

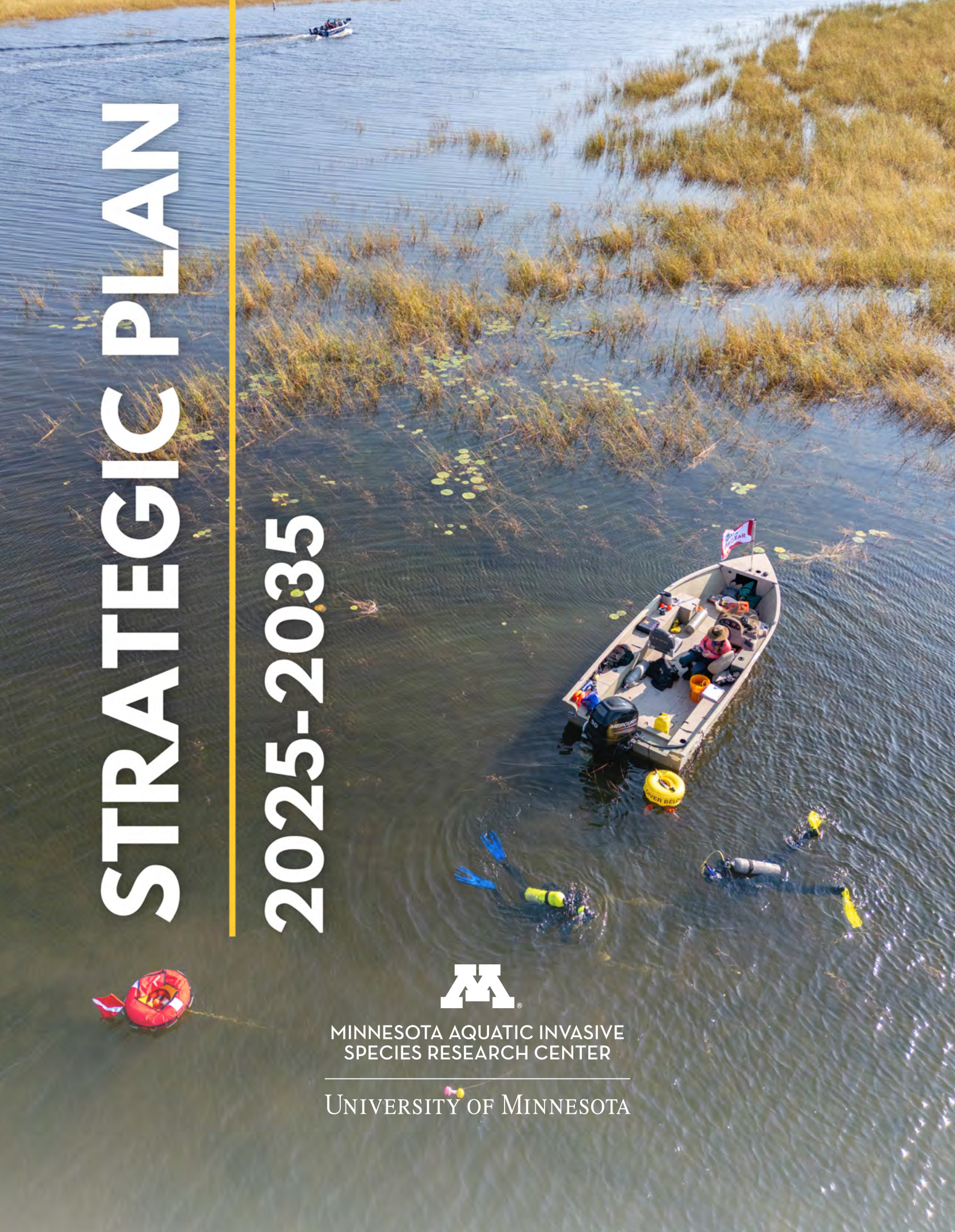
STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2035



MINNESOTA AQUATIC INVASIVE
SPECIES RESEARCH CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



MINNESOTA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH CENTER

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2035

CONTENTS

Mission and Vision	3
Introduction.....	4
Value 1: MAISRC is uniquely positioned to advance knowledge and develop research-based AIS solutions	5
Value 2: Education and training are essential to grow capacity for AIS response.....	6
Value 3: Public awareness and engagement support innovative research programs and implementation of AIS solutions	7
Value 4: An intellectually vibrant and diverse research community fosters innovation, collaboration, and productivity	8
Value 5: Impactful, solutions-oriented research requires stable funding, well supported teams, and advanced infrastructure.....	9
Implementation & Evaluation.....	10
Definitions.	11
Acknowledgments.....	12





MISSION

To develop research-based solutions that can reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota by preventing spread, controlling populations, and managing ecosystems; and to advance knowledge to inspire action by others.



VISION

The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center is a vibrant and durable research enterprise that advances the knowledge and builds the capacity that Minnesota needs in order to reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive species on our cherished lakes, rivers, and wetlands.



INTRODUCTION



The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) was created in 2012 to develop research-based solutions to the aquatic invasive species (AIS) issues facing the state. Our first, ten-year strategic plan was drafted in 2015 and defined a road map to establish a robust research program at MAISRC and develop outreach and education initiatives to help Minnesotans expand their knowledge and take action on AIS. Over the last decade, MAISRC has grown to be a national leader – advancing a rigorous academic program with field and lab research, world-class training, and outreach that is directly engaged with local communities, natural resource managers, and policy-makers.

In 2024, we embarked on an effort to establish a new strategic plan for the Center. One that would build on the successes of the MAISRC research community and define new goals and strategies that would pilot our mission into the next decade – developing and supporting

the implementation of innovative solutions to AIS and building knowledge and capacity for AIS education and response.

MAISRC is a national leader in research, training, and community-focused outreach on AIS.

To guide the 2024 strategic planning process, we engaged the Strategic Partnerships and Research Collaborative (SPARC) at the University of Minnesota, to facilitate stakeholder input opportunities, strategic planning workshops, and program monitoring and evaluation recommendations. The main objectives of the strategic planning process were to gain insight into future opportunities and potential challenges, understand trends and factors impacting or influencing the Center and AIS as a field of study, and identify goals and strategies that would leverage our resources and

expertise to maximize our impact.

Throughout the strategic planning process, SPARC and MAISRC staff gathered input from a diverse range of stakeholders through focus groups, interviews, surveys, and workshops. Taking an inclusive and collaborative approach to reflecting on ten years of progress and creating a plan for the future was essential. MAISRC is strengthened by the diversity of experience, perspective, and skills of the staff, researchers, educators, partners, and volunteers who make up the Center. Intentional and meaningful collaboration ensured that the new plan incorporates ideas and priorities that acknowledge the wide range of approaches and viewpoints on AIS.

Our new 2025-2035 Strategic Plan establishes five, primary values that are represented in each of our program areas. Aligned with each value are specific, measurable goals that will guide us in pursuit of our mission over the next ten years. ■

VALUE 1

MAISRC is uniquely positioned to advance knowledge and develop research-based AIS solutions.

The expertise, infrastructure, and geographic location of MAISRC is unique in the world and provides a strong foundation for investing in and advancing AIS research that can have local, national, and international impact.

Goal 1: Support prevention, control, and management of AIS by advancing research on species causing, or likely to cause, the greatest harm to aquatic ecosystems.

Goal 2: Support AIS managers by partnering to evaluate implementation of research-based management plans to improve outcomes over time.

Goal 3: Identify and respond to emerging needs by mobilizing and supporting collaborative research and management teams.

Goal 4: Advance foundational science to address key AIS knowledge gaps and foster innovation.

Goal 5: Develop, assess, and operationalize processes that effectively advance research from conception to implementation.



VALUE 2

Education and training are essential to grow capacity for AIS response.

The translation of research into effective communications and training opportunities is essential for the value of research to be fully realized and have a meaningful impact on the way AIS are managed.

Goal 1: Ensure that AIS managers, practitioners, and other natural resource professionals can understand research outcomes and apply research-based tools and recommendations.

Goal 2: Provide students and early career professionals with educational and practical opportunities to expand their professional skills.

Goal 3: Advance community and professional capacity for AIS response through partnership programs with UMN Extension.



VALUE 3

Public awareness and engagement support innovative research programs and implementation of AIS solutions.

The public is a critical partner in AIS research and response. The public is often the first to identify an AIS problem and the most impacted by the consequences of invasion. Therefore, MAISRC has an important role in facilitating public engagement to advance AIS solutions.

Goal 1: Continue to position MAISRC as a leader in AIS research and serve as a trusted source for information and resources.

Goal 2: Strengthen public awareness and engagement with MAISRC's mission and research initiatives by connecting with diverse audiences across multiple platforms and geographic locations.



VALUE 4

An intellectually vibrant and diverse research community fosters innovation, collaboration, and productivity.

Bringing together people with different perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge allows for the exchange of ideas and information and leads to collaboration, creative approaches to complex problems, and robust research initiatives.

Goal 1: Facilitate knowledge exchange and relationship building by connecting researchers and MAISRC's network of stakeholder groups.

Goal 2: Work towards diversifying the field of AIS research – including the people, places, approaches, and ways of knowing – to more inclusively respond to AIS problems, build capacity, and develop culturally aligned solutions.

Goal 3: Foster an engaged research community within MAISRC.

Goal 4: Seek opportunities to demonstrate the value, impact, and potential of MAISRC within the University of Minnesota system.

Goal 5: Seek opportunities to increase engagement and collaboration with external colleges, universities, and research centers.



VALUE 5

Impactful, solutions-oriented research requires stable funding, well supported teams, and advanced infrastructure.

For ideas to become research endeavors and results to be effectively implemented, infrastructure, funding, and skilled staff are essential. It is critical that we continue to support and develop these assets in pursuit of our mission.

Goal 1: Develop and implement an infrastructure plan to sustainably support MAISRC space and equipment.

Goal 2: Pursue stable funding from multiple sources to ensure long-term support of MAISRC's mission.

Goal 3: Build and sustain capacity within MAISRC to support research productivity, translation of research results, and stakeholder and user engagement.



IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

To achieve the goals outlined in the 2025-2035 Strategic Plan, MAISRC staff will develop a series of implementation plans that will guide our work in each of our program areas. Implementation plans will be updated every 1-2 years to ensure that we remain responsive to change and strategic in our approach to meeting our goals over the next 10 years.

Metrics and evaluation will be a key piece of each implementation plan, allowing MAISRC staff to regularly assess the effectiveness and impact of our programs. Evaluation data will be used to guide updates to implementation plans and decision-making around program initiatives. In addition, evaluation information will inform annual strategic plan progress reports that will document our advancement toward meeting our strategic goals.



DEFINITIONS

Diverse/Diversity: A variety of people, places, perspectives, backgrounds, and ways of knowing.

Stakeholder: Organizations, agencies, communities, and individuals who are impacted by MAISRC research and initiatives (e.g., state, local, tribal, and federal natural resource managers; conservation organizations; lake associations/property owners).

Engagement: Paying attention to and/or actively participating in a particular initiative.

Partner: Organizations, agencies, communities, and individuals who are directly involved in MAISRC research and initiatives (e.g., state, local, tribal, and federal natural resource managers; conservation organizations; lake associations/property owners). Partners play an active role in research projects, outreach, and operations.

Foundational science: Basic or fundamental research that brings understanding to how things work, often in controlled or laboratory settings. Provides a foundation of data and information for the development of new tools, technologies, and techniques.

MAISRC Fellows: Project managers and PhD-level researchers who are working directly on MAISRC-affiliated research projects.

MAISRC Grad Fellows: Master and PhD-level students who are working directly on MAISRC-affiliated research projects.

Center Advisory Board (CAB): A non-governing advisory board that represents key stakeholders and partners in MAISRC research. CAB provides strategic-level advice and guidance to MAISRC leadership.



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Contributions to MAISRC support innovative research, high quality education opportunities, and the advancement of solutions for AIS management.

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