

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

8:30 a.m., Friday, April 13, 2012

LMCD Office, 23505 Smithtown Road (Suite 120), Shorewood, MN 55331

Present: Kelsey Page, LMCD Board; Dan Baasen, LMCD Board; David Gross, LMCD Board; Jeff Morris, LMCD Board; Tony Brough, Hennepin County Environmental Services; Chip Welling, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR); John Barten, Three Rivers Park District (TRPD); Dick Osgood, Lake Minnetonka Association (LMA); Craig Dawson, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD); Eric Fieldseth, MCWD; Eric Evenson, MCWD; Jay Green, Anglers for Habitat; Gabriel Jabbour, Tonka Bay Marina; Dick Woodruff. Also in attendance: Bill Olson, MCWD; Lee Keeley, MCWD; Greg Nybeck, LMCD Executive Director.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes

The minutes from the 2/17/12 AIS Task Force Meeting were accepted as submitted.

Agency Reports

Welling stated that the MN DNR has revised its approach in the management of aquatic plants, in particular Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM), based on feedback and concerns raised by stakeholders through a series of meetings. Changes that have occurred include: 1) increasing grant funds available, 2) increasing the capacity of the various type of control projects, and 3) the adding of staff to assist in issuing permits for various types of projects. The issuing of permits is a substantial new undertaking in 2012, which has been compounded by spring arriving a month earlier than normal.

Barten stated that the TRPD has 14 different boat launches that they manage. There has been recent pressure from lake associations to inspect all incoming watercraft at these launch sites, which is not economically feasible. The Board is currently assessing how to best address this. Additionally, the TRPD has a couple of curlyleaf pondweed (CLP) projects that they are currently working with Welling on, in which he provided greater detail of.

Brough stated that changes will be made to the North Arm public access in 2012. The changes to be made will be similar to those proposed in a recent LCCMR grant request, although the infrastructure changes will not be made. The goal of this project is to promote management and prevention of AIS, while maintaining open access to the public. He requested further discussion of this via a PowerPoint presentation at the next AIS Task Force Meeting. He commented that the buoys on Lake Minnetonka have been installed for 2012, other than the side channel at Cruiser's Cove.

Dawson stated that he had been employed with the MCWD for over a month and was rapidly becoming familiar with AIS. During this time, he has renewed a number of acquaintances. In the near future, the MCWD will begin work on an AIS Comprehensive Plan to put in its overall Comprehensive Plan. The process will most likely include a Citizens Advisory Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), in which he believed a number of members on this Task Force will be asked to serve on the TAC. He

reviewed current AIS activities of the MCWD (cost sharing for watercraft inspections on a number of lakes, zebra mussel testing on Lake Minnetonka as part of the water quality sampling program, and a weevil program on Lake Minnetonka and Christmas Lake). He stated that he would be the representative for the MCWD at future AIS Task Force Meetings.

Green stated that Anglers for Habitat was currently working with the State Legislature on fee increases for fishing licenses (resident and non-resident). A rally for this is planned at the State Capitol on April 23rd.

Osgood circulated the most recent version of the LMA Newsletter, noting that it can be viewed on-line. The LMA and Minnesota Waters were not part of the lawsuit filed by Christmas Lake residents, which he understood has recently been dismissed.

Jabbour complimented efforts being made by: 1) the Chair of the Environmental Committee pertaining to AIS, and 2) the coordination of a second Lake Service Provider Training (in which approximately 80 people were in attendance). He expressed concern about the temperature standard (54 degrees Fahrenheit) in which zebra mussels become active. He questioned the validity of this temperature standard based on poles used for fencing in conjunction with de-icing this past winter, as well as boat lifts in Grays Bay that needed longer legs installed this spring. In both situations, the temperatures were well below 54 degrees and the poles and boat lifts were covered with zebra mussels.

LMA, Review of PLM Proposal for 2012 Coordinated Herbicide Treatments

Page asked Osgood for background on this agenda item.

Osgood stated that the LMA did not request bids since Professional Lake Management (PLM) was the successful bidder in the past and because minimal treatments are planned in 2012 (with the exception of Grays Bay). Areas to be treated were delineated by the Army Corps of Engineers last fall, with a final decision on treatment areas to be delineated this spring. The protocol proposed is the same as 2011 (timing, dosage, product, etc.).

Barten asked if the LMA had considered not conducting partial bay treatments in 2012 and using those funds for future whole bay treatments. Based on past treatments, partial bay treatments do not appear to accomplish the 20 percent frequency occurrence goal in the Lake Vegetation Management Plan (LVMP).

Osgood stated that the LMA needs to balance the goals of the LVMP and the controlling Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM). He questioned whether the 20% frequency of occurrence was the best metric for EWM control and he believed that this would be discussed in the next agenda item.

Page stated that the PLM Proposal does not include costs for a treatment on St. Albans Bay.

Osgood stated that a treatment is not planned at this time on St. Albans Bay based on the Army Corps of Engineers delineation from last fall.

Baasen questioned whether the low water conditions on Lake Minnetonka would impact the planned treatments.

Osgood stated that he believed the treatment planned for Grays Bay would benefit from the low water since the Grays Bay Dam would most likely be closed.

Woodruff asked when the treatments are planned.

Osgood estimated that the treatments would occur in late May or early June.

The consensus of the Task Force agreed with the PLM Proposal for 2012.

Assessment of 2008-2011 Coordinated Herbicide Treatment Projects

Page asked Nybeck for background on this agenda item.

Nybeck stated that he and Barten prepared a first draft of Report for this agenda item. This Report is a document representing the Task Force and that any changes which are needed should be communicated at this meeting. If Task Force members have technical questions or comments in the Report, he recommended that they be addressed by Barten. He hoped that this draft Report could be finalized by the Task Force at this meeting, with the Report to be presented to the LMCD Board of Directors on April 25th.

Page stated that there was quite a bit of discussion on this agenda item at a Task Force meeting last fall. He asked Barten to provide an overview of the draft Report.

Barten stated that the Report was prepared based on prior findings from the Army Corps of Engineers and Welling. A summary of his comments were as follows:

- The agreed upon metric in the LVMP for determining success of the treatments was 20 percent of occurrence for EWM and CLP. The data for whole bay or late season treatments indicates that the treatments were successful. For spot treatments and early season treatments, the data indicates that these treatments were not successful.
- There has been some damage to the native species during the years of whole bay treatments; however, these plants have generally recovered in the year following the treatment.
- There has been some discussion by the LMA on the inclusion of anecdotal information by residents on the success of treatments when the percent of occurrence exceeded 20 percent. There has also been anecdotal information from some user groups of the lake (such as the fisherman) on the negative impacts of the treatments on the native plants. He and Nybeck believed that the Report should be prepared where: 1) this anecdotal information is excluded, or 2) all anecdotal information is included.
- A great deal seems to have been learned with regards to successful treatment protocols (later in the season at higher dosage rates). Using this treatment protocol, it seems that the native plants are sustained the year following whole bay treatments.
- Whole bay treatments do not appear to be a long-term management tool for EWM. If you do not treat EWM on a regular basis, the EWM appears to come back rather quickly (citing Grays Bay as an example).
- He entertained questions and comments from the Task Force.

Morris stated that the treatments protocols have become more effective in addressing the targeted plants, in particular EWM. He questioned whether this could also be done for the native plants.

Barten stated that it is presumed that there will be some impact to the native plants with treatments that occur later in the season, at a higher dosage rate, with a greater length of contact time.

Jabbour stated that a resident on Grays Bay communicated to him that he observed that EWM re-established a lot stronger than he had observed in the past. This raises a question of whether a bay could

become worse prior to a treatment occurring. With regards to scientific data, he questioned whether work needs to be done by fisheries because feedback from the fishing lobby that fish have migrated out of Grays Bay.

Green stated that this information has been anecdotal.

Jabbour stated that this would be valuable scientific information if lakewide herbicide treatments were to occur. He also stated that he did not see the cost for the Army Corps of Engineers documented in the Report.

Osgood made the following comments:

- There has been evidence documented on damage to native plants. There has also been data provided on the 2011 herbicide treatments on Gideon and St. Alban Bays that provides evidence that native plants have increased, which he recommended be included in this Report. It is clear that whole bay treatments have some impacts on native plants (frequency and abundance). However, it is also clear that some other native plants appear to compensate. In 2011, there was some biomass-sampling conducted by the Army Corps that indicates that the overall bio-mass following treatments remained the same or increased. He recommended that this be included in this Report.
- The prospect of evaluating the impact on fisheries would be intensive. He relied on studies done elsewhere, which he believed showed no impacts.
- He concurred that the costs for the Army Corps was of high value. However, if these treatments are to become operational, he did not believe this level of monitoring was needed. For example, the MN DNR currently requires a late season point intercept survey for herbicide treatment projects elsewhere.

Jabbour re-stated that he would like the costs for the Army Corps included in the Report.

Osgood stated that one of the goals in the LVMP was to improve ecological health, which he believed was open-ended.

Welling stated that he believed the outcomes have been characterized reasonably in the Report. He emphasized the participation by the Army Corps on this project has been invaluable. He briefly commented on fishery studies conducted by the MN DNR and Mississippi State University. He stated that he would request a financial figure from the Army Corps for the first four years of this project. Additionally, he believed that Osgood accurately described the minimum amount of monitoring required by the MN DNR.

Page stated that it does not appear that the Army Corps has offered the level of monitoring planned for this project moving forward.

Osgood estimated \$3,000 per bay for monitoring expenses moving forward in absence of the Army Corp's participation.

Barten stated that a decision should be made on the appropriate metric moving forward. If bio-mass is used, this would substantially increase the monitoring costs. If point-intercept surveys are continued, there is a need to establish how to assess the difference between the scientific data (percent of frequency) and public perception of the bay residents.

Osgood stated that he believed the Report should reflect that all of the goals have been accomplished other than improving ecological health, which is open-ended. Although there was a 90 percent frequency of EWM in late season on Grays Bay in 2011, he believed the bay could be used for recreational purposes due to the lack of matting.

Page stated that he observed a tremendous amount of matting on the northwest corner of Grays Bay in late 2011, although he recognized there was no distinction made between EWM and native plants. He asked if this draft Report reflected the consensus of the Task Force.

Woodruff stated that he believed the data included in the draft Report was accurate. However, he believed the Board should have an idea of the recommendation of the Task Force moving forward.

Jabbour stated that he would like to somehow keep the Army Corps engaged in this project. He also requested that there costs be provided for this project, as well as including there logo on the front cover page.

Osgood stated that he believed the Report was incomplete for the reasons he has described at this meeting. He questioned why the data that is available for Gideon and St. Albans Bays would not be included in this Report.

Page stated that the LMCD Board has requested a Report for the three bays that were originally included in this project. If Osgood would like to provide supplemental information for Gideon and St. Albans Bays, he could provide this at the April 25th LMCD Board Meeting.

Welling stated that he would like some note made in the Report that the MN DNR has recommended that some of the objectives in the LVMP should be amended. In particular, a reduction of native plants the year of whole bay treatments is acceptable as a trade-off for the recovery of them the year following treatment.

Page summarized proposed changes to be made to the Report. These included:

- The LMA has requested that data from Gideon and St. Albans be included in the Report; however, it has not been included because these two bays are stand alone projects.
- Costs of the Army Corps should be reflected in this Report.
- With these two changes, the consensus of the Task Force was to move the Report for pages 1-5.
- On page 6, there is a need for Task Force feedback on the three questions detailed under the heading "EXPANSION TO OTHER BAYS (FUNDING COURCES)". Based on your feedback, this Section of the draft Report will be finalized.

The consensus of the Task Force was that the LMCD should not extend the current three-bay project beyond 2012, or expand this project to other bays, until a comprehensive vegetation management plan is developed for Lake Minnetonka by the AIS Task Force. Some of the minimum components the plan could include were as follows:

- A focus on bays where nuisance growth of EWM covers 50% or more of the surface use area.
- Control activities should demonstrate a public navigational or recreational benefit for the general public benefit.
- A focus on bays that have plant fragments drifting to other bays should be prioritized.
- Possible funding sources (private and public) needs to be identified.

Schedule Next AIS Task Force Meeting

The next AIS Task Force Meeting was scheduled for Friday, 6/8/12, at 8:30 a.m. in the LMCD office.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Nybeck
Executive Director