



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

July 28, 2015

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County Board approves distribution of funds to battle Aquatic Invasive Species

St. Louis County Commissioners have authorized the distribution of nearly \$750,000 of state funds to prevent the introduction and limit the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in lakes and rivers in St. Louis County. Eight projects were selected from 12 that were submitted by local organizations and agencies. The County's Planning and Community Development Department reviewed the proposed projects and made its recommendations based on what fit best with the County's Aquatic Invasive Species plan.

Approved projects include:

- \$285,885 to the Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, Inc. for inspections, education, decontamination, AIS sampling and habitat assessment at launch sites.
- \$50,000 to the City of Babbitt for the construction of a new boat access at Birch Lake. The design will incorporate drainage diversion into storm sewers, and a cleaning area for boats, trailers and vehicles.
- \$60,000 to the North St. Louis County Soil and Water Conservation District to purchase a decontamination unit, plus related labor and equipment costs.
- \$61,541 to the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) to conduct an AIS introduction risk assessment for the County, using GIS and spatial analysis to determine risk potential by waterbody.
- An additional \$64,740 to NRRI for baseline surveys and geospatial modeling of AIS plants in St. Louis County. Through field sampling, remote sensing, and invasion corridor analysis, researchers will create statistical models and a map of invasion risk.
- \$107,000 to Wildlife Forever to increase public awareness through a marketing campaign

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targeting boaters, anglers, hunters and others who use St. Louis County waterbodies.

- \$48,380 to the St. Louis River Alliance to develop a comprehensive training program and manual to for residents and volunteers on how to recognize and report AIS.
- An additional \$70,000 to the St. Louis River Alliance to establish a technical team to identify and implement management of nonnative phragmites in the St. Louis River Estuary.

One proposed project, which had not been recommended for approval, came from the Isaac Walton League. The group initially requested funding for testing of a new ballast water treatment system for use in Lake Superior harbors. Commissioners tabled this specific proposal to allow the group more time to provide additional information.

The County's Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commission worked with Minnesota Sea Grant to develop an AIS plan, including objectives and goals, and to develop a process for allocating funds to organizations that will participate in AIS research, control, prevention, and education activities. The work is part of the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid Program created by the state legislature to provide funding to Minnesota counties to participate in AIS control and prevention activities.

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. 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 in 2014 and \$680,790 for 2015.

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.

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