



Ripples

CROW WING COUNTY
LAKES AND RIVERS ALLIANCE
P.O. BOX 53, PEQUOT LAKES, MN 56472

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Watercraft Inspections 2016

By *Phil Hunsicker*

Here's to watercraft inspectors – all 973 of them that did 416,187 inspections in Minnesota in 2016 – the most for any state. They are doing their part. Are you?

Snapshot: 2016 Watercraft Inspection Statewide Summary

The goal of the watercraft inspection program is to prevent the spread of invasive species within Minnesota through boater education, watercraft

inspections and watercraft decontaminations at public water accesses.

Total inspections completed statewide

416,187 inspections completed in 2016 (857 Local Government Unit inspectors and 116 DNR inspectors)



Types of water-related equipment inspected



President's Message

By *Phil Hunsicker*

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are three little words and three little letters that have been on the minds and tongues of many of us – especially those of us who are lucky enough to live on a lake in Minnesota. We throw a lot of money at the problem – millions of dollars every year – but it seems that zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, Eurasian watermilfoil, and starry stonewort are all smarter than we are. They are definitely more patient and more adaptable.

Since 2014, Minnesota counties have been receiving money from the state to implement AIS prevention programs to keep this stuff from moving around and infesting more lakes. Crow Wing County receives approximately \$450,000 each year to educate residents and visitors about AIS, to place watercraft inspectors at public accesses, to decontaminate boats and trailers with high-pressure hot water, and to chemically treat infestations of Eurasian watermilfoil on 9 lakes in the county. The county has a good, comprehensive prevention program, but the plan on which the work is based was created with very little solicited input from the county's lake associations.

The county recently shared its draft 2017 AIS Prevention Plan and requested public comment. LARA board members read the draft plan, shared our thoughts with each other, and then provided our agreed-upon comments to the county. We explained to them that we wanted what they wanted: the most successful county-wide AIS prevention program in the state. We then gave them our ideas on how to make that happen. Below are some of our comments:

LARA generally feels that the county has a good, workable AIS prevention plan, but certain aspects could be greatly enhanced. Specifically, public input is the one area that needs to be

Lake-Friendly Development Awards: We Need Your Help

By Phil Hunsicker

On June 15th at 3:00 p.m. in the Land Services Building in downtown Brainerd, the 14th Lake-Friendly Development Awards will be handed out. LARA has been a partner since the inception of the awards back in 2003. All are welcome to attend. It is roughly 90 minutes (including a guest speaker) of highlighting the positive instead of pointing fingers at the negative, and we can all use that in our lives.

In addition to LARA, the organizing committee for the awards includes the Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District, University Extension, the DNR, the Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, and The Nature Conservancy. We all contribute what we can to pull these awards off every year. Coming up with enough money to buy prizes for the winners – typically framed prints – is not an easy task. LARA contributes roughly \$200 every year because the awards support our mission of healthier lakes. The organizing committee is doing some fundraising from local businesses, but we thought we would ask our member lake associations – many of whom have been recognized by these awards in the past – if they would like to contribute anything to the cause. If you would like to make a monetary contribution to support the awards, please contact Tasha Lauer at the SWCD office. Tasha's email is Tasha.Lauer@crowwingswcd.org

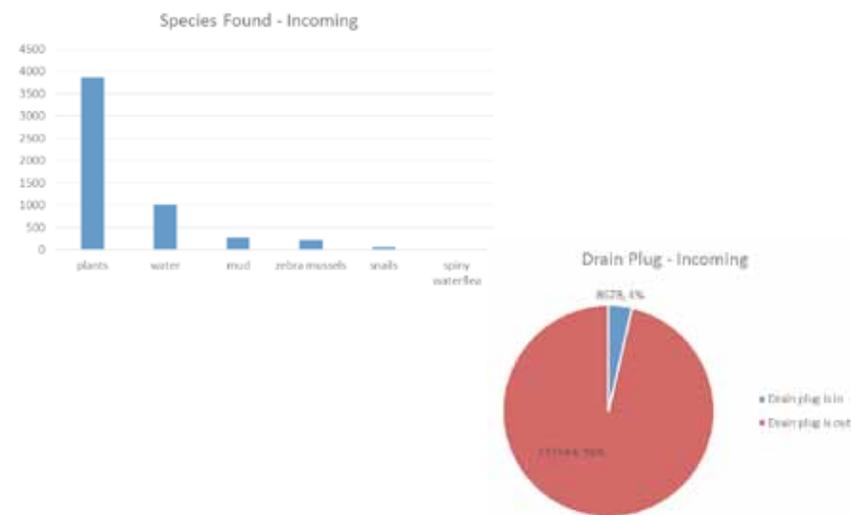
Thank you! Your contribution will be recognized during the awards ceremony.

Watercraft Inspections 2016

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Species found on incoming watercraft inspections and compliance with drain plug laws

Inspectors found something (listed in chart below) in 2% of incoming inspections; zebra mussels were found 200 times. Boaters arrived in compliance with drain plug laws 96% of the time.



President's Message

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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.

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 be involved from the very beginning of the process and not just as an afterthought to comment on a plan that has already been put together.

Before the plan is put together, the county should 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.

These are not new ideas, and they are not expensive to implement, but they could lead to a new, more collaborative and more inclusive relationship between the county, LARA, and the lake associations and concerned citizens we represent.

We're not sure how the county will receive our suggestions. Will they be criticized? Will they be ignored? Or will they be received in the spirit with which they were given – as thoughtful suggestions that just might have merit?

2018 CWEPA Fund Grant

By Ann Beaver

The Crow Wing Environment Protection Advised Fund (CWEPA Fund) will open its 2018 grant application period on May 1.

Grant applications for projects that will take place in 2018 are available on the Crow Wing County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (LARA) web site – CrowWingLARA.org. The deadline for submitting an application is September 30, 2017. The amount available in matching funds for 2018 projects will be approximately \$3,000.

Past recipients and their projects are:

2012 – Cullen Lakes Association (\$600), to assist in establishing an aquatic plant identification and management program; Lake Hubert Conservation Association (\$742), to involve, educate, and encourage lakeshore property owners to become more active in monitoring and preventing AIS.

2013 – The City of Nisswa (\$2,500) to replace the trees along the Highway 371 corridor near downtown Nisswa lost when the highway was expanded through the city.

2014 – Pelican Lakes Association (\$2,800), to help fund its well testing for water quality project.

2015 – Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District (\$2,500), to help fund the creation of a vegetated catch basin for stormwater control between the west end of Round Lake and Highway 371.

2017 – East Twin Lake Association (\$3,000) to replace trees and stabilize the shoreline in areas impacted by the Highway 371 expansion project.

CWEPA Fund grants are available to all non-profit or local government organizations wishing to complete an environmental project in Crow Wing County. Proposals must align with the mission of protecting or restoring the natural resources of Crow Wing County. Grant funds received must be matched by the recipient. If your organization is interested in applying for the grant but is not a registered non-profit organization, LARA does provide fiscal services, at a nominal charge, for its member organizations.

Anyone interested in learning more about the CWEPA Fund or making a tax-deductible donation to the fund should contact Phil Hunsicker at 218-824-5095 or by email at phunsicker@q.com. 🐾



Calendar of Events

March 16, 2017:

Open House Event at Camp Ripley regarding the 3-mile buffer area, conservation easements, and water quality.

More information can be found at <http://crowwinglara.org/>

Community Partners Grant Program 2017-2019

Crow Wing SWCD is accepting proposals for community focused projects aimed to protect and improve lakes, streams, and groundwater. For more information and an application, go to crowwingswcd.org/grants/. 🐾

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