

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

8:30 a.m., Friday, March 13, 2015

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

Present: Jay Green, LMCD Board; Gabriel Jabbour; LMCD Board; Rob Roy, LMCD Board; Tony Brough, Hennepin County Environment and Energy (Hennepin County); 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; Judd Harper, LMCD Administrative Technician.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes

The minutes from the 2/13/15 AIS Task Force Meeting were approved as submitted.

MCWD, AIS Letter of Inquiry to the Initiative Foundation

Green asked for an overview of this agenda item from Fieldseth.

Fieldseth stated that the MCWD had recently submitted a letter of inquiry to Lessard Sams as an alternative way to implement watercraft inspections. This inquiry, which was recently reviewed by the West Metro AIS Coordinating Committee, was reviewed via a PowerPoint presentation. A summary of his comments were as follows:

- **Grant Timeline:** A full proposal deadline is March 30th, with announcement of successful applicants scheduled for April 10th.
- **Problem:**
 1. Staffing inspectors at the various public accesses is becoming more problematic.
 2. The proposal is to shift watercraft inspectors from on-site at all public accesses to off-site at several locations (five off-site locations are being considered by the MCWD at this time).
 3. The mechanism that would allow for this is a parking permit for boat trailer parking, in which he provided further background of how this could be established. He emphasized that partnerships with the various organizations would be key to the success of this.
- **Enforcement:** A key component to a successful program and the proposal included added dedicated law enforcement time to patrol parking.
- **Possible Pilots Within a Pilot:** Self- Inspection Certification and Home Lake Programs.
- **Additional Measures:**
 1. Off-site stations would not cover outbound inspections (unless they were launching in a participating boat launch).
 2. One strategy is to manage aquatic vegetation at public accesses to reduce the amount of vegetation that is likely to get on exiting boats and trailers.

3. A need still exists on zebra mussel infested waters to conduct outbound inspections (possibly utilizing inspection resources already provided to Lake Minnetonka by the MN DNR).
 4. Funding has been proposed for improved signage (AIS educational signage and a description of the permit parking program).
- He entertained questions and comments from the Task Force.

A summary of the Task Force discussion was as follows:

- Some members suggested that the MCWD consider keeping Lake Minnetonka outside of the scope of the proposal for the first year (public perception concerns).
- A question was raised as how to best deal with in-bound inspections off-site while out-bound inspections would be dealt with at the public accesses.
- The proposal is to move watercraft inspections from non-mandatory to mandatory. This should take into consideration unintended consequences (citing unintended consequences that occur when a snow emergency is declared in Minneapolis).
- Since 2016 was the first year that it appeared that this could be implemented, it was recommended that the current inspection program components be maintained for outbound inspections (rather than abandoning this).
- The Self-Certification and Home Lake pilot programs (including how they could work and logistics associated with them). There was a discussion of the checks and balances for these programs (third party verification). This discussion included the concept of a home mooring place for boat owners that do not reside on Lake Minnetonka, which would allow for equal treatment of the public.
- Further discussion of the current problem (in particular securing quality staffing to conduct the necessary inspections). There was discussion of current challenges in the hiring of seasonal employees (available pool of staff).
- The proposal is seeking further investigation of centralized watercraft inspections (through the use of parking permits rather than the traditional gate discussion). Some members hoped that this proposal would assist in better addressing the lack of support for gates in the future.
- The proposal should be submitted as a pilot program. Some concern was raised as to how the public may circumvent the launching of their watercraft at launch sites without a parking permit (i.e., street ends, side of county roads, etc.).
- The consensus of the Task Force was that this proposal was a good pilot project and the MCWD was encouraged to submit a full proposal to Lessard Sams.

Preparations for 2015 Lake Minnetonka Watercraft Inspections

Green stated that he and Jabbour had worked with TRPD staff to contract with the LMCD to perform watercraft inspections, at selected public accesses, in 2015. LMCD Board approval of an agreement is planned for the March 25th LMCD Board Meeting, with approval planned for the March 26th TRPD Board Meeting. Once approved, these inspectors will be seasonal employees of the TRPD, monitored primarily by supervisors and periodically TRPD law enforcement officers.

Woodruff questioned whether TRPD law enforcement officers would be involved in enforcement.

Green stated that he envisioned that the law enforcement officers would assist to determine that the inspectors are doing their job properly (as well as presence).

Discussion of Increasing 2015 Outbound Watercraft Inspections on Lake Minnetonka

Green stated that he hoped the percentage of outbound inspections could increase in 2015. He believed that the LMCD's contract with the TRPD may allow for this (although the issue is greater than just the LMCD watercraft inspections). He hoped to maximize the number of outbound watercraft with the hours worked.

A summary of the Task Force discussion was as follows:

- The issues of outbound vs. incoming inspections varies (depending on the audience).
- The majority of the funding is being provided outside of the LMCD (MCWD and MN DNR). However, this needs to take into consideration that the funding for the LMCD is being derived by the member cities, which are equally concerned about incoming watercraft inspections. Should there be a move to focus greater on outbound inspections, this would need to be articulated carefully with the LMCD member cities.
- It was clarified that incoming inspections was approximately 60%, compared to 40% for outbound inspections (both statewide and Lake Minnetonka). This has become a hot button for non Lake Minnetonka stakeholders (Lake Minnetonka is perceived as a super spreader). It was noted that the goal should be 50% for incoming and 50% for outbound inspections.
- For the MN DNR, the policy is to conduct outbound inspections on AIS infested waters; however, it is common that both outbound and incoming watercraft inspections can be done at the same public access. Further background was provided by Doll on this.
- In 2015, the MN DNR communicated that a number of violations came from Lake Minnetonka and Prior Lake. The Task Force reviewed the application available from the MN DNR for 2014 watercraft inspections (including the process for follow-up for problematic watercraft). In particular, at the beginning of the boating season for watercraft that were being launched for the first time and were not properly cleaned over after the 2013 boating season (coming from winter storage). It was noted that the statistics derived are only as good as the information provided by the public (as well as the accuracy of the information recorded by the inspector).

Discussion of Program Objectives for 2015 EWM Harvesting Program on Lake Minnetonka

Green stated that the annual mechanical harvesting program is right around the corner (in particular because the next LMCD AIS Task Force meeting is planned for May). He hoped to have a discussion of what is planned for the 2015 EWM Harvesting Program and stated that Harper was invited to participate on this agenda item since he serves as the project manager.

Harper made the following comments:

- The permit and grant applications have been submitted to the MN DNR.
- The trucking specifications are planned to be sent out later this month.
- The 2014 site supervisor is returning for 2015 and calls have been placed on other returning 2014 employees. He believed that there would be a couple of positions available in 2015 that will need to be filled with new seasonal employees.
- The North Upper Lake Option is planned; however, this can be deviated from (based on actual EWM growth).

- It is anticipated that the 2014 mechanic, Curfman Trucking and Repair, will return in 2015 (although some details need to be finalized). He reviewed maintenance needs that will need to be resolved for 2015.
- He entertained questions and comments from the Task Force.

Woodruff asked what strategy was planned in 2015 where mechanical harvesting could be considered in bays where herbicide treatments are planned by the Lake Minnetonka Association (LMA).

Harper stated that there was some communication between the LMCD and LMA on this in 2014 that needs to be improved in 2015. He hoped that this could be accomplished with one point of contact for the LMA (the decision-maker) in 2015. Ideally, both herbicide treatments and mechanical harvesting could take place in the same area (provided this communication is improved).

Roy stated that Josh Leddy, who was the point of contact in 2014, will continue in 2015. He believed that this will be improved in 2015 because the bay captains have been asked to work through Leddy, who will have one year of experience under his belt in 2015.

The Task Force had a discussion of possible changes to the LMCD's EWM Harvesting Program. Some of the discussion included:

- The need to factor in the whole bay or large scale herbicide treatments being coordinated by the LMA.
- An in house program vs. contracting the program out.
- The need to evaluate systematic harvesting vs. random harvesting cutting.
- The concept of reducing one of the harvesters from the program (to evaluate what affects this may have).
- Actual costs for the 2014 program were approximately \$97,000 (compared to a budget of \$95,000).
- How the program could be of assistance for high-traffic areas, near speed channels and public accesses, for fragments and heavy growth areas. There was discussion of the concept of a rogue harvester in better addressing this.
- A discussion of the aquatic plant management plan being considered by Leddy, Dick Osgood, and others. A question was raised to knowledge of other Task Force members and what the purpose of it was (possibly an update to the Lake Vegetation Management Plan). This was discussed with regards to the comprehensive EWM and Curly-Leaf Pondweed Plan prepared by this Task Force a few years ago (including whether these would be competing documents). Roy stated that he would check further into this and get back to the Task Force.
- The consensus was that a smaller group of Task Force members should get together for a meeting to discuss possible changes to the EWM Harvesting Program for 2015. Interested organizations included Hennepin County, LMA, LMCD, MCWD, MN DNR and any other interested organizations.

AIS Task Force Member Reports

Barten provided an update of an AIS Workshop which is scheduled for April 10th (in place of the West Metro AIS Coordinating Committee planned for the same date). He provided a list of people to be invited, committee members that will provide an update on a variety of AIS related topics at this

workshop, and the background of why this is being coordinated. This workshop is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. at the French Regional Park in Plymouth.

Dawson provided an overview of MCWD comments and testimony to the legislature on the State of Minnesota Decal Program. In summary, the MCWD has communicated to fix the legislation rather than repealing it. He further expounded on this.

Welling stated that a large number of applications have been received by the MN DNR for permit and grant applications. These application requests are currently being processed.

Brough provided an overview of the requests that Hennepin County received for grant funding. He stated that he was excited about the quality of the grant requests that were received for a total of \$362,000 (\$100,000 of funds have been made available). A committee has reviewed the grant requests and he expounded on the requests where funding will be recommended to the Hennepin County Commissioners.

Jabbour provided an update on lake service provider training scheduled at Tonka Bay Marina on March 19th. Lake service providers need to be trained every three years and the first cycle of providers that were trained are back up in 2015.

Doll provided an overview of planned watercraft inspections for 2015, including Lake Minnetonka and other nearby waters, for Level 1 and 2 inspectors. He expounded on this further.

Schedule Next AIS Task Force Meeting

The next meeting for the LMCD AIS Task Force was scheduled for Friday, 5/8/15 (8:30 a.m. at the LMCD office).

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Nybeck
Executive Director