

## 2017 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) PREVENTION PLAN

Date	Name	Comments	Staff Comments	#
12-22-16	Jon Steblay	I do like the plan but there is one area that does concern me and that is the decrease in dollars for education. I believe strongly that an understanding of the issue must first come from recognizing there is a problem and then learning about it so they can take action on a personal as well as community/state level. In summary, I would like to the \$\$\$ for education/awareness increased	Thank you for your comments. As part of an Initiative Foundation grant the Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) received, they conducted a regional survey of watercraft users consisting of 360 individuals at public accesses spread over public accesses in three counties (Beltrami, Cass, & Crow Wing) on August 6 & 7, 2016. The results of the survey indicated that inspectors and volunteers at public boat landings is the source that helped inform lake users the most (75%) concerning aquatic invasive species (AIS). And, 67% of those respondents indicated that as a result of being informed it has inspired them to use AIS prevention practices in the future. Therefore, much of our education and outreach resources (in CWC, 75% of local AIS aid) are dedicated at targeting watercraft users coming in and out of public boat accesses. That being said, the County will continue to provide other forms of targeted, effective education and outreach efforts beyond the landing as we have done successfully in the past.	1
12-22-16	Tim Terrill (MHB)	I think the county did a good job of focusing and targeting their efforts based off past data and budgets. It clearly demonstrates to the reader that there is a process and method to protect Crow Wing County from AIS by coordinating their work with what other counties are doing around them. One suggestion I have is to rename the Innovation/Special Projects fund to something else. Based on what your plan outlines for that line item, I only see that as community engagement project, but not innovative. If you plan to fund innovative projects, than I would suggest that you title it Innovative/Community Engagement Projects.	Thank you for your comments. Projects partially or wholly funded through the innovation/special category in the past have included veliger sampling, AIS education reimbursement monies for lake associations, and water quality sampling.	2
12-29-16	Mike O'Brien	<p>Our Board of directors from the Lower South Long Lake Improvement Association and members of our Lake Improvement District (LID) have read the copy of the <b><i>Crow Wing County 2017 AIS plan</i></b> that you distributed for review. While we appreciate the funds for inspections and signs but do have concerns with the process. Once again the county puts the plan together and THEN asks for comments. You should be gathering input from lake associations, LID's and groups such as resort operators and similar businesses to evaluate the proposed PRIOR to sending it out and asking for comments.</p> <p>There are a lot of snowbirds that will not be around and get a chance to evaluate the plan. The timing for this is ill advised with this time of year being so busy with the holidays and travel. In years past Crow Wing County valued citizen involvement and welcomed citizens in the planning process not just as an afterthought.</p>	Thank you for your comments. Since 2010, when Crow Wing County assumed administrative responsibilities for County water planning, Crow Wing County has been at the forefront of pro-active communication with all stakeholders concerning water quality and AIS prevention. We will continue our aggressive, proactive and broad approaches to getting input from stakeholders. Below is a list of events and opportunities where Crow Wing County has pro-actively solicited feedback and answered questions from stakeholders concerning AIS:	3

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		<p>We understand that the \$35,000 Crow Wing County proposes to have earmarked for “multi-county regional initiatives and that the goal is to initiate cooperative statewide AIS prevention efforts.” All well and good-but this process should start at home with your constituents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly water plan newsletters with information about water planning and AIS from 2010-2015.</li> <li>• Weekly e-mails to lake associations and LIDs with updates about the status of the watercraft inspection program and other AIS specific information.</li> <li>• Participation in the annual AIS roundtables.</li> <li>• Meetings held at various townships / cities concerning water planning, ordinances, and AIS.</li> <li>• One-one-one informal meetings with lake association representatives</li> <li>• Crow Wing County Fair</li> <li>• AIS summit and other conferences where stakeholders were in attendance.</li> <li>• Participation in LARA annual meeting (2015)</li> <li>• Annual lake association open house in May</li> <li>• Lake Edward Conservation Club annual meeting in June, 2016.</li> <li>• Various individual e-mails and phone calls, with an internal county policy to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours.</li> </ul> <p>The process used for gathering formal feedback from the public for the 2017 AIS Prevention Plan is a way in which we can receive the broadest diversity of inputs from as many stakeholders as possible. We are not aware of any other counties that use a comment period to garner public feedback. It is the same process used for other land-related practices such as the Water Plan, Land Use Ordinance, and recreation trail proposals. The process is clear, consistent, transparent, and effective. According to the Minnesota DNR, Crow Wing County’s annual AIS Prevention Plan is “a great example for others” to follow.</p>	

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			<p>We recognize that some lakes have specific and sometimes complex AIS protection needs. In order to better meet those challenges, the 2017 AIS Plan offers local lake associations the option to partner with local government units (LGUs) to receive local AIS aid monies directly from the County’s watercraft inspections and decontaminations that is 100% administered by the LGU, rather than the County. In this way, lake associations can coordinate with other LGUs to meet their own particular needs.</p>	
1-8-17	LARA	<p>The LARA Board of Directors has reviewed the draft 2017 Crow Wing County AIS Prevention Plan, and we have a few comments to share. We generally feel that the County has a good, workable AIS prevention plan, but certain aspects could be greatly enhanced, and we have ideas on how to do that. We want what you want: the most successful county-wide AIS prevention program in the state. Here’s how that can happen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public input is the one area that needs to be greatly improved. A one-month comment period in the middle of winter when many lake residents are absent is not a good enough public process to achieve true civic engagement on an important public document that is used to dispense \$450,000 of taxpayer money. LARA believes that the process is as important as the final product, and the process is broken.</li> <li>• Crow Wing County lake associations have spent hundreds of thousands of their own dollars to manage AIS infestations. We have first-hand knowledge and hands-on experience working with AIS that the County does not. So why doesn’t the County take advantage of that by inviting us to help put together – and not simply “comment on” – an AIS prevention plan? The County is missing out on a golden opportunity to make a good plan better, and it wouldn’t cost a dime.</li> <li>• The County needs to do what many other counties have done with great success: put together an AIS task force consisting of diverse stakeholder groups including lake association representatives, resort owners, lake service provider businesses, sportsmen’s groups, conservation organizations, etc. and ask them: “How should we spend our AIS Prevention Aid to achieve the greatest success?” The task force would represent various stakeholder interests and opinions, and play an advisory role to the County on AIS prevention activities. They would be involved from the very beginning of the process and not just as an afterthought at the end. The County may end up with the same plan it has now, but it would be a plan with true community input and buy-in cultivated throughout the entire process.</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Concerning public input, proactive communication, and an AIS task force, since 2010, when Crow Wing County assumed administrative responsibilities for County water planning, Crow Wing County has been at the forefront of pro-active communication with all stakeholders concerning water quality and AIS prevention. We will continue our aggressive, proactive and broad approaches to getting input from stakeholders. Below is a list of events and opportunities where Crow Wing County has pro-actively solicited feedback and answered questions from stakeholders concerning AIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly water plan newsletters with information about water planning and AIS from 2010-2015.</li> <li>• Weekly e-mails to lake associations and LIDs with updates about the status of the watercraft inspection program and other AIS specific information.</li> <li>• Participation in the annual AIS roundtables.</li> <li>• Meetings held at various townships / cities concerning water planning, ordinances, and AIS.</li> <li>• One-one-one informal meetings with lake association representatives</li> <li>• Crow Wing County Fair</li> <li>• AIS summit and other conferences where stakeholders were in attendance.</li> </ul>	4

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midway through the draft document, \$35,000 is tentatively proposed for “multi-county regional initiatives.” There is no explanation in the document for what this means. Is this to supplement the work of the Mississippi Headwaters Board or to support the work of those counties that receive the most money from the state for AIS prevention? LARA knows that the “Top Ten” counties, of which Crow Wing is one, have been meeting to discuss opportunities for collaboration that could potentially have significant statewide AIS impacts. This initiative is a budgetary expense worthy of support, but only if it is fully discussed and understood by the County’s citizens. Again, including stakeholder groups in the process of creating the plan and budget, and sharing what ideas are being bantered about and considered for funding by the task force would help alleviate any misconceptions about what the County is doing and why.</li> <li>• A commonly heard complaint from the lake associations LARA represents is that the County doesn’t seem to care what lake associations think. And there are valid reasons for that kind of thinking. The County Board has often called lake associations and their members, “activists,” and that word is said with a negative connotation, as if citizens wanting something better from their government is a bad thing. We also recall the County’s response when Serpent Lake wanted to start a Lake Improvement District (LID) and did everything the County required, yet their application was still denied. And we recall that citizen advisory committees to the County, like the Water Plan Advisory Committee and the Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, were both disbanded. The message received was, “The County can do this on our own. We don’t need or want citizen input anymore.” If the County included lake associations in the entire AIS prevention planning process (and not just in the accepting public comments portion), relationships between lake associations and the County could only be improved. LARA would be happy to help the County organize a task force that includes lake association representation. Before the plan is put together, the County could arrange a few meetings and invite stakeholders to participate in the “gathering ideas” part of the process. The County could then use the best ideas and promote the plan as an example of open and honest collaboration between the County and its partners. It’s a win-win. The alternative is that the County continues to leave others out of the full process, and those “others” continue to complain that this is a plan crafted by a few individuals behind closed doors with little transparency and even less citizen participation. If the process remains unchanged, the divide between the County and its citizens will grow larger, deeper and more difficult to bridge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in LARA annual meeting (2015)</li> <li>• Annual lake association open house in May</li> <li>• Lake Edward Conservation Club annual meeting in June, 2016.</li> <li>• Various individual e-mails and phone calls, with an internal county policy to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours.</li> </ul>	
			<p>The process used for gathering formal feedback from the public for the 2017 AIS Prevention Plan is a way in which we can receive the broadest diversity of inputs from as many stakeholders as possible. We are not aware of any other counties that use a comment period to garner public feedback. It is the same process used for other land-related practices such as the Water Plan, Land Use Ordinance, and recreation trail proposals. The process is clear, consistent, transparent, and effective. According to the Minnesota DNR, Crow Wing County’s annual AIS Prevention Plan is “a great example for others” to follow.</p>	
			<p>We recognize that some lakes have specific and sometimes complex AIS protection needs. In order to better meet those challenges, the 2017 AIS Plan offers local lake associations the option to partner with local government units (LGUs) to receive local AIS aid monies directly from the County’s watercraft inspections and decontaminations that is 100% administered by the LGU, rather than the County. In this way, lake associations can coordinate with other LGUs to meet their own particular needs.</p>	
			<p>We look forward to continuing to solicit feedback from all stakeholders in the future.</p>	
			<p>The \$35,000 Crow Wing County proposes to have earmarked for “multi-county regional initiatives” is for two broad concepts:</p>	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) AIS Awareness Campaign that includes the “Minnesota Traditions” social media campaign, professional regional television (and YouTube/website) infomercials, and web space presence.</li> <li>• Collaboration on large scale projects that could make a substantial impact on AIS in Minnesota and beyond as part of the group of 10 Minnesota counties receiving the most AIS prevention aid, amounting to approximately \$4.3 million/year. These are ideas that individuals counties may not have tried to take on themselves, but if others were to join in, there could be great success. The goal is cooperative statewide AIS prevention efforts.</li> </ul> <p>Concerning the kind of work that is being accomplished in collaboration with the MHB, see their AIS website at <a href="http://www.minnesotatraditions.com/">http://www.minnesotatraditions.com/</a>.</p> <p>Concerning the “AIS Top 10” group, it has not yet identified a specific project that it plans to financially support in 2017. However, many good ideas have been discussed. Ultimately, Crow Wing County looks forward to utilizing economies of scale to support regionally significant projects that have an impact not only on one or two lakes within Crow Wing County, but to all watercraft users state-wide in a way that cannot be done by one county alone.</p>	
1-10-17	Jeff Allison	<p>I attended the work session at the Beltrami County Court House last week and listen to the report on the county's aquatic invasive species plan. The plan continues to allow the county to spend state tax payers money for management activities through 2018, approximately 200,000.00 dollars next year. I expressed my opposition to mandatory inspections and requested other alternatives. From their standpoint, I am on a island by myself without any creditable support. What we need is the silent majority to become involved and request a public scoping process to hold government accountable. It seems that a small minority of influential folks have had control over this issue and the rural areas go unrepresented. I hope voters will convey there interest in a new direction for less government to</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Since 2010, when Crow Wing County assumed administrative responsibilities for County water planning, Crow Wing County has been at the forefront of pro-active communication with all stakeholders concerning water quality and AIS prevention. We will continue our aggressive, proactive and broad approaches to getting input from stakeholders. Below is a list of events and opportunities where Crow Wing County</p>	5

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		<p>the newly elected politicians (they did run on that assumption). I urge the county board to hold public meetings or public input processes to get all voices heard (thanks to Crow Wing County for doing just that). We are promoting clean water and healthy ecosystems; I am against government over regulation and not giving public users credit that we can do this ourselves. The money could be used for other practical projects.</p> <p>I referenced the 2015 Beltrami County invasive species report in other articles and it indicated that compliance was at 98% . This year, 2016, the invasive species summary for Beltrami County reported that boater compliance was at 99%! An obvious question then would be, why are we still doing the same ridiculous inspections, wasting tax payers money?</p> <p>As far as preventing any living invasive plant, seed or organism entering local lakes, the answer, a big zero. So what did we get for our tax payers dollars? I think this election did reflect change.</p>	<p>has pro-actively solicited feedback and answered questions from stakeholders concerning AIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly water plan newsletters with information about water planning and AIS from 2010-2015.</li> <li>• Weekly e-mails to lake associations and LIDs with updates about the status of the watercraft inspection program and other AIS specific information.</li> <li>• Participation in the annual AIS roundtables.</li> <li>• Meetings held at various townships / cities concerning water planning, ordinances, and AIS.</li> <li>• One-one-one informal meetings with lake association representatives</li> <li>• Crow Wing County Fair</li> <li>• AIS summit and other conferences where stakeholders were in attendance.</li> <li>• Participation in LARA annual meeting (2015)</li> <li>• Annual lake association open house in May</li> <li>• Lake Edward Conservation Club annual meeting in June, 2016.</li> <li>• Various individual e-mails and phone calls, with an internal county policy to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours.</li> </ul> <p>The process used for gathering formal feedback from the public for the 2017 AIS Prevention Plan is a way in which we can receive the broadest diversity of inputs from as many stakeholders as possible. We are not aware of any other counties that use a comment period to garner public feedback. It is the same process used for other land-related practices such as the Water Plan, Land Use Ordinance, and recreation trail proposals. The process is clear, consistent, transparent, and effective. According to the Minnesota DNR, Crow Wing County’s annual AIS Prevention Plan is “a great example for others” to follow.</p>	

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			<p>Concerning providing more flexibility at a local level, we recognize that some lakes and areas within the County have unique challenges. In order to better meet those challenges, Crow Wing County is offering, for the first time, the ability for local lake associations to partner with local government units (LGUs) to receive local AIS aid monies directly from the County for watercraft inspections and decontaminations that is 100% administered by the LGU. In this way, we are demonstrating our commitment to working with partners that can provide an increased capacity to combat AIS that is custom-tailored to local agencies and/or organizations' specific needs.</p> <p>Concerning watercraft inspections at landings, Crow Wing County is required to comply with state law (see MN Statute 477A.19 and 84D) in preventing the introduction and/or spread of aquatic invasive species. The AIS aid the County receives must specifically be used to "...prevent the introduction or limit the spread of aquatic invasive species at all access sites within the county." And, "The county must establish, by resolution or through adoption of a plan, guidelines for the use of the proceeds." As part of an Initiative Foundation grant The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) recently received, they conducted a regional survey of watercraft users consisting of 360 individuals at public accesses spread over public accesses in three counties (Beltrami, Cass, &amp; Crow Wing) on August 6 &amp; 7, 2016. The results of the survey indicated that inspectors and volunteers at public boat landings is the source that helped inform lake users the most (75%) concerning aquatic invasive species (AIS). And, 67% of those respondents indicated that as a result of being informed it has inspired them to use AIS prevention practices in the future. Therefore, much of our education and outreach resources (in CWC, 75% of local AIS aid) are dedicated at targeting watercraft users coming in and out of</p>	

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			public boat accesses. That being said, the County will continue to provide other forms of targeted, effective education and outreach efforts beyond the landing as we have done successfully in the past.	
1-20-17	Tom Watson-Northern Crow Wing Coalition of Lake Associations	<p>On behalf of the Board of Directors of the undersigned lake and property owners associations, we offer comments, suggestions and recommendations regarding the 2017 Crow Wing County Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan (Plan). Our group of lake associations appreciates the opportunity for input based on the direct experience of our lake associations for an effective 2017 Plan.</p> <p>As you know, the 2014 Minnesota Legislature enacted legislation that appropriated \$4.5 million for 2014 and \$10 million for 2015 and annually thereafter solely to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in our public waters. This annual appropriation is made to the Commissioner of Revenue who is required to confirm the quantities of public accesses and parking sites at those same accesses. The Commissioner has provided those quantities and the 2017 projected state aid amount for Crow Wing County AIS prevention is \$445,700, based fifty (50%) percent on 102 public accesses (launch) and the other fifty (50%) percent on 917 public access parking spaces in Crow Wing County. This is a reduction of nearly \$(3,000) compared to the 2016 AIS state aid amount.</p> <p>As a reminder of the state statute authorizing this AIS Prevention Aid, the “. . . county that receives a distribution under this section [MN Stat. 2016, Section 477A.19] must use the proceeds solely to prevent . . . aquatic invasive species at all access sites within the county”.</p> <p>We believe that a stronger, more effective Plan and the program services to be conducted in 2017, must considering the following items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Increase</u> the allocation to the 2017 AIS budget by at least \$85,000 for inspections that would add about 5,000 watercraft inspections hours and for “water-focused” direct education services, which is the fundamental intent of Laws 2014, Chapter 308, from at least three funding sources: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The \$35,000 carryover funds from 2016 should be used <del>planned</del> for direct AIS efforts in 2017 as <u>Chapter 308 requires</u> the Crow Wing County aid allocation to be spent at public accesses in Crow Wing County;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>As has been the case since the latter half of 2014, when Counties first began receiving AIS prevention aid from the State of Minnesota, all of the financial support for the County’s AIS prevention efforts have come from that aid or other state grants. The proposed budget reflects maximal use of these funds, including approximately 75% of the money directly used to support watercraft inspections. Any proposed additional watercraft inspections would exceed the totality of the \$450,473 in state funding.</p> <p>The tentative \$35,000 that Crow Wing County proposes to earmark for “multi-county regional initiatives” is for two broad concepts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) AIS Awareness Campaign that includes the “Minnesota Traditions” social media campaign, professional regional television (and YouTube/website) infomercials, and web space presence.</li> <li>2. Collaboration on large scale projects that could make a substantial impact on AIS in Minnesota and beyond as part of the group of 10 Minnesota counties receiving the most AIS prevention aid, amounting to approximately \$4.3 million/year. These are ideas that individuals counties may not have tried to take on themselves, but if others were to join in, there could be great success.</li> </ol> <p>Crow Wing County believes that utilizing economies of scale to support regionally significant projects have impact not only on one or two lakes within Crow Wing County, but to all watercraft users state-</p>	6

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Crow Wing County must commence budgeting “local property tax levy” funds, about \$50,000, to provide added funding for the annual AIS Plan and services;</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>Proposed 2017 Bud</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>2016 Est/Act</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>Final 2016 Budget*</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>2015 Proj Act</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>2015 Budget</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Inspections</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$293,230</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$337,948</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$293,176</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$276,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$264,473</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education /training</td> <td style="text-align: right;">21,500</td> <td style="text-align: right;">41,892</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">43,000</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Decontamination</td> <td style="text-align: right;">26,500</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6,877</td> <td style="text-align: right;">51,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">50,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">90,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other services</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>50,188</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;">51,664</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>77,000</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>54,000</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>95,000</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Subtotal; Direct svcs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$391,418</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$421,176</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$425,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$449,473</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multi-county</td> <td style="text-align: right;">35,000</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>County staff</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>58,166</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>tbd</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>46,500</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$54,000</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$40,000</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Total</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$484,584</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$438,381</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$467,676</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$477,000</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$489,473</u></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>c. Secure a more cost effective approach to employing inspectors that should be less costly than the present arrangement with the Employment Resource Center (ERC), and which savings could fund additional AIS direct services; and</p> <p>2. <u>Consult</u> with the Northern Crow Wing Coalition of Lake Associations, considering the County seems to not desire establishing a County AIS Advisory Committee, for a more effective formulation of the County’s Annual AIS plan, which is essentially a spending plan for lake associations, rather than only offering a “public comment” period.</p> <p>We reviewed the proposed 2017 Crow Wing County AIS Plan. We analyzed the data in the following table that summarizes the 2017 budget with comparisons to estimated/actual 2016, budget 2016 as approved December 29, 2015, and budget and actual 2015:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* as approved December 29, 2015</p>		<u>Proposed 2017 Bud</u>	<u>2016 Est/Act</u>	<u>Final 2016 Budget*</u>	<u>2015 Proj Act</u>	<u>2015 Budget</u>	Inspections	\$293,230	\$337,948	\$293,176	\$276,000	\$264,473	Education /training	21,500	41,892		43,000		Decontamination	26,500	6,877	51,000	50,000	90,000	Other services	<u>50,188</u>	51,664	<u>77,000</u>	<u>54,000</u>	<u>95,000</u>	Subtotal; Direct svcs	\$391,418		\$421,176	\$425,000	\$449,473	Multi-county	35,000					County staff	<u>58,166</u>	<i>tbd</i>	<u>46,500</u>	<u>\$54,000</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>\$484,584</u>	<u>\$438,381</u>	<u>\$467,676</u>	<u>\$477,000</u>	<u>\$489,473</u>	<p>wide in a way that cannot be done by one county alone.</p> <p>Concerning cost effective approaches to employing watercraft inspectors, Crow Wing County (as an organization) maintains a contract with Brainerd’s Employment Resource Center (ERC), which is reviewed periodically. The latest review in late 2014 found the rate to be the lowest of the competition. Continual reviews will be conducted to ensure we receive the best price available.</p> <p>Concerning effective public input, Since 2010, when Crow Wing County assumed administrative responsibilities for County water planning, Crow Wing County has been at the forefront of pro-active communication with all stakeholders concerning water quality and AIS prevention. We will continue our aggressive, proactive and broad approaches to getting input from stakeholders. Below is a list of events and opportunities where Crow Wing County has pro-actively solicited feedback and answered questions from stakeholders concerning AIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly water plan newsletters with information about water planning and AIS from 2010-2015.</li> <li>• Weekly e-mails to lake associations and LIDs with updates about the status of the watercraft inspection program and other AIS specific information.</li> <li>• Participation in the annual AIS roundtables.</li> <li>• Meetings held at various townships / cities concerning water planning, ordinances, and AIS.</li> <li>• One-one-one informal meetings with lake association representatives</li> <li>• Crow Wing County Fair</li> <li>• AIS summit and other conferences where stakeholders were in attendance.</li> <li>• Participation in LARA annual meeting (2015)</li> </ul>	
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Date	Name	Comments	Staff Comments	#								
		<p>We call to your attention that the 2016 budget provided with the proposed County Plan totals \$389,913 and not the \$467,676 budget approved by the County Board on December 29, 2015.</p> <p>Our detailed analysis of the County’s proposed AIS state aid budget, a County restricted fund, should consider the following items that support our primary recommendations above:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our lake associations with present 2016 funding from <u>all of our sources</u> were able to provide about fifty (50%) of watercraft inspection demand coverage from May 15 (about walleye fishing opener) to September 15.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Actual hours for 2016, as reported by and hired by ERC, totaled 21,892.65 hours for the combined County lake associations compared to the budgeted 16,900 inspection hours; <u>the additional nearly 5,000 hours were paid by the lake associations from their member dues.</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The lake associations represented on this letter had to pay “full cost” for 38.6% of actual for 2016 inspections exceeding the 2016 allocation:                   <table style="margin-left: 20px; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">• Actual hours with ERC</td> <td style="text-align: right;">9,424.9 hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">• Allocated hours by CWC</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>6,800</u> hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">• Deficit; funded by lake assns</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(2,624.9) hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">• Billed at \$16.50 per hour</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$43,310.85</td> </tr> </table> </li> <li>b. Allocation to watercraft inspections is minimally increased compared to (est) actual spending (as we were provided over the summer/fall) and compared to the 2017 Plan budget, <u>including</u> County staff costs:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <u>2017 Plan = \$338,451; 2016 (est) actual = \$337,948; increase = \$503</u></li> </ol> </li> <li>c. Allocation to County personnel increased from \$46,500 in 2016 Plan budget (2016 actual is not available) to \$58,166 in 2017 Plan; <u>increase of \$11,666,</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <u>Net of County staff increase; the proposed direct services amount is actually a decrease allocation for 2017 watercraft inspections</u></li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li></ol>	• Actual hours with ERC	9,424.9 hours	• Allocated hours by CWC	<u>6,800</u> hours	• Deficit; funded by lake assns	(2,624.9) hours	• Billed at \$16.50 per hour	\$43,310.85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual lake association open house in May</li> <li>• Lake Edward Conservation Club annual meeting in June, 2016.</li> <li>• Various individual e-mails and phone calls, with an internal county policy to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours.</li> </ul> <p>The process used for gathering formal feedback from the public for the 2017 AIS Prevention Plan is a way in which we can receive the broadest diversity of inputs from as many stakeholders as possible. We are not aware of any other counties that use a comment period to garner public feedback. It is the same process used for other land-related practices such as the Water Plan, Land Use Ordinance, and recreation trail proposals. The process is clear, consistent, transparent, and effective. According to the Minnesota DNR, Crow Wing County’s annual AIS Prevention Plan is “a great example for others” to follow.</p> <p>The Northern Crow Wing Lakes Association Coalition clearly has an increased and unique capacity for planning and communication. We are offering, for the first time, the ability for local lake associations to partner with local government units (LGUs) to receive local AIS aid monies directly from the County for watercraft inspections and decontaminations that is 100% administered by the LGU. In this way, we are demonstrating our commitment to working with partners that can provide an increased capacity to combat AIS that is custom-tailored to local agencies and/or organizations’ specific needs.</p> <p>We look forward to continuing to solicit feedback from all stakeholders in the future.</p> <p>Concerning allocation to County personnel, an informal survey of surrounding counties has revealed that counties spend between 10 and 35% of local</p>	
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## 2017 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) PREVENTION PLAN

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		<p>d. Loss of the State of MN, DNR grants for 2016 which provided several thousand hours of inspections for our lake associations, without any assurance nor approved budget for these grants will be available for 2017,</p> <p>e. Increase County staffing is unnecessary and disregards the coordination and “volunteer” work performed by members of our lake associations, a recommended AIS advisory committee, and several lake associations who will handle these services,</p> <p>f. In addition to the state aid funded AIS activity, our lake associations have funded or will be funding with member dues the following examples of our commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. 2016 inspection hours through ERC exceeding state aid funds</li> <li>ii. Contributions to the Univ of MN AIS Research Center</li> <li>iii. Pelican Lake Assn (PLA) – construct new Breezy Point decon center</li> <li>iv. WAPOA – construction of campsites with electricity and sewer @ ACOE Crosslake in exchange for watercraft inspection hours</li> <li>v. AIS Tracker program initiated by PLA with MAISRC; statewide in 2017</li> <li>vi. Other examples are available from each of our lake associations</li> </ul> <p>2. Recommend the County “bid” or “re-negotiate” the employment services, costing forty-four (44%) percent of wages, which is <u>extremely high overhead and profit margin</u> considering the employment taxes and no benefits paid these inspectors,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Savings from employment agency re-negotiated or re-bid agreement should be a cost reduction, and savings reallocated to inspections,</i></li> </ul> <p>3. Multi-county regional initiative (\$35,000) – Our lake associations believe it is a good idea and the County should work with other counties and the Mississippi Headwaters Board on developing and planning initiatives, but these state aids <u>must be spent within the county.</u></p>	<p>AIS aid monies on administrative personnel costs (Aitkin = 10%; Cass = 12.4%; Hubbard = 13%; Mille Lacs = 35%; St. Louis = 15%). Even so, the proposed 2017 Plan been modified to reduce the amount of local aid AIS money spent on administrative costs from 15% to 9.9% and reallocate those monies to the watercraft inspection program. This is the lowest ratio of administrative costs among all counties, to our knowledge. The reduction will amount to \$22,549 coming from personnel costs and re-allocated to the watercraft inspection program for additional inspection hours (apx 1,000 hours) and enhanced inspector training.</p> <p>Concerning the retention of County local AIS aid, in 2016, we actually spent more than the proposed budget of \$389,913 by more than \$40,000 (actual spent was \$438,381), but due to the 2015 carry-over, will still have a positive balance for 2017 (approximately \$35,000). That carryover is tentatively earmarked to be spent on participation in multi-county regional initiatives as described above. If there are additional or potential unspent monies that become available in 2017, we will consider reallocating those monies into the watercraft inspection program either in the form of a reimbursement to lake associations for their paid time or additional county allocated inspections part-way through the season.</p> <p>Concerning in-kind spending by lake associations and other AIS partners, the funds allocated by the State of Minnesota do not require a local "in-kind" match as many state grants do. We recognize that lake associations play a huge role in preventing the spread of AIS. Over the years, our AIS program has been driven in large part by the input of lake associations.</p> <p>Concerning the risk-classifications assigned to various landings in Crow Wing County, they are</p>	

## 2017 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) PREVENTION PLAN

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		<p>a. As a reminder of the state statute authorizing this AIS Prevention Aid, the “. . . county that receives a distribution under this section [MN Stat. 2016, Section 477A.19] must use the proceeds solely to prevent . . . aquatic invasive species at <b><u>all access sites within the county</u></b>”. In other words, the state aid allocation to each County, which is based on local measures, must be used at all access sites within the county,</p> <p>b. The County should fund personnel and travel costs from its General Fund,</p> <p>c. As proposed initiatives and projected costs are identified, representatives of our lake associations would be available to meet with the County staff to review, and if approved, decide how to fund those projects,</p> <p>d. The 2016 carryover funds of \$35,000 should be spent on 2017 direct services;</p> <p>4. Retaining annual state aid funds is neither responsible nor appropriate based on the experience of the last two (2) years</p> <p>a. “Withholding” funds in any year is inconsistent with the fundamental intent of the 2014 legislation for <u>annually</u> preventing and controlling AIS. Delaying for one year will NOT make the challenge and solution better and requires us to fully fund the last months’ inspections,</p> <p>b. A second allocation should be provided in July to enable lake associations to plan their late summer and fall watercraft inspection schedules,</p> <p>c. The carry-over of \$35,000 from 2016, including \$19,000 from 2015, would have provided an additional 2,120 hours of watercraft inspections at full cost or 4,240 hours at \$8.25 per hour for 2016;</p> <p>5. Crow Wing County must budget “local property tax levy” funds to provide additional funding for the annual AIS Plan and services. The water and lake resources of Crow Wing County are obviously the “lifeblood” of the local economy, property values, and county identity.</p>	<p>based off of a number of quantifiable factors, including usage (# of inspections/hr), infested status and location relative to other heavily used and/or infested water bodies. We use the same model as the DNR when determining inspection hours (# of inspections/hour) as well as additional factors as mentioned above to identify landings that may be of more risk. As in previous years, our 2017 Plan is required to include all landings. Any modification to the risk classification is not likely to provide additional hours to these lakes, which seems to be the goal. Using the state allocation formula, which relies heavily on the # of trailer spaces would result in a decrease for most of the lakes in this letter, up to 35% decrease for WAPOA, 58% decrease for Pelican Lakes. Until a better regional or statewide system is used to monitor/control access to public waters, it will be very difficult to inspect all boaters at all times of the day, especially those actively seeking to avoid inspection.</p> <p>Concerning decontamination, we follow Minnesota state statutes concerning when a decontamination is required. Until the State of Minnesota changes the law concerning when and how a decontamination is conducted, we will continue to follow the current protocol. In 2016, we switched from having the Crosslake decontamination station fully staffed 7 days per-week to on-call only during the weekdays and fully staffed Friday thru Sunday. We have received no negative feedback concerning the availability of the decontamination station under the 2016 arrangement. We will certainly continue to analyze usage patterns moving forward and make changes to the hours of operation as necessary to achieve maximum effectiveness.</p> <p>Concerning a potential change of location of the Crosslake decontamination station, Land Services Supervisor Chris Pence met with Supervisory Park Ranger Carrine Hodapp of the US Army Corps of</p>	

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		<p>a. The MN DNR has continually told us that these lakes are for "all" people and not just the property owners. If that is the case, then the County should also be funding efforts to keep our lakes healthy, not just lake associations and the State. If starry stonewort, spiny waterflea, Eurasian watermilfoil or silver carp get into the Whitefish Chain or Pelican or Gull Chain, Crow Wing County officials, County Commissioners, and the rest of us can watch property values slide downward. Then we will be interested in watching the County address the county tax levy increases on <u>all</u> property owners to make up the difference. We need to remain ahead of the problem and help with the AIS prevention effort.</p> <p>6. Provide a provision in the Plan that accounts for the "in-kind" spending by all organizations, including lake associations, participating in the AIS control and prevention program county-wide,</p> <p>a. Our lake associations spend an amount equal to or more than the state aid allocation on watercraft inspection, education, and public information,</p> <p>b. Our local lake associations organized, planned and conducted annual AIS roundtables in 2014 and 2015, and with plans for spring 2017, and</p> <p>c. The County AIS Plan fails to recognize the considerable "in-kind" efforts of our lake associations in AIS services, which accounting can be provided.</p> <p>7. Risk classification does NOT go far enough; need to be reviewed and updated</p> <p>a. The present risk classification is very arbitrary and not based on watercraft traffic measures and accurate number of public accesses, but simply inspection history per access recorded only when inspectors were present.</p> <p>b. Risk ranges from Very High to Low on the same lake are not supported by "fact", as watercraft owners use social media and cellular phones to identify accesses without inspector staffing and avoid inspections.</p>	<p>Engineers (USACOE) in the summer of 2016 to discuss a proposed re-location of the existing Crosslake decontamination station. We were told that the USACOE did not have the space available to re-locate the decontamination station at the Crosslake campground.</p>	

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		<p>c. Based on property values and the quantity of watercraft entering and exiting on larger lakes, the range of hours allocated of 100 to 400 hours is not substantiated with the present arbitrary allocations.</p> <p>8. Decontamination has not been effective</p> <p>a. Decontamination should be mandatory for watercraft moving into and out of multiple lakes in and out of the County, which watercraft are the “transporters” of the non-native AIS,</p> <p>b. We understand the expected importance of the decontamination, but the present program is not working as measured by expenditures and usage as the number of decontamination treatments performed in 2016 and 2015 does “not measure up” to the requirement for decontamination, and</p> <p>c. As we offered last year, the Crosslake location does not work for numerous reasons, and the County should accept the ACOE offer to locate it at their Crosslake site, near several busy accesses, and have better visibility.</p> <p>9. Establish an AIS Advisory Committee</p> <p>a. Our lake associations recommended in 2014, 2015 and again in 2016 that Crow Wing County appoint an AIS services advisory committee/task force much like the County has for several functions; rejected previously;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i. An AIS advisory committee would enable much improved communication and coordination between the County and lake associations;</p> <p>b. Our lake associations <u>have</u> organized a Northern Crow Wing Lakes Association Coalition for planning and communication among our lake associations; coordination of and sharing services and training; and addressing AIS plans including the County AIS Plans. We believe that we have informally worked effectively in the past with Mitch Brinks, CWC Water Protection Specialist, in conducting the present AIS program. We are rarely asked by the County for input on these matters even though our associations have a major role in the annual implementation.</p>		

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		<p style="text-align: center;">c. The formulation of the County’s Annual AIS plan would be more effective working with our lake associations rather than only offering a “public comment” period after issuing it.</p> <p>The undersigned lake associations represent a large number of taxpaying property owners, including those who are members of our lake associations in Crow Wing County.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 10px 0;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="6" style="text-align: center;"><i>Economic Market Value for Cities and Counties. Assessment Year 2015 for taxes payable in 2016</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="6" style="text-align: center;"><i>COMBINED - Timothy, Jenkins, Ideal, 50 Lakes, Man Beach, Crosslake, Mission &amp; Pelican</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>Estimated MV</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>Economic MV</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>% of Total</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>% of CWC</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">01</td> <td>Residential</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$879,833,600</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$918,805,603</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29.5%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">03</td> <td>Non-Comm'l Seas Res Rec</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,833,722,600</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,987,612,630</td> <td style="text-align: center;">63.9%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">49.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">06</td> <td>Commercial</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$61,493,100</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$61,882,963</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2.0%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">14</td> <td>Commercial Seasonal Rec</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$29,982,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$29,982,000</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1.0%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">97</td> <td>Total Agriculture</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$93,681,600</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$97,049,207</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">14.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Other</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$16,112,967</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$16,153,910</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>0.5%</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>7.7%</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$2,914,825,867</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$3,111,486,313</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>100.0%</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>29.8%</u></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>As shown in the above table, our lakes represent nearly 30% of the Economic Market Value (2015 pay 2016), including increases to 49.5% and 27.8% for commercial seasonal residential recreational property and commercial seasonal recreational property, respectively. This is a \$68 million and 0.3% EMV increase, respectively, compared to 2015 pay 2016 data. The above data does not include Gull and Bay property and areas of southern Crow Wing County.</p> <p>The northern area of Crow Wing County is a major “economic” contributor to the County, provides a significant source of employment, and serves as a destination as a result of the significant travel and tourism, seasonal visitors, watercraft traffic, and waters. The importance of “quality” waters should be foremost in the County</p>	<i>Economic Market Value for Cities and Counties. Assessment Year 2015 for taxes payable in 2016</i>						<i>COMBINED - Timothy, Jenkins, Ideal, 50 Lakes, Man Beach, Crosslake, Mission &amp; Pelican</i>								<u>Estimated MV</u>	<u>Economic MV</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>% of CWC</u>	01	Residential	\$879,833,600	\$918,805,603	29.5%	20.0%	03	Non-Comm'l Seas Res Rec	\$1,833,722,600	\$1,987,612,630	63.9%	49.5%	06	Commercial	\$61,493,100	\$61,882,963	2.0%	8.1%	14	Commercial Seasonal Rec	\$29,982,000	\$29,982,000	1.0%	27.8%	97	Total Agriculture	\$93,681,600	\$97,049,207	3.1%	14.0%		Other	<u>\$16,112,967</u>	<u>\$16,153,910</u>	<u>0.5%</u>	<u>7.7%</u>		Total	<u>\$2,914,825,867</u>	<u>\$3,111,486,313</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>29.8%</u>		
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		<p>decision for this 2017 AIS Plan and budget allocation. The importance of quality water in our area is further demonstrated in the following table:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel, tourism and second home owner spending in Crow Wing County is the third largest outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan seven county area after only Olmstead and St. Louis Counties.</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="border: none;"><u>2007</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Traveler Exp</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>State Revenue</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>FTE Direct</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>FTE Indirect</u></th> </tr> <tr> <th style="border: none;"><u>-08</u></th> <th style="border: none;"></th> <th style="border: none;"></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Jobs</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Jobs</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Crow Wing</td> <td style="border: none;">\$294,295,204</td> <td style="border: none;">\$135,953,389</td> <td style="border: none;">5,029</td> <td style="border: none;">2,189</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="margin-left: 40px; font-size: small;">Source: Univ of MN, Extension Service, June 2007-May 2008, Davidson-Peterson Associates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct tourism (leisure and hospitality; defined by the State of MN Dept of Revenue and Dept of Employment and Economic Development) spending in Crow Wing, as shown below for calendar year 2012 and 2014 gross sales, sales tax revenue and employment:</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="border: none;"><u>Crow Wing</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Gross Sales</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Sales Tax Rev</u></th> <th style="border: none;"><u>Employment</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="border: none;">2014</td> <td style="border: none;">\$219,764,993</td> <td style="border: none;">\$13,723,626</td> <td style="border: none;">3,969</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">2012</td> <td style="border: none;">\$201,073,526</td> <td style="border: none;">\$12,686,611</td> <td style="border: none;">3,892</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Traveler Exp</u>	<u>State Revenue</u>	<u>FTE Direct</u>	<u>FTE Indirect</u>	<u>-08</u>			<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	Crow Wing	\$294,295,204	\$135,953,389	5,029	2,189	<u>Crow Wing</u>	<u>Gross Sales</u>	<u>Sales Tax Rev</u>	<u>Employment</u>	2014	\$219,764,993	\$13,723,626	3,969	2012	\$201,073,526	\$12,686,611	3,892		
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		<p>We offer this property tax and economic data as evidence of the importance of managing water quality and AIS for our Crow Wing County lakes area and throughout Crow Wing County. These data items illustrate the importance and growing magnitude of “quality” water as a destination for visitors, tourists, second homeowners and small businesses.</p> <p>At the present time, the annual funds from all sources spent on watercraft inspections, decontamination, milfoil treatment, and education and information is considerably less than need to be effective in preventing the introduction and/or spread of AIS in Crow Wing County. We strongly believe the County needs to make a financial commitment of property tax levy funds to support a more effective AIS prevention program. Please improve the watercraft inspection budget, along with our recommendations to fund those services.</p> <p>Our non-profit lake associations, IRS Code Sec 501(c)3 tax exempt organizations, have now and have had for many years AIS prevention and control programs. These programs include (1) boat inspections at the public accesses, (2) AIS and watercraft inspection materials purchased for distribution, (3) lake inspection surveys for non-native AIS plants and animals and (4) control of already identified non-native AIS plants and animals. Except for annual direct grants from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), our lake associations have funded with member dues and donations the majority of these AIS program costs for years. As property and business owners, we are prepared to effectively continue administering the AIS program for our</p>																													

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		<p>respective lake associations and continue to make annual financial commitments to AIS control and prevention; a “true” public benefit.</p> <p>Our lake associations will continue to be contributors to this AIS responsibility. We also would be available to meet to discuss our suggestions and recommendations prior to County Board meeting addressing this 2017 Plan or invited to present at the Board meeting.</p>		