



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan draft available for review

The first draft of a plan for dealing with Aquatic Invasive Species in St. Louis County is now available for public review and comment. The draft plan is the work of St. Louis County Planning and Community Development and the University of Minnesota Sea Grant program, and includes input collected from the more than 60 people who attended two public meetings held in February. The draft AIS plan can be found online at stlouiscountymn.gov/ais. Comments may be submitted via the website, or can be emailed to mkitson@d.umn.edu.

The deadline to submit comments is March 31. The goal is to complete the plan in early April and submit it to the County Board for final approval.

The plan is being developed as part of the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid Program, created by the state legislature in 2014 to provide funding to Minnesota counties to participate in AIS control and prevention activities.

The draft AIS plan focus on seven types of activities, such as increasing public awareness and participation in prevention, broadening participation in rapid response activities and managing existing populations of aquatic invasive species.

Aquatic invasive species disrupt the health of water bodies, and pose a myriad of threats to natural, cultural and recreational resources of the region. Key AIS species of concern in St. Louis County include zebra and quagga mussels, the New Zealand mudsnail, viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), round and tubenose gobies, Eurasian ruffe, faucet snail, mystery snail, spiny water flea, Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife and rusty crayfish.

Through the AIS Prevention Aid Program, counties are allocated funds based on a formula that factors each county's share of watercraft trailer launches and watercraft trailer parking spaces.

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Of Minnesota's 87 counties, St. Louis County has the second highest number of watercraft trailer launches (166) and the highest number of watercraft trailer parking spaces (1,173). St. Louis County's share of funding totaled \$305,356 for 2014 and will be \$680,790 in 2015.

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