

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

8:30 a.m., Friday, February 14, 2014

LMCD Office, 5341 Maywood Road (Suite 200), Mound, MN 55364

Present: Jeff Morris, LMCD Board; Jay Green, LMCD Board; Tony Brough, Hennepin County Environmental Services (Hennepin County); Tom Frahm, Lake Minnetonka Association (LMA); Josh Leddy, LMA; Craig Dawson, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD); Eric Fieldseth, MCWD; Adam Doll, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR); Chip Welling, MN DNR; John Barten, Three Rivers Park District (TRPD); Dick Woodruff. Also in attendance: Greg Nybeck, LMCD Executive Director.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes

The minutes from the 12/13/13 and 1/17/14 AIS Task Force Meetings were approved as submitted.

Update of February 10th West Metro AIS Committee Meeting

Morris asked for background on this agenda item from Barten.

Barten stated that there was good representation from a number of organizations at this meeting. The consensus was that there would be benefit, at this time, to identify efficiencies on coordinating at a regional level (i.e., watercraft inspections). Two of the issues for the committee to work out include: 1) how the committee will be structured from an organizational standpoint, and 2) how the committee members will process recommendations from this committee to their policy makers. The next committee meeting is scheduled for February 26th and topics planned for discussion include: 1) the coordination of watercraft inspections on a regional basis, 2) AIS educational opportunities for 2014, and 3) a discussion of the 2013 MCWD proof of inspection pilot project (and whether this could be implemented on a regional basis). Overall, he believed that the comments were positive and that such a committee could make sense for the various organizations looking ahead.

Morris asked if there were concerns raised at this meeting.

Barten stated that Brent Baker from Lake Bavaria raised the concept of regional watercraft inspections, in which there was limited discussion and no consensus. He reiterated that this an example of how the committee needs to decide how to organize and react to such issues.

Morris thanked Barten for the update and asked for continued updates on future West Metro AIS Committee meetings.

Feedback on Content for 2014 AIS Educational Brochure

Morris asked for background on this agenda item from Green.

Green stated that he had raised this topic at previous meetings and he would be working with the LMCD office on the creation of a brochure. He reviewed a similar brochure created for the Detroit Lakes area by the Pelican River Watershed District (and other partners). He stated that he was researching information on line on what boaters can do to protect their watercraft (i.e., the use of boat lifts and anti-fouling paint). He was having some problems finding information and he hoped that the Task Force could provide some information on content for an AIS educational brochure for Lake Minnetonka.

A summary of the Task Force discussion was as follows:

- Discussions of this topic at the MN DNR AIS Committee and whether this was an appropriate topic for the West Metro AIS Committee. In particular, uniformity of messages.
- The focus for such a brochure is to educate the public on what they can do for bodies of water with an invasive species (i.e., zebra mussels).
- Further discussion of the Pelican Rivers Watershed District brochure.
- A short discussion of anti fouling paint (pros and cons).
- The vacuuming of the carpet as a best management practice for the public (in particular the fishing stakeholders).
- What funding might be available for the production of such a brochure.
- Action items included: 1) Green was to work on a first draft of a brochure with the LMCD staff, for further review at the February AIS Task Force meeting, and 2) a copy of the Pelican Rivers brochure was to be e-mailed to Task Force member (for feedback on a possible Lake Minnetonka brochure).

Task Force Member Reports

Green provided an update on options being considered by the LMCD Board for a 2014 Lake Minnetonka Watercraft Inspection Program. One of the options being considered is whether additional inspection hours could be contracted with the MN DNR (rather than a temporary agency).

Doll stated that the MN DNR, at one time, offered the public the ability to expand watercraft inspection coverage by contracting with the MN DNR. This service has gone away as the MN DNR has expanded its watercraft inspection program, which has been difficult at times to adequately staff (both inspectors and supervisors). Whether additional hours could be contracted for 2015 with the LMCD can be discussed internally by the MN DNR. With regards to the MN DNR supervising non MN DNR inspectors, he stated that this could not occur.

Green stated that Eric Evenson from the MCWD has questioned whether other organizations, such as the TRPD, could take on additional watercraft inspection hours.

Barten stated that the request could be made of the TRPD Board of Commissioners and the request could be discussed. However, one area of concern that would be challenging is the supervision of these added watercraft inspectors. This would not be an option for 2014.

Nybeck stated that the LMCD is targeting a seasonal employee in 2014 to supervise the project to ensure that the inspectors for non LMCD employees are conducting the work that that they are contracted to perform.

Woodruff stated that he believed the City of Shorewood might have a similar interest in sharing with the LMCD on this seasonal employee for Christmas Lake.

Fieldseth stated that the MCWD would be meeting with Brough in the near future to discuss the social marketing signage used at the North Arm public access (and whether this could be implemented elsewhere in the watershed). He provided an overview of a report he prepared from 2013 watercraft inspection data for Lake Minnetonka, which provides a risk or threat assessment of those who use the public accesses. A goal for this project was to assess water bodies within the watershed to determine movement from Lake Minnetonka. He provided an overview of the methodology used to assess the risk level for a number of categories. One of the categories he focused on was the number of entering watercraft that needed decontamination. Based on 2013 data, there were 17,806 inbound inspections, with 357 watercraft needing decontamination. Of these 357 watercraft, 215 had a MN DNR decontamination unit present and 142 had no decontamination unit present.

Dawson stated that the decontamination assessment indicates that there are some flaws in the current decontamination efforts that should be considered for improvements (only 60 percent of the incoming watercraft that needed decontamination had a unit present). He understood that an estimated 60,000 watercraft are launched annually through the public accesses on Lake Minnetonka.

Frahm stated that the 60,000 annual launches is a concern of the LMA because a number of watercraft are not being inspected.

Green stated that when analyzing watercraft inspection statistics for Lake Minnetonka, this needs to take into consideration that 68% of the watercraft launching are only using Lake Minnetonka.

A summary of the Task Force discussion was as follows:

- Additional watercraft inspections have conducted by the TRPD on Medicine Lake. A question is whether the additional inspections are worth the additional financial investment, in particular since a large percentage of the inspections are for the same watercraft operators that only use Medicine Lake.
- Is there a way to focus inspection hours on the minority of the watercraft that are causing the majority of the problems (a triage concept for establishing when and where watercraft inspectors are assigned).
- A number of the invasive species of potential concern to Lake Minnetonka (i.e., spiny water flea) are either in Mille Lacs or in northern Minnesota. This is a different issue for other nearby lakes that do not have invasive species (i.e., zebra mussels).
- The establishment of inspection stations when the public enters the State of Minnesota from out of state.
- Drain plus laws and the need to analyze whether the public was complying with state law.
- The difficulty of drawing conclusions from the 2013 data because some of the data was a result of paper surveys rather than electronic surveys.
- An improvement is being made for the MN DNR electronic application for 2014 on previous and last waterbody drop down information.
- Decontamination needs and how this could be improved. Highlights included:
 1. Four decontamination were assigned to this area in 2013, with typically three of these units assigned to Lake Minnetonka at the primary public accesses (Grays Bay, Maxwell Bay, North

Arm, and Spring park Bay). The fourth unit was used as a floating decontamination unit in 2013.

2. Regional inspections stations (a discussion of whether this concept made sense, including legal implications and statutory challenges in requiring the public to use them). A question was raised as to how to track watercraft that need decontamination efforts. Additionally, there are challenges associated in directing watercraft operators to a station for watercraft that need to be decontaminated.
3. A discussion of public and private decontamination stations.
4. The concept of a local decontamination ordinance (noting that this would not be enforced by the MN DNR).
5. Regional decontamination stations around Lake Minnetonka (possibly utilizing a MN DNR unit).
6. Whether the decontamination unit schedules of the MN DNR could be forwarded to the inspectors. As an alternative to publicly advertising the schedules, this information could be provided to in-house supervisors of the various programs. A recommended action item for Lake Minnetonka was for the supervisors of the LMCD and TRPD to contact the MN DNR on locating a decontamination unit (when a decontamination is deemed appropriate).
7. Some of the decontaminations required may have been a result of the protocol established by the MN DNR (in particular the length of time a watercraft was in the water).
 - A discussion of citations issued and the fine schedule.
 - Possible legislative changes are already being considered by the MN DNR AIS Committee (noting that Minnesota already has some of the most rigorous laws).
 - Discussion of how decontamination efforts were coordinated between the LMCD and MN DNR for a regatta on Lake Minnetonka two years ago.

Brough stated that he had concerns about the discussion that just took place. The MN DNR has coordinated a top notch watercraft inspection program, which is proven by reducing the risks at public accesses. He questioned what has been done for the other pathways to introduce invasive species to Lake Minnetonka. Although it may be politically appealing to address public accesses only, it is not proven scientifically. He thanked Doll and the MN DNR for their efforts. Hennepin County will be making improvements to the Spring Park public access. He offered Task Force members to participate in the planning for the work to be done at this access, which he estimated to take place later in the fall.

Doll stated that the 2013 Summary Report for watercraft inspections on Lake Minnetonka has been prepared. It focuses more on inspections per hour at the various public accesses, the drain plug status, where species are coming from, what other states watercraft are coming from, and an overall assessment of incoming and exiting watercraft. He entertained questions or comments from the Task Force.

Green stated that a breakdown on number of incoming and exiting watercraft inspections would be beneficial.

Doll stated that he overlooked that and would make that update.

Woodruff stated that clarification at the beginning of the report on the public accesses covered would be beneficial.

Welling stated that Dick Osgood has previously submitted a draft Lake Vegetation Management Plan (LVMP) for baywide treatments to the MN DNR. Staff has been reviewing the LVMP and the approaches might be a little bit different moving forward. The MN DNR is looking to accelerate the issuance of permits statewide (in particular for early season treatments of curlyleaf pondweed). He announced the following future meetings: 1) an Overall Waters meeting scheduled for May 1st and 2nd in Brainerd by Conservation Minnesota, which will include some discussion on invasive species, and 2) the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in Duluth (scheduled for October 21st through 23rd).

Barten stated that the TRPD has reviewed its watercraft inspection data from 2103 (14 public accesses on 14 different lakes). It appears to be consistent with the data summarized by Fieldseth and Doll (10 percent of the users are causing the majority of the problems). The TRPD Board was recently approached by the Coalition of Minnehaha Creek Waters for a pilot project that involves a regional inspection and decontamination station within five miles of a couple of lakes that have public accesses managed by the TRPD. The TRPD was requested to participate in this project and this has been referred back to staff for a response, which staff is currently considering.

Dawson announced that the MCWD would be coordinating a half day AIS Symposium at the Kelly Inn in St. Paul on March 19th.

Liddy stated that three herbicides are being considered for the baywide treatments planned in 2014 for Lake Minnetonka. Further discussion on this is planned with Osgood and Patrick Seltier from PLM.

Schedule Next AIS Task Force Meeting

The next Task Force Meeting was scheduled for Friday, 3/14/14, at the LMCD office.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Nybeck
Executive Director