

March 24, 2025

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Committee Members,

The DNR established the Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Advisory Committee (SAISAC) in 2013 to provide public input and guidance for statewide AIS prevention and management. SAISAC requests the Committee reconsider proposed cuts to the Local AIS Prevention Aid.

- County-led programs (watercraft inspections, cleaning stations, enforcement and outreach) account for 90% of Minnesota's commitment to slowing the spread of AIS. Without support from the state, these programs are at risk. The impact will fall heaviest on rural counties, they are most at risk, more dependent on tourism, with fewer funding resources. Cutting aid by half will dramatically impact state-wide AIS prevention efforts.
- Each new infestation is essentially irreversible and becomes a vector for new infested waters. Studies show each dollar spent on prevention is equivalent to \$100 of AIS management. Infested waters cost Minnesota taxpayers over \$2.6 million in management in 2024, each new infestation will only increase this burden. Minnesota has well over 13,000 water bodies with over 1,100 listed as infested and nearly 800 more lakes at immediate risk of Zebra Mussels infestation. New infestations have decreased markedly over the last 10 years. The success of this effort is evidence that our efforts are working, not a justification for budget cuts. AIS Prevention Aid saves taxpayer dollars.
- AIS impacts water quality, public health, and lakeshore property values. Tourism and outdoor recreation (fishing, boating, etc.) brought Minnesota \$13.5 billion in revenue (2023) based in part on our beautiful lakes and rivers. AIS spread negatively impacts our natural resources, with serious consequences for this industry. Property owners, local tax bases, and the public at large are directly affected. Accounting for increased expense of mitigation/management, decreased property values/tax base, tourism impacts, water quality and public health impacts, these budget cuts are a false economy.

- AIS Management and Prevention research at the The University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center has made major breakthroughs in new techniques mitigating AIS. AIS prevention now buys time for these new tools for managing AIS.

Minnesota has long had a broad, bi-partisan, state-wide commitment to maintain our natural resources for future generations. Part of this commitment includes preventing the spread of AIS. Rather than taking a step back, now is the time to lean into this crucial effort. We urge full funding of AIS Prevention Aid.

On behalf of SAISAC



Spencer McGrew, Chair

#### Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee Members

Shelly Binsfeld	M. Mahood Tajbakhsh
Nick Bluhm	Amada Weberg (Co-chair)
Beto Garcia	Stephanie Hadler
Christine Maxwell	Andrew Dickhart
Carrie Ohly-Cusack	Jaded Langer
Patrick Selter	Raining White

#### Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee Exofficio Members

Madeline Hayden	Amy McGovern
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