



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Volunteers Needed for “Starry Trek” 2021**

Volunteers are needed to participate in a statewide search for starry stonewort, one of Minnesota’s newest aquatic invasive species, on Saturday, August 21<sup>st</sup>. This year’s Starry Trek will start at 9 am and go until approximately 12 pm. Participants who wish to volunteer must register online at [www.StarryTrek.org](http://www.StarryTrek.org). The Crow Wing County rendezvous location is Mission Park which is located at 13871 Mission Park Drive, Merrifield MN, 56465. This event is **free**, but registration is requested. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

“This event is so important for early detection of Starry Stonewort,” said Nicole Erickson, Environmental Services Specialist with Crow Wing County, Land Services. “Leech Lake in Cass County is now infested with Starry Stonewort. We need all hands on deck to protect our beautiful lakes in Crow Wing County”. Starry Stonewort has never been eradicated from any U.S lakes. With the addition of Leech Lake, Starry Stonewort has now been confirmed in 18 of Minnesota’s 11,842 lakes, including nearby Cass Lake and Lake Winnibigoshish.

No experience or equipment is necessary to participate in Starry Trek. Expert training on monitoring protocols and starry stonewort identification will be provided on-site. A map of the route and supplies will be provided to volunteers as they travel to different lake landings throughout the county to sample for starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species (AIS). Once the route is completed, volunteers will come back to the rendezvous location to report and identify species with the event coordinator.

This is the third year Crow Wing County is hosting a Starry Trek event. Hundreds of volunteers will gather at local training sites statewide to learn how to identify starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species and search for them in area lakes. Starry stonewort is an invasive algae that was first found in Minnesota at Lake Koronis in 2015 and has since spread to fourteen Minnesota lakes. At this time, there are no water bodies in Crow Wing County infested with starry stonewort. Early detection of this species is critical for control. Starry Trek volunteers have found starry stonewort in two lakes – Grand Lake in Stearns County and Wolf Lake at the Hubbard/Beltrami County border – as well as other aquatic invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels during this event. The 2017 discovery of starry stonewort in Grand Lake led to the lake association and Minnesota DNR rapidly mobilizing to hand-pull the infestation. This early intervention has widely been considered a success, with starry stonewort continuing to be limited to the small area near the public access where it was initially discovered.

“This event is a terrific way for people to get outdoors, get educated about aquatic invasive species, and help protect their area lakes,” said Megan Weber, Extension Educator with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center. “The information we gain at this event helps researchers and managers understand its current distribution and potentially take action if new infestations are found.”

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“We’re delighted to be partnering with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center for this event,” said Nicole Erickson, Environmental Services Specialist with Crow Wing County, Land Services. “Protecting our lakes for future generations is really important to us all, and we want to make sure we’re doing the best we can to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS.”

The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center works across the state to develop research-based solutions that can reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive. A portion of the funding for this program is provided by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Learn more at [www.maisrc.umn.edu](http://www.maisrc.umn.edu).

Information about Crow Wing County AIS prevention efforts, including interactive maps to search for the status of area lakes, can be found at [www.crowwing.us/ais](http://www.crowwing.us/ais).

The Land Services Department is committed to providing excellent customer service while helping landowners make wise choices that protect Crow Wing County’s extraordinary natural resources. Citizens are encouraged to contact the Land Services Office at (218) 824-1010 or [landservices@crowwing.us](mailto:landservices@crowwing.us) to discuss AIS or other land use related activities.

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