

Christmas Lake AIS Program 2025 Program Report

This report provides a year-end look at the 2025 aquatic invasive species (AIS) program conducted at the Christmas Lake public access.

- Section I provides an Executive Summary of the 2025 AIS program along with our intentions for 2026
- Section II provides a summary of the costs of the program, historical comparisons, and a breakdown of the sources of funding for the program
- Section III provides perspectives on AIS in Minnesota and a smarter way to help prevent the spread of AIS
- Section IV was prepared by Waterfront Restoration, our services provider. This separate report provides an analysis of the data collected by the inspectors as a part of the AIS inspection process. It also includes information on species of greatest concern that we hope to keep out of the lake

We hope this program report helps make sense of what we are doing to prevent the spread of AIS into and out of Christmas Lake, how we are doing on this important effort, and our thoughts on a better way to protect more lakes from AIS.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any suggestions, comments, or questions.

Thank you,

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Christmas Lake AIS Program

2025 Program Report

I. Executive Summary

We are again happy to report that 2025 was a year where no new aquatic invasive species were identified in the lake.

Our Christmas Lake AIS program is focused in four key areas:

1. **Inspection and Decontamination** - We strive to inspect every watercraft entering the lake to prevent the introduction of another aquatic invasive species or another strain of one of the species that have already infested Christmas Lake.
2. **Coordinated dock and lift installations and removals** - We work to intentionally limit the number of dock and lift service providers to further reduce the introduction of a new AIS into Christmas Lake.
3. **Dedicated trailers** - We work to limit the number of commercial trailers that haul watercraft into and out of Christmas Lake.
4. **Early detection and control** - We strive to know about an infestation of a new species as soon as possible to increase our control options, and we look to leverage proven science as well as research opportunities to gain greater control over AIS that are already in Christmas Lake.

Each of these areas requires volunteer support along with coordination and communications with lake residents. And we couldn't do this work without our public sector partners: the Minnesota AIS Research Center, Hennepin County, and the City of Shorewood.

Our AIS program is expensive, and most of the expense is from the contract for AIS inspection services. Another unusual expense in 2025 was for repairs to the entrance and exit access control gates.

The gates were installed in late 2011. They have not been working for most of the recent years, and they are now being refreshed with the costs borne by the Christmas Lake Homeowner's Association. Costs of nearly \$7,000 are reflected in this year's report, but some remaining costs will show up in the 2026 program year. The gates need to be operating to provide an effective access barrier when the landing is not "open". Additionally, they will provide an easier access control mechanism for the inspectors as part of the parking ordinance procedures when the parking area is full.

The decontamination unit, procured new in 2012, is having some significant maintenance done over the winter to bring performance back up to expected levels. Those costs will be reflected in the 2026 program year.

The coordinated dock and lift program worked well, but as in prior years, a few uninspected barges were seen on the lake after our inspection program stopped on October 31. That represented some degree of risk which we may want to address for the future.

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The dedicated trailers program worked well for inboards and pontoons, but it does not handle tri-toons which are becoming more common on Christmas Lake. We are considering the acquisition of a trailer that can handle both pontoons and tri-toons.

This year, Christmas Lake participated with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center at the University of Minnesota on a project to evaluate rapid testing for multiple AIS using eDNA technologies. That research effort will continue in 2026. Happily, early research results did not find DNA evidence of starry stonewort in Christmas Lake.

Overall, we were pleased with the 2025 AIS program and plan to continue operating in this same model in 2026, and hopefully with the entrance and exit gates operating to reduce the risk of an uninspected boat entering the water. But the costs are high and getting higher, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss new approaches as discussed in Section III.

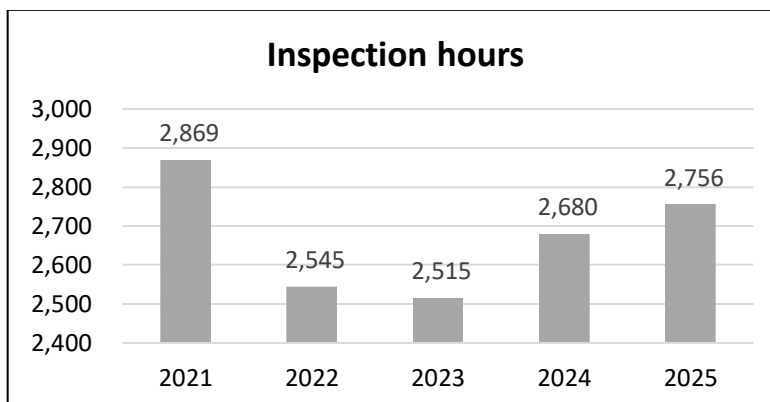
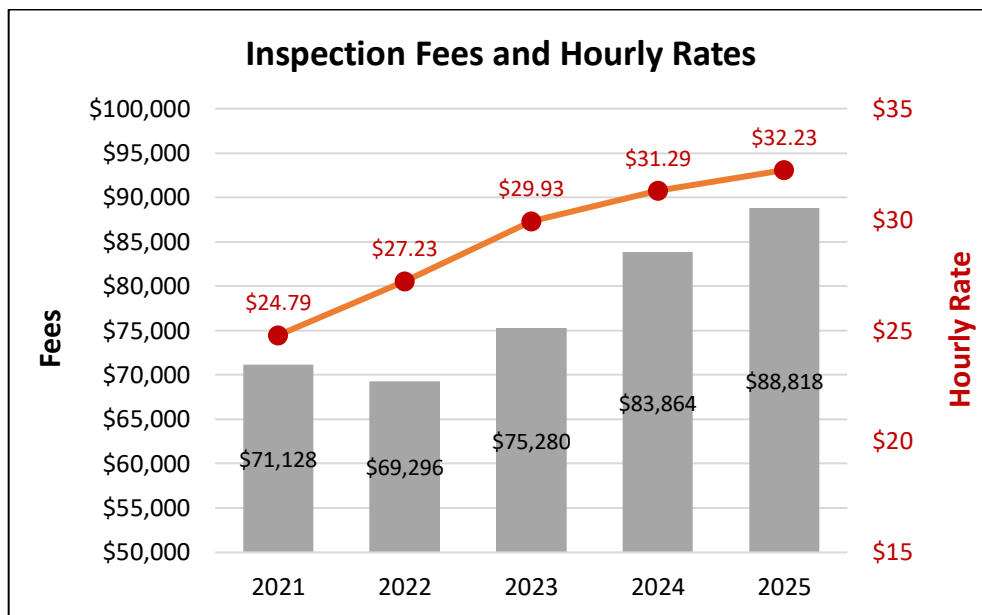
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II. Costs

The total costs for the 2025 AIS inspection and decontamination program were \$99,820.

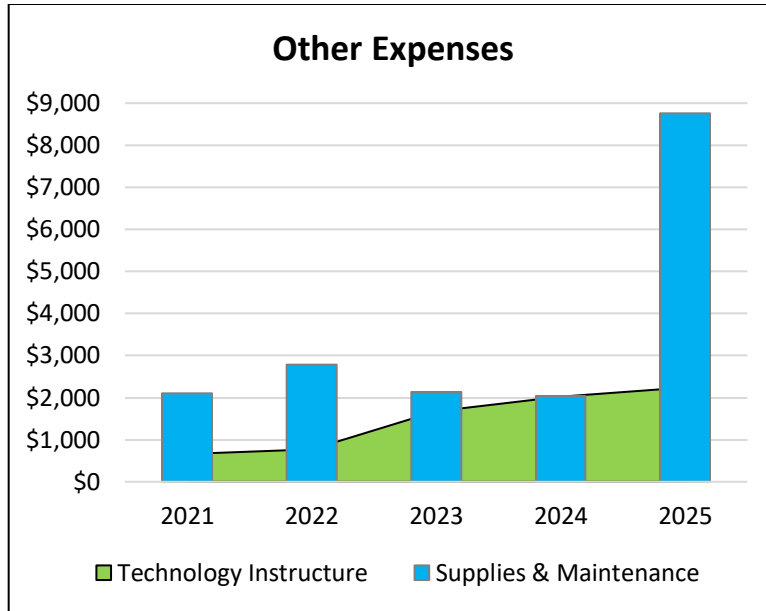
	2021 Expenses	2022 Expenses	2023 Expenses	2024 Expenses	2025 Expenses
Inspection fees	\$71,128	\$69,296	\$75,280	\$83,864	\$88,818
Operating supplies & maintenance	\$2,100	\$2,785	\$2,140	\$2,035	\$8,760
Technology infrastructure	\$660	\$774	\$1,672	\$2,024	\$2,242
Total expense	\$73,888	\$72,855	\$79,092	\$87,924	\$99,820

The largest variable in the cost of the program is inspection fees. Those costs went up in 2025 due to a 3% rate increase and an early start due to ice-out in March. As in prior years, we cut the hours of operation after dark as well as seasonally to reduce inspection fees. The lake is well protected during the peak summer season with AIS inspectors on duty from 6 am to 9 pm, May 1 through August 15.

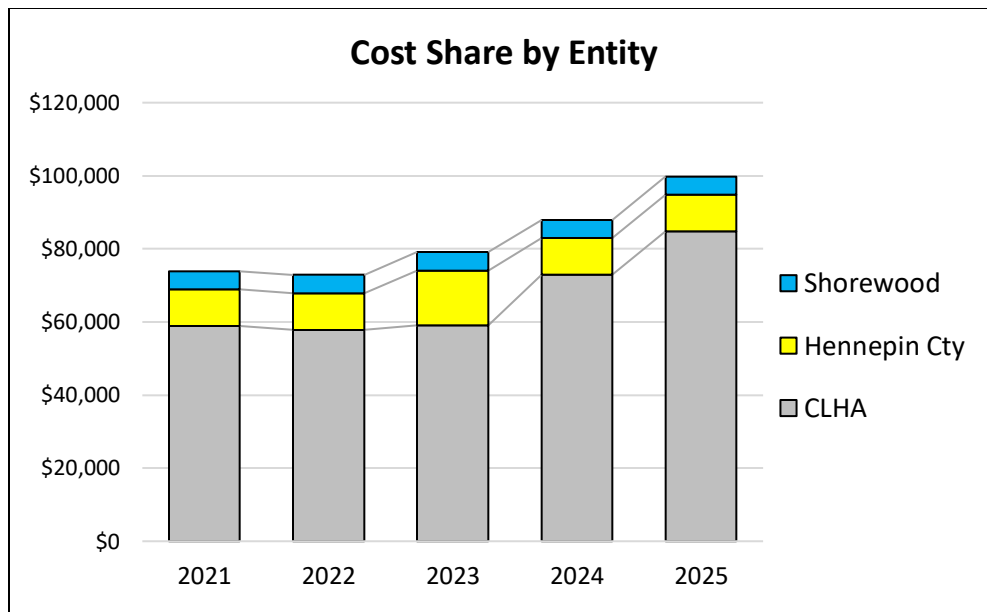


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The Christmas Lake Homeowner’s Association owns and maintains the decontamination unit that stays on site at the boat ramp. Winterization and end-of-season repair costs for 2025 to the decontamination unit will be reflected in our 2026 program report. And as mentioned, significant repairs to the gates were made in 2025.



The 2025 costs were split between 3 entities: the City of Shorewood - \$5,000 (5%), Hennepin County - \$10,000 (10%) from State provided AIS Prevention Aid, and the Christmas Lake Homeowner’s Association - \$84,8200 (85%).



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III. The Bigger Picture

Minnesota's 30 yearlong approach to stopping new AIS from entering the state and preventing the spread of AIS within the state has simply not worked well enough. As of the end of 2025, a huge percentage of the surface water of the State is now infested with one or more AIS.

One very troubling species to highlight is starry stonewort. Six new starry stonewort infestations were found this year bringing our statewide total to 38. Starry stonewort was first discovered in Minnesota in 2015 at Lake Koronis. This is very troubling. The state has NOT kept starry stonewort contained and we are still in the early stages of the typical infestation curve. We are very concerned for Christmas Lake as starry stonewort has already infested nearby Medicine Lake.

There is no doubt that these numbers would be worse without the AIS Prevention Aid that provides \$10 million annually from the State's general fund to the counties, but it's headed in the wrong direction after two of years of lower infestation rates. In 2025, AIS infestations grew by 70% over 2024. Most disconcerting is that the Governor recommended a 50% cut in the AIS Prevention Aid during the 2025 Legislative Session. In the end, the full \$10 million was retained for another 2 years, but only \$5 million will be provided thereafter. Without county or local governments stepping up to fill this gap, many county-based AIS programs will cease to exist, and we can expect infestations to rise even more.

That said, there is a smarter model that could be used for AIS inspections beyond today's at-ramp inspection model. Inspecting boats at the point of entry into a lake is the most convenient approach for the boater, it unfortunately represents the costliest approach to prevention.

A mandatory regional AIS inspection model can protect more lakes at a lower cost per landing. With regional inspections, a centrally located AIS inspection station would be set up to service several lakes, and every boat intending to launch in one of those lakes would be required to be inspected at the central facility prior to launch.

This kind of a regional AIS model has been defined in state statute for over ten years, but only one pilot regional inspection project has been allowed by the Minnesota DNR and it ran for just one year.

The City of Shorewood and Hennepin County could, and should, lead the efforts in our area to leverage the laws already on the books and implement mandatory regional AIS inspection stations.

The Christmas Lake Homeowner's Association is willing to expand our public/private partnership, and to be a key player in a regional AIS inspection program to protect more lakes at a lower cost per ramp. The pilot project already sorted through the process and procedures, but it takes political will at the local level to make this a reality. We are eager to start this dialogue.