

**Three Rivers Park District Watercraft Inspection Program
Final Report-2025
for
Hennepin County Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Grant**



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I Introduction

Hennepin County awarded Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Grant for \$50,000 to:

1. Supplement the watercraft inspection efforts at Bryant Lake where zebra mussels were found in the fall of 2015.
2. Supplement the hours for watercraft inspection as well as provide level II decontamination services for incoming and outgoing watercraft at Medicine Lake French Regional Park in Plymouth. Medicine Lake has become a primary vector for spread of zebra mussels (discovered in 2017) and starry stonewort (discovered in 2018).
3. Supplement the watercraft inspection efforts at Fish Lake Regional Park in Maple Grove where zebra mussels were found in the fall of 2022.
4. Supplement the watercraft inspection efforts at the public accesses on Twin Lakes (Robbinsdale) and Little Long Lake (Minnetrista).
5. Supporting watercraft inspection effort and providing Level II decontamination services at Lake Minnetonka Regional Park access.

The project included two main activities: (1). The hiring and training of additional watercraft inspectors to extend coverage beyond an overall “baseline” effort and (2). Scheduling/providing supervisory oversight for the additional inspectors in the execution of their duties at the specific sites to which they were assigned.

Hennepin County has generously awarded \$50,000 to supplement Three Rivers Park District existing watercraft inspection program for Medicine, Fish, Bryant, Lake Minnetonka Regional Park, Little Long and Twin as the targeted lakes identified in the grant contract agreement. In 2018, Hennepin County also generously awarded Three Rivers Park District \$20,000 for the purchase of a decontamination unit to be used at Lake Minnetonka Regional Park; and awarded Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission \$20,000 for the purchase of a decontamination unit to be used at French Regional Park – Medicine Lake. A portion of the grant dollars awarded in 2023 was used for the continual operation and maintenance of both decontamination units. The decontamination units were operated and maintained by Three Rivers Park District Level II staff during incoming and exiting watercraft inspections. Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission provided \$5000 to assist with the Level II staffing and operation for the decontamination unit at French Regional Park-Medicine Lake; and the Fish Lake Area Residents Association (FLARA) provided \$8000 to assist with Level I staffing at Fish Lake Regional Park. The awarded grant dollars and financial assistance from these partners have been critical to supplement and improve the Three Rivers Park District watercraft inspection program.

II Results

Following is a summary of highlights for the 2025 watercraft inspection program as it pertains to this grant:

- Watercraft Inspection Certification used a hybrid training approach that provided both on-line and in-person training opportunities in 2025.
- Watercraft Inspection Training on-line became available on April 10, 2025. Three Rivers Park District hosted eleven Level 1 and one Level 2 in-person training workshops in 2025. The workshop sessions were led by the MnDNR with TRPD water resources and facility operations staff assisting with the training.
 - Level 1 In-person Training Workshops
 - April 23 – French Regional Park
 - May 2 – French Regional Park
 - May 9 – French Regional Park
 - May 10 – Lake Minnetonka Regional Park (2 Training Sessions)
 - May 31 – French Regional Park (2 Training Sessions)
 - June 4 – French Regional Park (2 Training Sessions)
 - June 11 – French Regional Park
 - July 16 – French Regional Park
 - Level 2 In-person Training Workshops
 - May 22 – Baker Park Reserve
- A total of 84 TRPD staff were authorized as Level I inspectors for the 2025 season. There were 14 fewer individuals hired in 2025 in comparison to the 98 Level I inspectors hired in 2024. The decrease in hiring fewer seasonal staff was attributed to no-net increase in the facilities general operation budget while increasing wage rates to become more competitive with the wage rates offered by agencies hiring seasonal staff providing similar watercraft inspections services.
- A total of 16 of the 84 TRPD staff were also authorized as Level II inspectors for the 2025 season to operate decontamination units at 2 accesses covered by this grant (French Regional Park-Medicine Lake and Lake Minnetonka Regional Park) and 1 access that is not covered by this grant (Baker Park Reserve-Lake Independence).
- Staff typically conduct watercraft inspections at a total of 10 accesses within the Three Rivers Park District metro area. Six of these access locations receive grant funding to supplement our watercraft inspection program (Medicine Lake, Fish Lake, Bryant Lake, Twin Lakes, Little Long Lake, and Lake Minnetonka). Certified Level I and Level II seasonal staff dedicate 90% to 100% of their time toward watercraft inspection surveys.

- TRPD provided all Level I and Level II inspection staff with tablets that had the watercraft inspection application provided by MnDNR. Data recorded by the inspectors using the tablet and application were uploaded to the MnDNR data base.

Table 1 shows the percent of total inspection hours that were funded by the Hennepin County AIS prevention grant for each of the accesses.

Table 1 – Percent of Total Watercraft Inspection Hours Funded by Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant by Lake Access (2025)

<i>Access</i>	<i>Total Inspection Hours</i>	<i>Inspection Hours Assigned to AIS Prevention Grant</i>	<i>% of Inspection Hours Funded by AIS Prevention Grant</i>
Medicine Lake	1431	666	47%
Fish Lake	2134	1023	48%
Bryant Lake	1235	728	59%
Twin Lakes	124	84	68%
Little Long Lake	172	118	69%
Lake Minnetonka ¹	821	500	61%
Total	5917	3119	53%

¹ Access at Three Rivers Park District - Lake Minnetonka Regional Park

The Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant supplements the Three Rivers Park District watercraft inspection program. Table 2 shows the Three Rivers Park District total expenditures for staff wages to conduct the watercraft inspection program for 2025. The Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant supplements approximately 52% of the Three Rivers Park District total staffing costs for the accesses covered by the grant program. It should be noted that the Three Rivers Park District total costs are conservative because they only take into consideration staff service hours during inspections and does not take into consideration the costs associated with Level I and II training.

Table 2 – Cost Distribution Funded by Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant by Lake Access 2025.

<i>Access</i>	<i>TRPD Total Inspection Costs</i>	<i>Assigned Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant Costs</i>	<i>% of Inspection Hours Funded by AIS Prevention Grant</i>
Medicine Lake	\$23,128	\$10,435	45%
Fish Lake	\$34,238	\$16,301	48%
Bryant Lake	\$20,711	\$12,215	59%
Twin Lakes	\$1,812	\$1,227	68%
Little Long Lake	\$2,484	\$1,701	68%
Lake Minnetonka ¹	\$13,126	\$8,121	62%
Total	\$95,489	\$50,000	52%

¹ Access at Three Rivers Park District - Lake Minnetonka Regional Park

Table 3 shows the percentage of the total inspection hours and the number of decontaminations that were completed by a level II certified watercraft inspector.

Table 3 – Decontamination Watercraft Inspection Hours and Hours of Operation 2025

<i>Access</i>	<i>Decontamination Inspection Hours</i>	<i>% of Total Inspection Hours</i>	<i>Total Number of Decontaminations</i>
Medicine Lake	376	26%	57
Lake Minnetonka	206	25%	12

Table 4 summarizes the watercraft inspection results by access for the five lakes covered under this grant other than Lake Minnetonka.

Table 4 – Watercraft Inspection Results for 2025 by Lake Access

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Lake Access</i>					<i>TOTALS</i>
	<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Fish</i>	<i>Bryant</i>	<i>Twin</i>	<i>Little Long</i>	
<i>Total # of inspections</i>	4388	2826	1210	49	53	8526
<i>Inspection Hours</i>	1431	2134	1235	124	172	5096
<i>Inspections/hr.</i>	3.07	1.32	0.98	0.40	0.31	1.67
<i># in-bound inspections</i>	3132	2812	672	39	36	6691
<i># outbound inspections</i>	1256	0	538	10	17	1821
<i># Contaminated watercraft</i>	201	151	14	0	0	366
<i># Zebra Mussel Contaminations</i>	26	11	1	0	0	38
<i>Entering</i>	18	11	0	0	0	29
<i>Exiting</i>	8	0	1	0	0	9
<i>%Contaminated Watercraft</i>	6.42%	5.37%	2.08%	0.0%	0.0%	5.47%
<i># Drain Plug Violations</i>	61	42	5	0	0	108
<i>% Drain Plug Violations</i>	2.0%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%

Note: This table does not include Lake Minnetonka Regional Park data.

Table 5 summarizes the watercraft inspection results for the Lake Minnetonka Regional Park access covered under this grant.

Table 5 – Lake Minnetonka Regional Park Inspection Results for 2025

<i>Parameter</i>	Lake Minnetonka Regional Park
<i>Total # of inspections</i>	2218
<i>Inspection Hours</i>	821
<i>Inspections/hr.</i>	2.7
<i># in-bound inspections</i>	1417
<i># outbound inspections</i>	801
<i># Contaminated watercraft</i>	58
<i># Zebra Mussel Contaminations</i>	36
<i>Entering</i>	1
<i>Exiting</i>	35
<i>% Contaminated Watercraft</i>	4.1%
<i># Drain Plug Violations</i>	4
<i>% Drain Plug Violations</i>	0.28%

The following narrative is a summary and conclusion of the data collected as well as supporting observations from facility staff that oversee the Three Rivers Park District Watercraft Inspection Program:

- The Hennepin County AIS grant funds were used to support supplemental watercraft inspections at Medicine Lake, Fish Lake, Bryant Lake, Twin Lake, Little Long Lake, and Lake Minnetonka Regional Park.
- There were 84 certified watercraft inspectors in 2025 for TRPD. The number of certified watercraft inspectors in 2025 is still lower in comparison to pre-covid pandemic numbers where TRPD would typically have 120 certified watercraft inspectors. The shortage and difficulty in hiring/recruiting seasonal staff has been noticeable post-covid throughout the park district for both maintenance and facilities. The Park District general operations budget for hiring seasonal staff to conduct watercraft inspections has not necessarily increased, but there has been an increase in overall wage rates to become more competitive with other agencies hiring seasonal staff conducting watercraft inspection services. This has resulted in the hiring of less staff that are more qualified to provide watercraft inspections services hours that are similar and comparable to previous years (Table 6).

Table 6 - Comparison of watercraft inspection service hours provided for 2021-2025.

<i>Access</i>	<i>Inspection Hours 2021</i>	<i>Inspection Hours 2022</i>	<i>Inspection Hours 2023</i>	<i>Inspection Hours 2024</i>	<i>Inspection Hours 2025</i>
Medicine Lake	2442	1460	1532	1473	1431
Fish Lake	2178	2180	2122	2014	2134
Bryant Lake	1491	1114	992	1330	1235
Twin Lake	184	198	156	141	124
Little Long Lake	206	95	198	210	172
Lake Minnetonka	1487	413	1230	1005	821
Total	7988	5459	6230	6172	5917

- There was a total of 10,744 watercraft inspections conducted at the 6 boat accesses that the Hennepin County AIS Prevention grant supplements cost for providing inspection services in 2025. The watercraft inspections at these 6 lakes represent approximately 70% of the total watercraft inspections (15,276 in 2025) conducted by TRPD staff at all accesses it provides services. This grant does not supplement watercraft inspection services at Lake Independence in Hennepin County for Baker Park Reserve and the Carver County Lakes in Carver Park Reserve (Zumbra, Auburn, and Steiger).
- The total number of watercraft inspections in 2025 (10,744) was lower than 2024 (12,366). Three Rivers Park District observed a significant increase in water-based recreation activities during the Covid pandemic in 2021. The number of inspections has been considerably lower in comparison to pandemic covid period of 2021 (Table 7). Despite fewer watercraft inspected post covid pandemic, the number of watercraft inspected per hour has been significant and similar to previous years following the Covid pandemic (Table 8).

Table 7 - Comparison of watercraft inspections provided for 2021-2025.

<i>Access</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections 2021</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections 2022</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections 2023</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections 2024</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections 2025</i>
Medicine Lake	8585	4980	4740	4850	4388
Fish Lake	3159	3050	2926	2845	2826
Bryant Lake	1538	1139	886	1452	1210
Twin Lake	404	300	140	78	49
Little Long Lake	36	70	134	126	53
Lake Minnetonka	4115	1545	3648	3015	2218
Total	17837	11084	12474	12366	10744

Table 8 - Comparison of watercraft inspections per hour for 2021-2025.

<i>Access</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections/hour 2021</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections/hour 2022</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections/hour 2023</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections/hour 2024</i>	<i>Watercraft Inspections/hour 2025</i>
Medicine Lake	3.52	3.41	3.74	3.29	3.07
Fish Lake	1.45	1.40	1.38	1.41	1.32
Bryant Lake	1.03	1.02	0.89	1.09	0.98
Twin Lake	2.20	1.52	0.90	0.55	0.40
Little Long Lake	0.17	0.74	0.68	0.60	0.31
Lake Minnetonka	2.77	3.74	2.97	3.00	2.7
Total	2.23	2.03	2.25	2.00	1.82

- Fish Lake typically has the most watercraft inspection service hours per year in comparison to the other lakes that receive Hennepin County AIS Prevention Grant Funds. The watercraft inspection service hours have been consistently ranging between 2000 to 2100 hours per year since 2021 (Table 6). The Fish Lake access receives funding assistance (typically \$5000 to \$8000/year) from the Fish Lake Area Residents Association (FLARA) to supplement the watercraft inspections hours. In 2024 & 2025, Hennepin County provided AIS prevention grant funding (\$8000) assistance to FLARA that was used to supplement TRPD’s watercraft inspection program. This funding has been critical to maintaining a similar level of watercraft inspection service hours at the Fish Lake access. The Fish Lake access received a considerable amount of activity in 2025 where there were 2826 watercraft inspections completed, which was approximately 1.32 boats inspected per hour (Table 7 & 8). All of the watercraft inspections for Fish Lake are considered incoming inspections at the regional park gate entrance. Every year boats have been denied access into Fish Lake due to having attached zebra mussels (11 boats in 2025) (Table 4); and these boats are required to be decontaminated before they are allowed to launch their boat in Fish Lake. It should be noted that zebra mussels were discovered on a sampling plate September 22nd of 2022 at the Fish Lake boat access. Three Rivers Park District surveys conducted in 2023 through 2025 suggest that the zebra mussel population has increased considerably throughout the entire lake making the lake high risk for spread to other lakes in the metro area. Consequently, Fish Lake will need to consider outgoing/exiting inspections in the future.
- Medicine Lake had the largest number of watercraft inspections (4388) representing approximately 41% of the total inspections covered by the grant in 2025 (Table 7). This access receives a significant amount of boat traffic (3.1 inspections/hour) and is considered high risk for new infestations as well as spreading AIS to other lakes (Table 8). The watercraft inspection services hours in 2025 were similar to the number of hours provided in 2023 & 2024. It has become critical to schedule staff inspections service hours during critical high-use times at Medicine Lake-French Regional Park since the lake is considered high risk due to the discovery of zebra mussels in 2017 and starry stonewort in 2018. Due to the high risk of spread to other

lakes, there was a significant number of outgoing inspections (1256 inspections) that represented 29% of the total watercraft inspection in 2025.

- Zebra mussels were discovered on several docks throughout the lake in November of 2017. Recent shoreline and snorkeling surveys conducted in 2020 through 2025 indicated that zebra mussels have significantly spread to other parts of the lake.
- A watercraft inspector discovered starry stonewort on a boat exiting Medicine Lake in July of 2018. This was the first discovery of starry stonewort within the metro area. The discovery of starry stonewort by a trained watercraft inspector supports the significant importance for the watercraft inspection program. This recent discovery of starry stonewort initiated a rapid response plan for treatment/control measures by TRPD and MnDNR staff to minimize spread to other areas of the lake as well as reduce the risk of spread to other lakes. There have been copper treatments conducted each year from 2019 through 2025 to contain the Starry Stonewort within an area (14-acres) adjacent to the boat access. It appears that the growth of starry stonewort has become suppressed due to continuous treatment efforts over the past several years. However, aquatic vegetation surveys have unfortunately indicated that starry stonewort has been found (relatively small abundance) in other areas of the lake outside of the treatment area. Three Rivers Park District and Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission are considering expanding lake-wide treatments for Starry Stonewort in 2026.
- Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission used Hennepin County AIS prevention grant dollars to purchase a decontamination unit to be operated by TRPD staff at French Regional Park in 2018. Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission has financially contributed \$5000 towards the staffing operation of the decontamination unit from 2018-2025. This lake is considered high risk for spread of zebra mussels and starry stonewort to other lakes in the area. There were 57 watercraft decontaminations conducted at French Regional Park-Medicine Lake in 2025. An increase in outgoing inspections hours for Medicine Lake has contributed to more watercraft decontaminations conducted in 2024 & 2025 in comparison to previous years (Table 3).
- Three Rivers Park District used Hennepin County AIS prevention grant dollars to purchase a decontamination unit for the Lake Minnetonka Regional Park in 2018. The Lake Minnetonka Regional Park access has a significant amount of use where there was 2218 watercraft inspection completed in 2025. Eurasian Watermilfoil has been in portions of Lake Minnetonka since 1987; and zebra mussels were discovered in Lake Minnetonka as recently as 2010. Lake Minnetonka Regional Park is considered high risk (2.7 inspections/hour) for new infestations and the transport of aquatic invasive species to other lakes. A total of 58 boats were reported as contaminated trying to enter the lake, which represents approximately 2.6% of the total boats inspected entering the lake. Unfortunately, there were only 12 decontaminations reported in 2025 due to level 2 certified staffing limitations. The number of decontaminations (12) reported in 2025 is significantly lower in comparison to the number of decontaminations (39) reported in 2023.

- A common violation that is reported by Three Rivers Park District watercraft inspectors are boats arriving with their drain plug ready for launch. The percentage of boats inspected with drain plug violations in 2025 were approximately 2.0% for Medicine Lake, 1.5% for Fish Lake, 0.7% for Bryant Lake, and 0.3% for Lake Minnetonka Regional Park (Tables 4 & 5). Typically, the highest use accesses have had the highest percentage of boats with drain plug violations in the past. There was no drain plug violations reported for the lower used accesses of Twin Lake and Little Long Lake in 2025.

- CD3 stations were available for boaters to use at Bryant Lake, Medicine Lake, Fish Lake, Little Long, and Twin Lake accesses. Unfortunately, tool use was not monitored for the stations in 2024 & 2025. Based on previous years of monitoring tool use data in 2022 & 2023, CD3 stations have become a valuable tool for boaters taking the initiative themselves to remove aquatic invasive species. Table 9 shows the tool uses reported from 2022 & 2023.
 - Bryant Lake – The Bryant Lake CD3 station was the first unit installed in Minnesota. The Bryant Lake station has had over 12,535 tool uses since being installed in 2017. This is a conservative estimate since the station was partially closed in 2021 (due to reconstruction of the boat launch and pavement overlay project) and the lack of data reported for 2023 (the unit had problems with downloading of data the entire season) and 2024. Based on tool use data in 2022, the air and grabber are the primary tools consistently being used.
 - Medicine Lake – Hennepin County has provided a Wayside Mobile Trailer CD3 unit at the access since 2020. The station had 1,742 tools used in 2023 with the air tool being the primary tool used. Since the mobile trailer CD3 station was receiving significant use, Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District installed a permanent CD3 station in 2025.
 - Fish Lake – A CD3 outpost was installed in July of 2020. The unit seems to receive a significant amount of use with a total of 4,920 total tools uses with 1,851 tools used in 2023. All the tools on the Fish Lake outpost unit are being used equally so there really hasn't been a preferred tool used among the boaters.
 - Little Long Lake – The CD3 outpost was installed in July of 2020. This access doesn't have a significant amount of boat traffic because of the remote location and restricted horsepower motor use. There were 101 total tool uses in 2023 with the plug wrench being the primary tool used at the access.
 - Twin Lake – The CD3 outpost was installed in May of 2021. The station has 1,653 total tool uses despite the access not having a significant amount of activity. In 2023, there was 374 tool uses with the drain plug wrench being the primary tool used followed by the brush/weed hook.

Table 9 - CD3 Station Tool Use at each boat access.

Access	CD3 Type	Installation Date	Tool Uses	
			2022	2023
Bryant Lake	Station	6/21/2017	2,368	**
Medicine Lake	Wayside Mobile Trailer	7/2/2020	2,185	1,742
Fish Lake	Outpost	7/18/2020	1,008*	1,851
Little Long Lake	Outpost	7/8/2020	**	101
Twin Lake	Outpost	5/6/2021	545	374

*Fish Lake battery was dead so no readings in April, May, June of 2022. Battery was replaced in July of 2022.

**Little Long & Bryant Lakes were having difficulty downloading data.

- The Hennepin County AIS grant funds were extremely important with providing financial support to supplement TRPD watercraft inspection program in 2025. The Hennepin County AIS grant funds accounted for approximately 45% to 68% of the watercraft inspection budget for lakes covered by the grant in 2025 (Table 2). Hennepin County grant funds have also been used for purchasing of decontamination units at Medicine Lake and Lake Minnetonka; and used for purchasing/installation of CD3 stations at Bryant Lake, Medicine Lake, Fish Lake, Little Long Lake, and Twin Lake. The Hennepin County Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention grant funds has been critical for the implementation of the Three Rivers Park District AIS prevention program.