

**LAKE MINNETONKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SPECIAL AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) TASK FORCE MEETING
MINUTES**

8:30 a.m., Tuesday, August 10, 2010
MCWD Office, 18202 Minnetonka Blvd., Deephaven, MN 55391

Present: Herb Suerth, LMCD Board; Dick Woodruff, LMCD Board; Lisa Whalen, LMCD Board; Luke Skinner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR); Gary Montz, MN DNR; Jay Rendall, MN DNR; Brittany Hummel, MN DNR; John Barten, Three Rivers Park District (TRPD); Dick Osgood, Lake Minnetonka Association (LMA); Dr. Udai Singh, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD); Tony Brough, Hennepin County Environmental Services (Hennepin County); Steve McComas, Blue Water Science; Greg Nybeck, LMCD Executive Director. A number of non-AIS Task Force members were in attendance (see attached list).

Meeting Kickoff

Whalen stated that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the recent infestation of zebra mussels in Lake Minnetonka. She stated an attendance sheet is circulating for AIS and non-AIS Task Force members to sign in. This is a committee meeting and she hoped that the Task Force will get through the agenda. Thus, discussion will be focused within the committee. However, the public is welcomed to forward written questions and comments to Co-Chairs Suerth and Woodruff. They will decide whether discussion of these questions and comments by the committee will take place at this meeting. Otherwise, a number of the experts that serve on this Task Force will be able to discuss the public's questions and comments after this meeting.

Suerth stated that there are a number of bodies of water in Minnesota that are already infested with zebra mussels. Although there are a number of nasty things that are associated with zebra mussels on these bodies of water, they continue to be used from a recreational standpoint. He believed that the public was seeking a perspective from the LMCD on where we go from here. He stated that there is a need to contain zebra mussels to Lake Minnetonka. Additionally, he suggested that there was a need to further professionally research how zebra mussels spread from lake to lake.

Woodruff echoed Suerth's comments by stating that there has been a lot of hard work to prevent the introduction of zebra mussels on Lake Minnetonka. Since the introduction has occurred, there is a need to discuss the necessary steps to deal with the situation and he believed that matter should be the main focus of this meeting.

Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities

Woodruff stated that there was a need to define who was going to drive the process for this effort. He asked for feedback on this from Skinner.

Skinner recommended the following roles and responsibilities for the MN DNR:

- Provide a lead role on communication and technical guidance, using the MN DNR webpage as an example.

- To assist the local level on the preparation of an Action Plan. He pointed out that the LMCD and MCWD were uniquely organized for Lake Minnetonka, although there is a need to further refine roles and responsibilities.
- Action Plans are a collaborative effort and need to be implemented at the local level.
- To conduct future survey work, although this will be coordinated with the MCWD and other local stakeholders.
- Zebra mussels need to be managed because effective eradication methods currently do not exist. The MN DNR can assist on containment efforts, in particular education. The MN DNR will take the lead in preventing the spread to other bodies of water.

Woodruff asked if other Task Force members were willing to define roles or take on responsibilities for this project. There was no feedback.

Suerth believed that the Task Force should make recommendations on tasks and responsibilities.

Skinner concurred with Suerth's comments, although he believed that it would be beneficial to:
1) communicate the message on expectations (in particular lakeshore residents and lake service providers), and 2) communicate what can be done.

Update on What's Known and What Has Been Done So Far

Skinner made the following comments:

- A call was received from a citizen on July 27th on the possibility of a zebra mussel infestation along County Road 101 causeway in Wayzata Bay. Follow-up was done by the MN DNR, with zebra mussels confirmed by Montz on July 28th. A follow-up Press Release was sent out by the MN DNR.
- A collaboration followed with the MCWD and the LMA on rapid assessment surveys. These surveys quickly identify zebra mussel locations, not establish quantities or densities. He provided the Task Force further background on the methodology used, which involved approximately 10 to 15 minutes per location.
- He reviewed a distribution map, pointing out that they are quite widespread. Young adult zebra mussels have spread out in Grays Bay, Wayzata Bay, near Spirit Island in Wayzata Bay, Browns Bay, St. Louis Bay, and off of Big Island. No zebra mussels have been discovered on the Upper Lake, although this does not mean that they are not present.
- Most of the zebra mussels are 1 to 2 millimeters, with the larger mussels 3 to 4 millimeters.
- The current survey efforts have been done in the shallows, although there is a need to search in deeper water because zebra mussels in shallow water have problems surviving a winter due to the ice.
- Originally, a question was raised as to whether these zebra mussels might have come from Grays Bay. Due to their widespread on the Lower Lake, the MN DNR cannot determine where they might have come from.
- He entertained questions and comments from Task Force members.

A summary of the Task Force discussion was as follows:

- Whether the introduction could have come from one source or multiple sources, although this would be difficult to conclude.

- Future surveys are planned for late August or early September when the zebra mussels are larger and easier to see. This assessment could be expanded when the public pulls out their docks and boats for the current boating season.
- The creation of a MN DNR web page, which would serve as the single communication source by the various agencies and organizations.
- A training session has been scheduled for August 12th for commercial marinas, dock installers, and other lake service providers.
- The need for open house Public Forums in the near future.
- A follow-up Press Release is planned by the MN DNR later this week.
- A zebra mussel education card is currently being printed by the MN DNR, which patterns a similar card at Lake Mille Lacs. These cards, which are educational in nature and will summarize the laws and public expectations, will be available for distribution to the public.
- The official designation of Lake Minnetonka is planned for August 16th. The Minnehaha Creek and a number of other bodies of water downstream will also be designated as infested, although there may not be zebra mussels in them. This is a common practice of the MN DNR.
- Landowner responsibilities in the removal and transportation of vegetation from their properties to a compost site, with and without a permit from the MN DNR, and ensuring compliance with the law. One of the concerns is that zebra mussels can attach to vegetation. A review of a MN DNR authorization form and its logistics was provided, which is on the MN DNR webpage.

Discussion of Possible Containment and Eradication Efforts

Woodruff suggested that Task Force discussion should focus on containment and eradication efforts on Lake Minnetonka and outside of Lake Minnetonka. He asked Skinner for further background on this to set the stage for Task Force discussion.

Within Lake Minnetonka

Skinner made the following comments:

- He believed that eradication in a large lake such as Lake Minnetonka would be extremely difficult or nearly impossible.
- He reviewed some control efforts done on a 100 acre lake that was self-contained in the State of Kansas on an Army base. This lake was treated with copper sulfate at one part per million in the fall of 2008 and re-treated in the spring of 2009. Although they believe that the zebra mussels have been controlled, over 41,000 pounds of fish have been killed.
- Other research is on-going, such as zequinox, and the MN DNR will continue to track this. He provided further background on zequinox, as well as other research alternatives. A discussion of labeling by the Environmental Pollution Agency and experimental permits took place, including whether this would work on an open-water system.

Montz briefly reviewed potassium chloride research at a 12-acre mine pit in Virginia.

The Task Force discussed eradication of zebra mussels from Lake Minnetonka. The consensus was that this was not feasible or practical at this time, although this might change in the future based on the research being tracked by the MN DNR. However, one Task Force member suggested a long shot on eradicating zebra mussels if the breeding populations could be located and removed.

Brough questioned are there actions that should be taken at the Arcola and Narrow channel bridges since zebra mussels have not been located on the Upper Lake. Water flow goes both ways at both of these channels.

The Task Force discussed whether restricting traffic at both of the channels was appropriate. Similar restrictions were implemented in channels to other lakes that were connected to Lake Ossawinnamakee and Lake Le Homme Dieu, which are infested with zebra mussels. The consensus of the Task Force was that restricting traffic on Lake Minnetonka between the Upper and Lower Lakes did not make sense and was not practical, although there was interest in communicating best management practices to the public on how zebra mussels can spread on Lake Minnetonka. The MN DNR agreed to assess the situation and come back with recommendations. Additionally, other pathways to and from Lake Minnetonka should be identified on how zebra mussels could potentially spread. Task Force members were recommended to forward Nybeck the following, who will, in turn, forward to the MN DNR: 1) possible best management practices for the residential and commercial sectors and 2) pathway categories.

Between Lakes

Woodruff asked for background on this from Skinner.

Skinner stated that the three facets of the MN DNR to address this include: 1) constant communication and public awareness, 2) the watercraft inspection program, and 3) enforcement. There has been a lot of work done previously by the LMCD, and others, for watercraft inspections; focusing primarily on incoming watercraft and trailers. Although zebra mussels have arrived at Lake Minnetonka, there is concern about the introduction of other AIS. The MN DNR needs to re-target and re-allocate how to deal with some of these issues for watercraft inspections and enforcement. There will continue to be a need to partner and collaborate with the LMCD and other agencies in the future. Additionally, phase two stakeholder meetings are planned in the near future to discuss a number of issues, which could result in policy changes and new legislation.

A summary of the discussion was as follows:

- The change in watercraft inspection procedures.
- More attention will need to be made by the public on the removal of zebra mussels from a boat before they leave a public access, unless they have a permit from the MN DNR.
- A risk assessment of water leaving the lake in livewells, bilges, and motors.
- Change in restrictions relating to water in bait buckets because of Lake Minnetonka's zebra mussel designation by the MN DNR.
- Challenges associated with wake boats, ski boats, and fishing boats. It was noted that within Lake Minnetonka, this would be best addressed through education and best management practices.
- The water quality monitoring program by the MCWD and how this program could assist in future sampling for zebra mussels. Additional sampling has been previously collected on the sustainability of zebra mussels if they were introduced into Lake Minnetonka. A Report on this is planned at the August 13th MCWD Board of Managers Meeting.
- A Task Force member suggested that restrictions on special events on Lake Minnetonka should be considered, in particular fishing tournaments. Nybeck was directed to forward the current LMCD special event permitting process to Task Force members.
- A recommendation was made to invest in infrastructure at public accesses and commercial marinas that provides for washing of boats. The recent Hennepin County LCCMR Grant

Application was briefly discussed, including the various engineering technologies available. Brough was directed to provide further information on this to Nybeck.

- The need to coordinate the installation of new signage between the LMCD and the MN DNR.

State Senator Terri Bonoff thanked the Task Force for their participation on this issue and recommended the need to work in partnership. This is a statewide issue and offered to provide leadership on the introduction of future legislation. Containment to Lake Minnetonka is critical and she believed that the use of Legacy Funds made sense.

Mr. Gabriel Jabbour stated that he believed the Task Force would benefit through interaction with the public. He asked for clarification on the existing fine schedule from the MN DNR.

Rendall stated that AIS regulations are established through State statutes and rules. Penalties associated with violations are misdemeanors or civil penalties, with monetary amounts specified by statute. Current fines range from \$50 to \$1,000 and he provided further detail of the fine schedule.

Jabbour stated that if an administrative ticket were issued locally, would the fee associated with this go back to the local police department.

Rendall stated that the fees associated with an administrative ticket or civil penalty go back to the State. However, misdemeanors are processed at the county level and he was unaware of where the funds go.

Jabbour stated that there are two State Senators in attendance that have offered leadership on this issue. He believed there was a need to have the local police departments make the issuing of tickets for AIS violations a higher priority. Additionally, there might be a need to have the fine schedule re-evaluated by the State.

Suerth stated that he and Whalen had recently discussed the need to coordinate with the local police department on making enforcement of AIS laws a higher priority.

Discussion of Next Steps and Issues to Tackle

A number of Action Items were established at this meeting. The following attachment provides further details.

Next AIS Task Force Meeting

The next AIS Task Force Meeting was scheduled for Friday, 8/27/10, at 8:30 a.m. at a place to be determined.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Nybeck
Executive Director