



2023 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Management Plan

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AIS Advisory Committee Members

Voting Members

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Past Chair: Karen Langmo, Lake Koronis Association

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Leo Bauer, Lake Manuella Improvement Association

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Greg Schultz, Land Use Director

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aquatic Invasive Species are nonnative plants, animals, and microorganisms that negatively impact the environment, economic and human health. The spread of AIS negatively affects Wildlife by altering landscapes and disrupting the balance in an ecosystem. The invasive species, which often have little predation or natural controls, can outcompete native species and result in a loss of biodiversity; creating an imbalance. Our native plants evolved to the conditions of Minnesota lakes. As seen in many upper Midwestern states, AIS is rarely eradicated. Invasive species are managed by multiple government agencies non-profits and stakeholders alike. Regulatory measures are in place aid in the effort to limit the spread of aquatic invasive; for example, the DNR's listing of species as "prohibited and regulated" designates those plants and organisms as illegal to possess or transport due to the high economic and environmental detriment they pose.

In 2014 Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton authorized Prevention Aid for Counties. In 2014 the state distributed funds totaling 5 million dollars and increased to 10 million in 2015. The amount of funds is determined 50% by the number of watercraft trailer launches and 50% by the number of watercraft trailer parking spaces. In 2022 Meeker County received \$. The use of these funds is regulated by MN Statute 477 A.19. Guidelines are established for the use of the funds by counties in a yearly plan or resolution, which is due to the state by December 31, the year funds are received.

The Meeker County Board of Commissioners passed resolution number 2014-16 on November 4, 2014 and designated AIS program oversight to the Planning and Zoning Department, to oversee and work closely with local, state and federal governments, as well as nonprofit and private organizations, to develop and implement AIS prevention programs. The County appointed community members from each district to an AIS Advisory Committee who have informed and supported plans passed after the first resolution, such as the first plan written by and facilitated by the Crow River Organization of Water (CROW). In 2019 Crow disbanded, and Meeker County hired an AIS Coordinator to facilitate and manage the County AIS Program. The plan has been updated annually to accurately reflect the next years goals, current years accomplishments, and state of the county's AIS Program and to report the use of funds according to state statute.¹ [A Minnesota Management Plan for Invasive Species - 2022](#), will be incorporate in our future plans as we plan to utilize the guide for partner implementation.

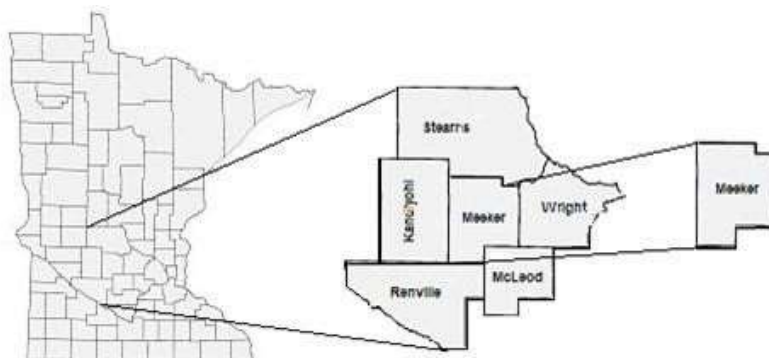
A. PURPOSE OF AIS PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Protect Meeker Lakes and Streams by preventing AIS spread by pursuing specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound goals
- Guide efforts to use legislatively granted funds in a justified and effective way.
- Exercise the powers necessary for implementing this plan and its goals to benefit Meeker County's water bodies' economic and environmental longevity.
- Fulfill the counties requirement under statute to establish and submit guidelines, that detail how the AIS Prevention Aid funding will be used.

B. MEEKER COUNTY

The prevention of AIS spread requires the community to be empowered and informed. Meeker County understands that people learn differently, so we have committed to hosting hands-on training and free

educational events by way of speakers, one on one and group discussions and grant clinics. Utilizing a variety of mediums allows the community to develop a shared understanding of the impact of invasive species and their investments and stake in our Lakes. Waterfowl hunters, boaters, lake goers, and shoreline owners all have a vested interest in our waterway's protection.



Meeker County encompasses seventeen townships, nine cities, and 11 unincorporated communities with 23,376. Meeker county has 170 lakes and 40 trailer launches.

C. BUDGET

The Meeker AIS Coordinator facilitates financial management. Up-to-date and accurate recordings of deposits and expenses are kept in the Planning and Zoning office. In 2020 a four-year projection of the program's budget and goals were revisited. The direction and plan to invest heavily in projects and services through 2022 aligned with the program's vision for improved long-term control, reduced spread and an empowered community. Use of funds will be detailed in the DNR's metrics template for 2022 Prevention Aid. In 2022, budget planning for the upcoming year was moved up in the planning timeline to align with county requirements. In 2023 the county plans to budget for future projects with less use of its funds balance. In 2022 and 2023 the budget reflected prudent planning for local risks and issues, informed by the priorities and interests of the AIS committee, as well as the advice of subject matter experts. The county decided to move to an EDR fund rather than a New Infestation Response fund so we may allocate and utilize funding for early detection of AIS, as well as the direct management or aid in the initial management of any new infestations should the need arise.

D. COLLABORATION

Meeker county understands the economic and environmental harm AIS poses, and the Water Plan Committee created several "Action Steps" to provide technical and financial assistance to lake associations. The 2023 AIS Plan is designed consistently with the goals established in the County's Water Plan adopted in 2013. Goal 1: Protect and improve surface water, and Goal 5: Effective Plan Administration and Coordination addresses a collaborative AIS management effort. The County is committed to remaining consistent with water quality efforts that support the ecological integrity of its lakes; and the AIS advisory committee has committed to staying open and actively engaged with stakeholders and researchers alike. The county coordinator also attends the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council's (MISAC) quarterly meetings and reports on county projects and programs, and shares relevant member updates with the advisory committee. Prevention and Monitoring efforts often face tool-related barriers, and Meeker County continued to address this both at the

launches and with the local Lake Associations directly in 2022. The county will continue to partner with groups such as Wildlife Forever, local businesses, Researchers, Universities and UMN Extension to address risk pathways, AIS education, and behavior-barrier reduction. A template for our tool stations will be made available in 2023 and connect stakeholders with local businesses to help increase the number of sites available throughout the county.

II. PRIORITIZATION FACTORS

Meeker County recognizes that the degree of efficacy is dependent upon the adaptability of this program. Since the plan's development, the Meeker County Needs Assessment has been on the societal vulnerabilities for individual water bodies. Understanding the movement patterns and risks associated with each lake and their types of traffic and history is a significant undertaking. In 2022 the county addressed barriers to preventative actions by providing tools to the community with our tool stations for the second year at eight lakes. An action timeline table for county efforts can be found on our county webpage.

A. SUMMARY OF MEEKER COUNTY'S PRIORITY CONCERNS

Pathways for prevention and the program's integrity are of paramount concern to the county. Research and collaboration amongst stakeholders underline the pursuit of county interests. Program priorities and interests are listed with the most significant interest or priorities at the top of the lists:

Program Priorities:


- Limiting Spread: Includes Control of AIS
- Early Detection
- Inspection and Decontamination
- Enforcement
- Stewardship and Outreach

Program Interests:

- Investment in projects with long term control potential
- Supporting projects funded by stakeholders with less fundraising capabilities
- Investment in community resources and services
- Investment in novel management projects
- Recruitment of volunteers for AIS Detection efforts

B. STATUS OF MEEKER COUNTY LAKES:

Table of infested waters in Meeker County updated 2022 Source: MN DNR

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) List of Infested Waters - November 9, 2022					
Water body name	County or counties	Listed for aquatic invasive species	Year listed infested	Year species was first confirmed, or connected to water body	DOW number
Clear	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2014	2013	47-0095
Erie	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2014	2014	47-0064
Francis	Meeker	zebra mussel	2021	2021	47-0002
Little Mud	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2009	2009	47-0096
Manuella	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2006	2005	47-0050
Minnie Belle	Meeker	zebra mussel	2020	2020	47-0119
Minnie-Belle	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2010	2010	47-0119
Ripley	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2004	2002	47-0134
Stella	Meeker	zebra mussel	2015	2015	47-0068
Stella	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	1999	1999	47-0068
Washington	Meeker	zebra mussel	2015	connected to Stella (47-0068)	47-0046
Washington	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	1999	1999	47-0046
Wolf	Meeker	Eurasian watermilfoil	2006	2005	47-0016
End of Worksheet					

C. LAKES OF CONCERN

The University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center's Risk scores on Zebra Mussel and Starry Stonewort infestations for Minnesota's Lakes are a key consideration for monitoring efforts. These risk scores are based on niche modeling, boaters' traffic patterns, and geographic proximity and are utilized in the AIS Explorer Model for Risk Assessment in their online tool at <https://www.aisexplorer.umn.edu/> .

ZM High-Risk Lakes	SSW High-Risk Lakes
Collinwood	Collinwood
Clear Lake	Clear Lake
Lake Jennie	Lake Jennie
Cedar Lake	Cedar Lake
Big Swan	Big Swan
Long	Long
Wolf	Manuella

III. LIMITING AIS SPREAD

The county recognizes that current infestations of AIS may need to be addressed not only by assisting lake associations with access to funding but with technology and research and partnerships with the community, Councils, and Institutes working toward the same goal. **The county will continue to consider the AIS Advisory Committee's feedback on county-led management, support of community-led management and pursuit of partnerships.**

A. PATHWAYS AND ADAPTIVE PLANNING

Community organizations are addressing AIS such as Eurasian Milfoil and Curly-leaf Pondweed. The program awards annual AIS Grants between \$70,000 and \$90,000 towards treatment. In 2022 the county ordered bait bags for distribution at local bait retailers in 2023. Partnerships in the community will be pursued in 2023 to share proper bait disposal practices. It is crucial to understand pathways and establish effective strategies. The county has, after researching success stories in similar counties, performing local projects and hearing the community, in 2022 focused on long term control projects for EWM, and AIS monitoring on at-risk lakes. To better serve the long term needs of the county in an equitable way we also plan in 2023, to evaluate impacts and future goals using the implementation tools in the updated Minnesota Invasive Species Management Plan.

B. EARLY DETECTION AND RESPONSE

Meeker County's AIS Program shares the state's updated EDR plan with the county coalition of lake associations. The county monitored high risk boat launches in the county in 2022 for new occurrences of AIS.

The county response to new infestations in 2023 will mirror the recommended course of action in the [Minnesota Early Detection and Response plan](#). Veliger tows in 2023 will be considered, depending on the availability of DNR and volunteer labor. In the event of a new infestation, the county will consider the action recommendation as described in the EDR Plan and coordinate with MN DNR and local stakeholders for initial control, monitoring effectiveness of control efforts and potentially follow-up control. In 2022 a small patch of Phragmites was found on the roadside in the center of the county, and was treated under a coordinated effort by MN DNR and Researcher Julia Bohnen at UMN. The AIS Coordinator consulted with researchers involved in the statewide effort on other suspected sites in the county and is planning local outreach for 2023 for phragmites education including identification, and reporting. Additionally, following confirmation of Zebra Mussels at Lake Koronis in Paynesville MN, the county's lakes of concern have been updated for follow up monitoring in 2023.

C. AIS WATERCRAFT INSPECTION AND DECONTAMINATION

Meeker County facilitates a county-wide inspection program. The county provides financial and logistical support for community organizations looking to reduce unmitigated traffic on at-risk lakes. Watercraft inspections are the county's first line of defense against the spread of AIS. It is known that most spread between waterbodies is local, so inspections allow's for one on one interaction with the main source of spread, lake users. County inspectors can educate and inform the public while inspecting a potentially infested boat and report any suspected instances of new AIS or illegal launch to the county and state. Each year our inspections are detailed in an End of Season Report, available on the county webpage. The report on inspections contains specific statistics on each lake, compliance to AIS Laws and traffic trends. The county contracts labor for inspections and will again be updating the details of their Professional Services Contract. There will continue to be revisions as needed to reduce inefficacy, address maximizing our financial resources and data collection, and ensure that funding is utilized most effectively. Improvements come from continued use of the AIS Explorer Model, Risk Scores, and consideration of observed boater behavior reported by our inspectors. The county will continue to partner with MN DNR, to secure effective placement of Meeker County inspectors and operation of two decontamination units. DNR inspectors operated one decontamination unit owned by MN DNR with staffing support by Meeker county inspectors, as needed and the second, a county-owned unit ran by the county AIS inspection program. In 2023 the county will aim to continue to improve the frequency and quality of decontaminations offered as well as explore a cost-sharing model for the county wide inspection program.

IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A. EDUCATION AND VOLUNTEERING

County efforts to educate the community on AIS have an advantage with the use of seasoned, local watercraft inspector who return year after year to help our community do its best to prevent spread. Local inspectors have improved the reception of Clean Drain Dry Dispose efforts and even intercepted dangers to watercraft users through-out the years. The aim to educate the community and transient boaters on best practices has been enhanced by our previously mentioned decontamination unit. In 2022 the county coordinator worked with contractors to improve inspector training and decontaminations offered to the community. In 2022 we more than doubled our number of decontaminations preformed. During these decontaminations, our inspectors answer questions from watercraft users and explain how the service

prevents spread. In 2023 the aim for local point intercept survey training and AIS Identification workshops will be investigated. The county has also developed an additional grantee packet that will inform stakeholders of opportunities to further their training or education in AIS, volunteer for monitoring efforts and subscribe to a quarterly email that includes updates to AIS action in the county, state and interesting news or press releases. 2023 will be the sixth consecutive year that the county will host a site for the Starry Trek, a statewide volunteer AIS monitoring effort. The county hopes to improve attendance by once again partnering with local radio and organizations.

B. INFORMATIVE EFFORTS

In 2022 Meeker County continued their sponsorship, one of five sponsors, of the PBS Program Prairie Sportsman's Club, AIS Conservation Stories. These segments air on over 13 local pbs channels and raise awareness and understanding about AIS, and the impact of conservation practices, and their actions. The program also shares information on AIS research and work being done in the state. The digital copies of these segments are also available to share as an educational resource. There are a number of groups who are also interested in updating the signage and messaging at the lakes in 2023 being considered for AIS Grants.

Appendix A: Border Lakes of Concern, Risk Scores

Zebra Mussel Introduction-Risk Scores

Name	DOW number	County	Infestation status	Overall risk score	Boater movement risk score	Water connectivity risk score
Cedar	86022700	Wright	1	1	1	1
Francis	47000200	Meeker	1	1	1	1
Collinwood	86029300	Wright	0	0.482	0.479	0.003
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Union	86029800	Wright	0	0.149	0.149	0
Byron	47000400	Meeker	0	0.134	0.134	0
Scott	86029700	Wright	0	0.124	0.124	0

Starry Stonewort Introduction-Risk Scores

Collinwood	86029300	Wright	0	0.482	0.479	0.003
Clear	47009500	Meeker	0	0.4445	0.443	0.0015
Jennie	47001500	Meeker	0	0.413	0.413	0
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Cedar	43011500	Mcleod	0	0.379	0.379	0
Big Swan	47003800	Meeker	0	0.3265	0.321	0.0055
Long	47017700	Meeker	0	0.323	0.3185	0.005
Manuella	47005000	Meeker	0	0.319	0.306	0.013
Wolf	47001600	Meeker	0	0.3105	0.3105	0
Collinwood	86029300	Wright	0	0.482	0.479	0.003
Clear	47009500	Meeker	0	0.4445	0.443	0.0015

Appendix B: Public Water Access Maps

