



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Land Services Department Seeks Comments on Proposed 2024 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan

The Crow Wing County Land Services Department is requesting public comments on the proposed 2024 Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Plan. The plan can be viewed on the County website at www.crowwing.gov/AIS. Written comments on the plan will be accepted until Sunday, December 31st and may be submitted to Crow Wing County at landservices@crowwing.us or mailed to 322 Laurel Street, Suite 15, Brainerd, MN 56401, attention AIS Plan Comments.

The County Board will review the proposed 2024 AIS Prevention Plan at a regularly scheduled meeting in January 2024.

Crow Wing County has been allocated \$472,580 by the State legislature to assist in the prevention of the spread of AIS within County lakes and rivers in 2024. The AIS Prevention Plan proposes to accomplish this through several approaches, including:

- **Watercraft inspections:** Crow Wing County optimized an online dashboard developed by MAISRC and the USDA Forest Service called AIS Explorer. This online dashboard uses existing infestation information, water connectivity risk modeling, and over 1.6 million boater movement survey results to forecast the introduction risk of four priority AIS (zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, starry stonewort, and spiny waterflea) at individual lakes throughout the County. Crow Wing County also used watercraft inspection per-hour data to determine allocated hours at multiple landings throughout the County. In total, 15,804 watercraft inspection hours are proposed to be allocated at 43 landings in 2024.
- **Decontamination units:** The County plans to operate the AIS decontamination station, located at the Crosslake Joint Highway Maintenance Facility, Friday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The County also plans to operate two mobile decontamination stations located at multiple public landings including Edward, Lower Hay, North Long Lake – Merrifield, Lower Cullen, Pelican – Halverson Bay, and Upper South Long that will be open Friday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Watercraft users are encouraged to call the Crow Wing County Decon Hotline at 218-824-1055 or text “CWCDECON” to 1-833-258-7509 for more details during the summer season. Watercraft decontaminations consist of a hot water rinse to kill zebra mussels and if needed, a high pressure spray to remove AIS from boats, motors, trailers, and personal gear.

- Treatment of Eurasian Water Milfoil: Crow Wing County has 10 lakes infested with milfoil that also have a public access. As in previous years, funds will be allocated for chemical or biological treatment of milfoil in these lakes.
- Education & Awareness: In 2024, funds will be granted for up to 25 lake associations that participate in the County's Starry Search program. Lake associations will receive a \$200 grant by sampling lakes for AIS with a public access. The \$200 grant will cover the cost of materials to build an AIS sampling rake, member's time, and monthly reports. Lake associations will work directly with the County's Environmental Services Coordinators to ensure they fulfill all the requirements of the Starry Search program. Our main goal for this program is to stay ahead of starry stonewort infestations within the County.
- Early AIS Detection: The County plans to continue to work with area lake associations and an environmental lab to conduct zebra mussel veliger and spiny waterflea testing in 2024.

The Land Services Department is committed to providing excellent customer service while helping our residents make wise decisions 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 to discuss AIS or other land use related activities.

Our Vision: Being Minnesota's favorite place.

Our Mission: Serve well. Deliver value. Drive results.

Our Values: Be responsible. Treat people right. Build a better future.