



Aquatic invasive species prevention program

2025 accomplishments report

Preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species: 2025 accomplishments

History and context

Hennepin County has received funding from the State of Minnesota since 2014 to implement plans to stop the introduction or limit the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). In 2019, county staff engaged more than 60 stakeholders in evaluating the AIS prevention program, guidelines, and funding options directing the use of funds from 2020 through 2025. In Hennepin County, there are 59 public accesses and 951 trailer launch parking spots (50 trailer launches and 9 carry-in). The public access administrators include 15 cities, two park districts, Hennepin County Environment and Energy, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Trails, and the National Park Service.

AIS are “non-native, aquatic organisms that invade water beyond their natural historic range” (Minnesota Statute 477A.19). These species may harm economic, environmental or human health and threaten our natural resources. A list of prohibited, regulated and unregulated non-native species is available at dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/laws.html.

2025 efforts:

In 2025, Hennepin County received \$314,527 to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of aquatic invasive species. Following the AIS prevention aid guidelines, this funding was distributed with the following administrative processes: \$100,000 toward expanding existing countywide watercraft inspection programs; the remaining annual funding is allocated approximately ½ through competitive pass-through grants and approximately ½ through other initiated projects.

The following provides a summary of the project accomplishments in 2025.

County project partnerships

The county leveraged many partnerships in 2025. Details about many of these partnerships are contained within this report.

Organizations partnered with in 2025

Lake associations/groups — 7

Nonprofits — 2

Municipalities — 1

Watersheds/WMO/conservation district — 2

Park districts — 2

Private companies — 7

Research university departments — 2

Multi-county projects — 1

Presentations about AIS by county staff

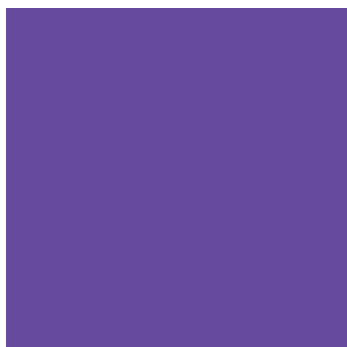
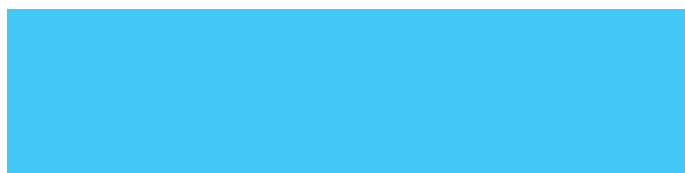
Hennepin County staff conducted presentations about aquatic invasive species at five events, trainings, or meetings in 2025. These presentations reached approximately 175 people.

- Eagle Lake Preservation Association — January 30
- Richardson Nature Center — March 25
- Lake Independence Association — April 20
- AIS Detector Course — May 9
- Friends of the Mississippi youth group — May 14
- Izaak Walton League — Bush Lake May 18
- Prairie Sportsman filming — September 12. The episode aired April 12, 2026.
- Red Rock Association — October 21
- Weaver Lake Elementary STEM — November 20

Interactive AIS display

A portable tabletop display helps spread the message about preventing the introduction of AIS. The display features realistic models, with a landscape containing boats and buildings as representations of pathways of aquatic invasive species, including lesser-known sources such as garden centers and pet stores. The display is available to borrow or duplicate at no cost within Hennepin County.

- Bush Lake Izaak Walton League — May 18
- Sweeny Lake Association — June 17
- Maple Grove Day expo booth — June 19
- Mississippi Gateway Regional Park grand opening — September 6
- Red Rock Lake Association — September 21
- Maple Grove Library — May 1 to May 31
- Weaver Lake Elementary STEM event — November 20



Early detection

Early detection efforts involve training citizen volunteers to work alongside scientists to conduct lake surveys as well as to look for signs of AIS in their daily activities. These efforts focus on early detection of AIS where management options may still be available.

Early detector acts and shares AIS knowledge

A Facebook Marketplace listing raised concern when a Hennepin County trained AIS Early Detector spotted a plant that looked like European frogbit, a prohibited invasive species in Minnesota. The early detector contacted the seller directly and started a respectful, informative conversation. The seller appreciated the outreach and followed up with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to confirm what to do with the plant.

The plant was later identified as American frogbit, a similar-looking, non-native species that is low-risk and commonly sold for water gardens. While not prohibited, it is not native to Minnesota and should never be released to any surface water.

AIS Detector classes

In May, Hennepin County sponsored a University of Minnesota AIS Detectors class, held at Wayzata Sailing on Lake Minnetonka. Seven people completed the course resulting in a total of 89 AIS Detectors in Hennepin County.



In June, an AIS early detection training was conducted for Sweeney Lake residents. Eight participated in both a classroom training and by boat on the lake. On the lake, many participants took a turn to throw a rake and review the vegetation. Several in the group reported feeling better informed and more comfortable with identifying EWM after the training. Staff from Endangered Resources LLC conducted lakewide surveys on June 10 and Sept 28 and found no EWM.

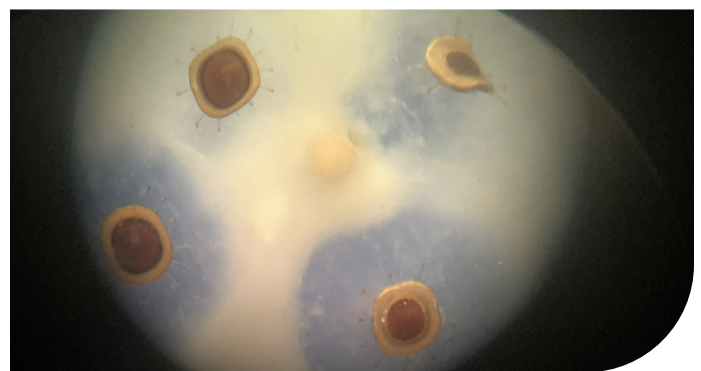
AIS on-lake training and survey

Members of the Lake Sarah Association participated in AIS on-lake training/surveys with a limnologist in 2025. On-lake surveys were conducted and included tosses to collect and identify plants. No new AIS was found. September.

Early detection assistance

When questions come in from the network of volunteers, trained AIS professionals from Bolton & Menk are available to provide quick and personal answers.

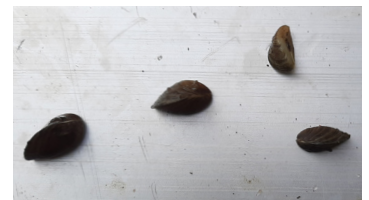
A boater found a large unknown structure attached to the boat's hull on Lake Minnetonka in fall 2025. In partnership with Water Patrol, it was stored and reviewed by Bolton & Menk. The specimen turned out to be a large bryozoan colony. Bryozoans are tiny aquatic invertebrate animals that form colonies resembling moss. They are often an indicator of clean water.



Bryozoan statoblasts from Lake Minnetonka under a microscope. These structures survive Minnesota winters and dry periods and will develop into new colonies when conditions are right.

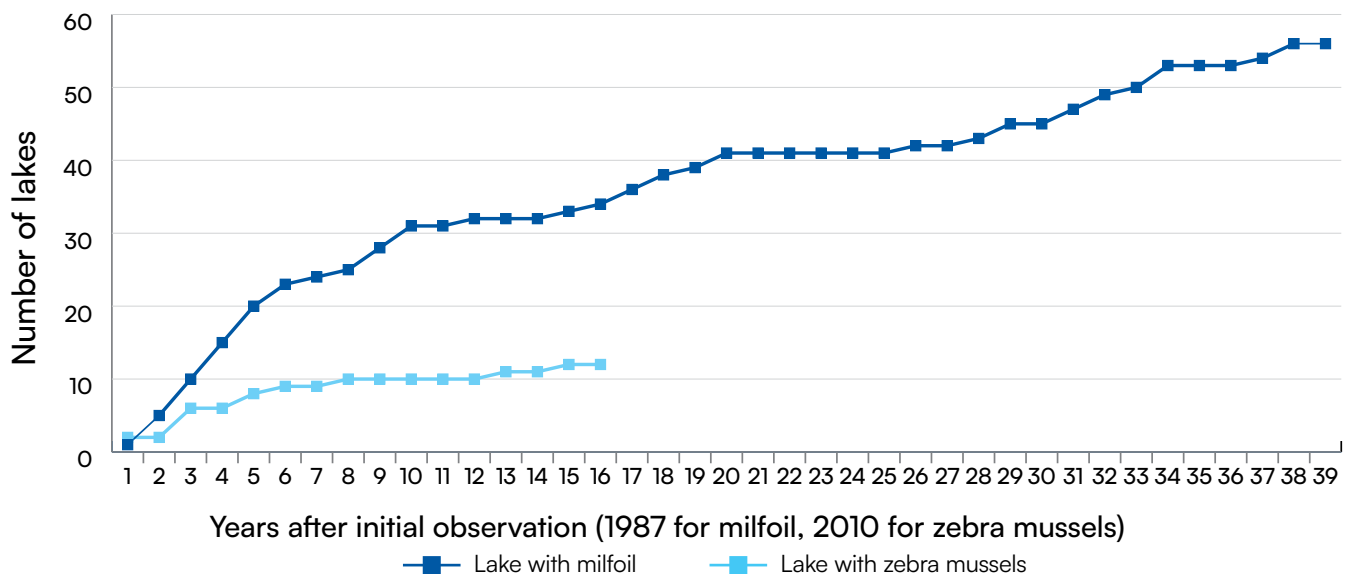
Spread of Eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels in Hennepin County lakes

This graph shows the spread of both Eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels in Hennepin County lakes starting from the first year discovered (milfoil: 1987, zebra mussels: 2010). The chart illustrates that given the same number of years since detection, 22 fewer lakes have zebra mussels than had Eurasian milfoil. This is a decrease of 64.7% when comparing milfoil and zebra mussels. When milfoil was discovered, there were few AIS prevention programs in the county in contrast to the robust AIS prevention programs that exist today. While it is difficult to evaluate the direct impacts of prevention efforts, this chart serves as an indicator that the AIS prevention efforts by the numerous stakeholders are making a difference and slowing the spread of AIS in Hennepin County. This chart only includes lake data (not pond, marsh, wetland, rivers or creeks).



During the 2025 season (as of 10-31-2025)

- 75 new infestations Statewide (5 milfoil, 3 faucet snails, 2 spiny waterflea, 6 starry stonewort, 59 zebra mussels)
- 13 new infestations 7-County metro (3 milfoil, 10 zebra mussels)
- 0 new infestations Hennepin County



Boat access redesign and boat cleaning stations

Boaters state that a common barrier to taking correct prevention actions is the lack of available space and AIS prevention tools. The county has established processes to initiate access redesign projects aimed at reducing these barriers and utilizing behavior-change psychology to help create social norms for AIS prevention.

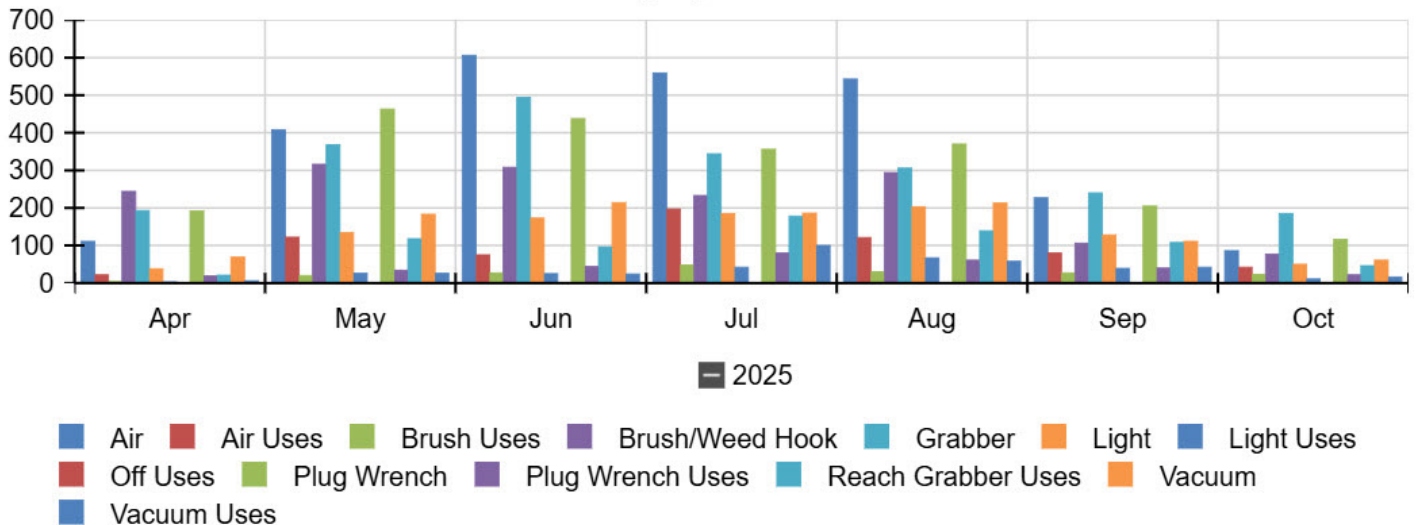
Any access administrator can call county staff to discuss possible projects at any time of the year. Current strategies include: the CD3 waterless cleaning system, which provides the tools to facilitate the actions; pavement markings to influence traffic flow, designated locations to take AIS prevention measures; and signs to prompt the desired behaviors. County staff will work in cooperation with access administrators to determine which approach(es) work best with their access. Currently, 20 accesses in the county have what is considered a high-level redesign including a CD3 waterless cleaning system, pavement markings, designated locations to take AIS prevention

measures, and signs to prompt the desired behaviors. This work is in partnership with 11 cities, the Three Rivers Park District, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Trails.

In 2025, 16 accesses recorded tool uses which included approximately 5,855 individual boat sessions and 12,655 tool uses. The top tool uses included the air blower, weed grabber/hook, and boat plug wrench. Currently, 44% of county accesses with trailer launches have a CD3 station. For more specific tool counts at any specific access, contact tony.brough@hennepin.us.



Tool Usage by Year/Month



Inspections and decontamination

The county continued to work with local partners including Three Rivers Park District, Minneapolis Park and Recreational Board, and the Christmas Lake Homeowners Association to supplement and enhance existing watercraft inspection and decontamination programs. This is a strong partnership which uses county funding to increase watercraft inspection hours, the number of inspections completed per year, and number of public accesses on lakes countywide.

Pass-through grant watercraft programs

Two additional watercraft programs were administered through the county pass-through grant process. Both programs utilized the Water Access Inspector training video the County created in 2024. This 3-minute video clearly models how to integrate behavior change into water access boater interactions.

- WaterGuards staff inspections included six part-time inspectors and 653.5 hours, 1,200 inspections, averaging 1.84 inspections per hour on 19 different accesses. Half of their hours were spent on Lake Minnetonka. This program reached boaters at times of day other programs typically do not, achieved excellent inspections-per-hour at several lakes, and maintained a positive safety and professionalism record.

Summary of Watercraft Inspection hours per lake access.

Bush Lake 24 hrs

Mitchell Lake 16 hrs

Eagle Lake 34 hrs

Sarah Lake 70 hrs

Weaver Lake 52 hrs

Whaletail Lake 51 hrs

Minnetonka — Maxwell 72 hrs

Minnetonka — Grays Bay 75.5 hrs

Minnetonka — Halstads 48 hrs

Minnetonka — North Arm 54 hrs

Minnetonka — Carsons Bay 37 hrs

Minnetonka — Spring Park 38 hrs

Mississippi — Point Park 4 hrs

Mississippi — River Park 12 hrs

Long Lake Nelson Lakeside — 24 hrs

Spurzem Lake 10 hrs

Parkers Lake 4 hrs

Rebecca Lake 4 hrs

Little Long 24 hrs

Watercraft access ambassador program

Waterfront Restoration ambassador staff worked 759 hours at five different accesses.

Waterfront Restoration included five part-time ambassadors and 672 hours, 2,651 interactions, averaging 3.9 inspections per hour on five different access. Lake Minnetonka was the location for 86% of their hours. Program highlights include being the only permitted presence at Cooks Bay on Lake Minnetonka in Mound and being at the accesses in early May. Compliance improved over the course of the season with an extra educational focus on Starry Stonewort.



Watercraft Ambassador lakes, interactions, and hours

Access name	Total interactions	Total hours	Average interactions per hour
Carson Bay launch	521	83	6.3
Halstead Bay launch	388	95	4.1
Long Lake launch	265	95	2.8
Spring Park Bay launch	423	89	4.7
Surfside (Mound) launch	1,054	310	3.4
Total	2,651	672	3.9

Hennepin County inspection data and summaries

These Hennepin County statistics are from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Watercraft Inspection Program database:

36,870

total watercraft
inspection interactions

(boater AIS compliance rate per access entrance was 97% for vegetation and 98% for drain plugs out.)

60%

of all public accesses with trailer launching availability have at least a part-time access inspection program.

Extra AIS enforcement

For the second season, Hennepin County Environment and Energy partnered with the Hennepin County Water Patrol to conduct extra AIS enforcement countywide. Water Patrol conducted 191 hours of AIS Enforcement and 3 hours of classroom training. All extra enforcement occurred when access inspectors were not present and was conducted at random times and locations. Lake Minnetonka was the location of 89% of their extra enforcement time.

There were no AIS-related citations in 2025, but there were 15 citations issued for various other violations at the boat launch on vehicles, trailers and parking. Verbal warnings related to AIS were issued because boaters attempted to take the correct actions and there was not a large amount of aquatic plants on trailers. Officers educated boaters on how to do better and more thorough inspections. Drain plug violations also resulted in verbal warnings. No water drained when plugs were removed, and boaters stated that they had removed the plugs when they left the lake and replaced them before returning.

28,333

(77%) of county watercraft inspections were conducted by local stakeholders (park districts, county, cities, lake associations).

County AIS funding accounted for 29% of all countywide inspections.

44%

of accesses with trailer launching have a CD3 station at existing locations.

During these enforcement hours, Deputies inspected 899 watercraft. Deputies issued the following verbal warnings, which is about a 15% violation ratio.

The following verbal warnings were issued:

- 83 — Prohibited transport of aquatic macrophytes (plants)
- 49 — Failure to remove/open drain plug/ other devices while transporting
- 1 — Enter or attempt to enter access with invasive species attached
- 2 — Failure to drain water-related equipment before transport

Bde Maka Ska

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

- 713.25 hours, 399 inspections

Bryant Lake

Three Rivers Park District

- 728 hours, 714 inspections

Bush Lake

WaterGuards, LLC

- 24 hours, 11 inspections

Christmas Lake

Christmas Lake Homeowners Association

- 271 hours, 319 inspections

Eagle Lake

WaterGuards, LLC

- 34 hours, 69 inspections

Fish Lake

Three Rivers Park District

- 1023 hours, 1,356 inspections

Lake Harriet

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

- 689 hours, 430 inspections

Little Long Lake

Three Rivers Park District

- 118 hours, 37 inspections

WaterGuards, LLC

- 24 hours, 8 inspections

Long Lake

WaterGuards, LLC

- 24 hours, 21 inspections

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 95 hours, 265 interactions

Medicine Lake

Three Rivers Park District

- 666 hours, 2,062 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Carsons Bay

WaterGuards, LLC

- 37 hours, 29 inspections

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 83 hours, 521 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Surfside Park

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 310 hours, 1,054 interactions

Lake Minnetonka — Grays Bay

WaterGuards, LLC

- 75.5 hours, 438 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Halstead Bay

WaterGuards, LLC

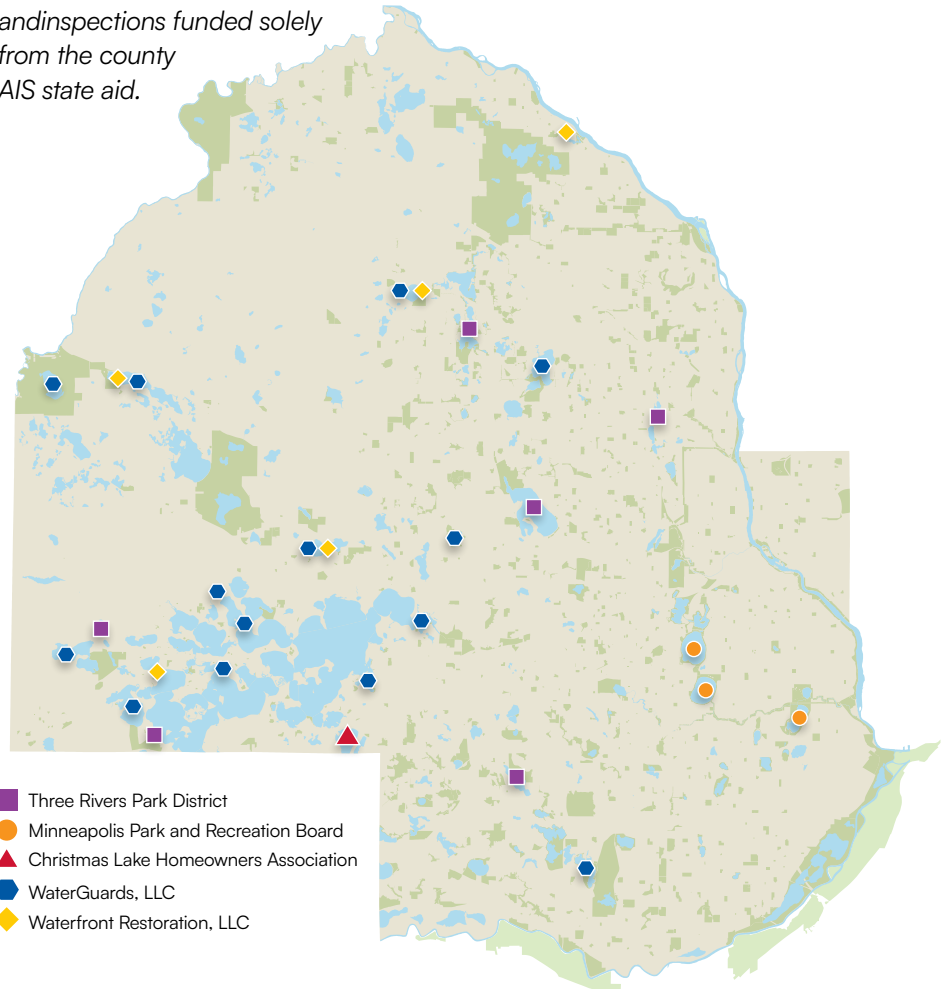
- 95 hours, 388 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Maxwell Bay

WaterGuards, LLC

- 72 hours, 124 inspections

This table summarizes the hours and inspections funded solely from the county AIS state aid.



Lake Minnetonka — North Arm

WaterGuards, LLC

- 54 hours, 252 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Regional Park

Three Rivers Park District

- 500 hours, 1,353 inspections

Lake Minnetonka — Spring Park

WaterGuards, LLC

- 38 hours, 81 inspections

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 89 hours, 423 inspections

Mississippi River — Point Park

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 4 hours, 234 interactions

WaterGuards, LLC

- 4 hours, 1 inspection

Mississippi River Park

Waterfront Restoration, LLC

- 12 hours, 234 interactions

WaterGuards, LLC

- 12 hours, 1 inspection

Lake Mitchell

WaterGuards, LLC

- 16 hours, 18 inspections

Lake Nokomis

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

- 689 hours, 440 inspections

Parkers Lake

WaterGuards, LLC

- 4 hours, 0 inspections

Lake Rebecca

WaterGuards, LLC

- 4 hours, 3 inspections

Lake Sarah

WaterGuards, LLC

- 70 hours, 120 inspections

Lake Spurzem

WaterGuards, LLC

- 10 hours, 2 interactions

Twin Lake

Three Rivers Park District

- 84 hours, 33 inspections

Weaver Lake

WaterGuards, LLC

- 52 hours, 89 inspections

Whaletail Lake

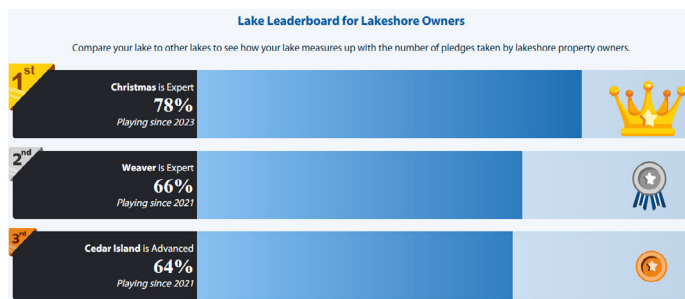
WaterGuards, LLC

- 51 hours, 46 inspections

Lake Pledge

The county piloted Lake Pledge as a website and app late in the 2021 boating season with lakeshore homeowners on several lakes. The primary focus of Lake Pledge is to educate and obtain a pledge from lakeshore residents to take actions that better prevent the introduction of AIS into lakes they live by, in which pledge actions are specifically tailored to how they recreate. In 2022, this program was opened up to all lake users in the county to take the pledge.

Unlocking these fun and rewarding badges can fuel a sense of accomplishment and act as milestones that mark progress on the journey to becoming more AIS-aware.



Groups should join Lake Pledge to learn what they can do to help prevent the spread of AIS in Hennepin County lakes. Group members will work together to earn badges and printed certificates as they take pledges and view videos.

At the end of 2025, 1,300 people were signed up with an 81.91% success rate of finishing the pledge. Minnetonka Power Squadron made the effort to join as a group, and through their outreach they were able to get 80% of their goal of 120 members to complete a pledge. This gained them the group title of “Expert”.

Mitchell Lake finished their second year of outreach encouraging their 170 lakeshore homes to take the pledge. With enthusiastic effort, they were able to obtain the lake title of “Advanced” with 63% of the lakeshore residents completing a pledge. This has moved them into 3rd place throughout the county.

The City of Bloomington created [a video](#) encouraging their residents to sign up and complete a pledge in 2025.

Activity	Countywide (N = 1,300)
We have a dock, boat lift, mooring buoy	61%
Never take Watercraft to Other Lakes	57%
We kayak, paddleboard, or canoe	63%
Boat can be in the water >24 hours	25%
We hike	53%
We have a swim raft, trampoline, water toys	22%
We use a personal watercraft	14%
We fish with live bait	29%
We do take our Watercraft to Other Lakes	22%
We take a pet to other lakes	19%
We SCUBA/snorkel	13%
We waterfowl hunt	7%
We wakeboard or wakesurf	12%
We sail	9%
We have an outdoor water garden, pond	10%
We have an aquarium tank or exotic pet	7%
We cannot identify zebra mussels	13%
We cannot identify Eurasian milfoil	18%

Communications

Digital newsletters

AIS early detectors newsletter



AIS early detectors e-newsletters were sent out to 2,318 countywide partners and volunteers in the spring and fall of 2025.

- [Spring 2025 edition](#)
- [Fall 2025 edition](#)

Subscribe to the newsletter:

- [Click this link](#)
- Click through the prompts to open a list of newsletter subscription options
- Open the Environment option
- Click the Aquatic Invasive Species: Early detectors newsletter to subscribe

Additional newsletters

Promotions of AIS prevention actions, Lake Pledge, and AIS grants were run in Hennepin County Environment and Energy's Green Notes newsletter (7,547 subscribers) and Environmental education news (6,039 subscribers). These articles were also shared in county commissioner digital newsletters.

Social media

AIS prevention actions, promotions of Lake Pledge, and AIS grants were included on Hennepin Environment and Energy's social media channels on Instagram (3,937 followers), Twitter/X (1,748 followers), and Facebook (13,000 followers) throughout the year.

Programmable message boards

In 2015, a capital improvement project and partnership with the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, Hennepin County Emergency Management, and the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District made improvements to the Spring Park public access on Lake Minnetonka. These improvements included the installation of a programmable message board. In 2016 the county received a grant application to partner with the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management to install programmable electronic message boards on the two busiest Lake Minnetonka boating channels; the Arcola and Narrows channels.

Throughout the 2025 season, multiple messages, including AIS prevention messages, were displayed every day from approximately one hour after sunrise to 1.5 hours before sunset. AIS prevention messages were displayed for 40% of this playtime reaching boaters traveling through these busy boating channels, using the public access, and reaching the 17,900 average daily traffic on Shoreline Drive.



Communications partnerships

Minnesota Traditions

The county partnered with 21 other counties (25% of all MN counties) to participate in the Minnesota Traditions AIS campaign. The campaign goal is to motivate and influence behavior change through proactive positive messages. Minnesota Traditions currently has hundreds of videos for social media and over 56,000 followers between YouTube, Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram.

Contact

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Website

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