. Bills are going through the legislative process and no bill has been passed to date.

Evaluation of Statewide Prevention Strategies

The DNR hired the consulting firm, Thompson Engineering, to evaluate costs, infrastructure requirements, feasibility and pros/cons for implementing statewide prevention for aquatic invasive species (AIS). The evaluation is focused on strategies that would require inspections in various forms including: mandatory inspections before launch, mandatory inspections for boaters leaving infested waters, and red lake/green lake. The information will be included in a report to the legislature and to help inform policy discussion during the 2012 legislative session. Both the legislative report and the consultant report is available at: http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquatic_programs.html.

Additional Staff for 2012

In order to better deliver program functions and meet some of the increased demands for prevention and management activities, the DNR is hiring additional staff. Four Invasive Species Specialist positions (two vacancies and two new) needed to be filled. The two new positions were recently filled by Nick Brown (Hutchinson) and Chris Jurek (Sauk Rapids). Christine Herwig recently filled the vacant specialist position in Park Rapids. The remaining vacancy to fill is in the Metro which should be completed shortly. The Invasive species specialists are the primary contact for the public for AIS issues in their respective work areas. This includes both prevention related activities and management of invasive aquatic plants.

The DNR also fill three of the four new regional inspection program supervisor positions. The new supervisors are Adam Doll (St. Paul), Keri Hull (Brainerd), and Evan Freeman (Sauk Rapids). Adam and Keri were promoted within the program and Evan came to us from Utah where worked for Utah's watercraft inspection program in a similar position. The fourth position in Park Rapids is currently posted. The new supervisors will be responsible for hiring and deploying the authorized inspectors (Level 1 and 2) within each region. With the ramp up of inspectors (approx. 100 level 1 and 46 level 2 inspectors) the supervisors are needed to manage the increased workload statewide.

For a complete listing of all Invasive Species Staff go to:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/contacts.html>

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