

Hubbard County's AIS Prevention Aid Program: A Snapshot of Accomplishments in 2022

Program Summary









The Hubbard County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program was originally pioneered by Lake Associations that contributed funding and volunteered time in order to prevent the spread of AIS in Hubbard County. It wasn't until 2014 when the State AIS Prevention Aid was allocated, that the program was really able to expand and develop to what it is today. Although Hubbard County had several inspectors before State Aid was available, the addition of the State Aid has allowed Hubbard County to double the number of watercraft inspectors that are hired annually.

In 2022, \$263,133 was allocated to Hubbard County to combat the spread of AIS. The AIS Prevention Aid, along with Township, City, and Lake Association contributions, has allowed Hubbard County to administer an extensive AIS prevention program which includes: a County employee to coordinate the program, public awareness materials, radio PSAs, a decontamination station, a comprehensive watercraft inspection program, and an infestation response fund to prepare for potential future infestations. The below metrics summarize the Hubbard County AIS prevention work completed in 2022.

The goal of the Hubbard County AIS Program is to prevent the spread of AIS through education and public awareness. The County and our contributing partners believe that our inspection program provides the most effective means of meeting that goal. That being said, Hubbard County works with a local radio broadcasting company to create public service announcements (PSAs) that are aired on local radio stations promoting AIS prevention best management practices. Additionally, in 2022, the AIS Program collaborated with the local coalition of lake associations to purchase updated flyers and handouts which were distributed to local shops as well as watercraft users at the local boat accesses.

The bulk of the State Prevention Aid was utilized to operate a comprehensive Watercraft Inspection Program that consisted of 44 DNR certified Level 1 watercraft inspectors contracted through Always There Staffing, a staffing agency based out of Bemidji. Those inspectors worked a total of 16,327 hours at 34 public water access points. The inspectors started the season on May 13, 2022 and concluded on October 31, 2022. The total number of inspection hours conducted represents a five-year high. The vast majority of the inspection hours were worked between Memorial Day and Labor Day, heavily concentrated on the weekends and holidays when boater traffic is heaviest. During the 2022 open-water season, Hubbard County watercraft inspectors completed 21,767 inspections, which happens to be a five-year low.

Another important component of the Hubbard County AIS Program is watercraft decontamination. Hubbard County operates a central decontamination station located in the City of Park Rapids where boaters can bring their watercraft, boat lift, dock, and gear to have them inspected and decontaminated by our DNR certified Level 2 inspectors. This decontamination service is at no cost to the boater and is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. In 2022, Hubbard County completed 83 decontaminations, which unfortunately was half of last year's number, but similar to 2020 when travel restrictions were in place.

Category	Metrics
	AIS Prevention Aid Used \$263,133 AIS Prevention Aid used this calendar year
	People Doing AIS Work 1 full-time staff dedicated to AIS work 1 seasonal contracted staff with AIS duties (other than inspectors) 40 Level 1 Watercraft Inspectors 4 Level 2 Watercraft Inspectors (operate decontamination units) 96 % of aid used this year for staff wages
	Partnerships Our partners include the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations and its AIS Operation Team, multiple individual lake associations, and several Townships.
	Funds Distributed, Contributed and Leveraged \$156,568.00 in funds contributed by lake associations, townships, and cities. 33 organizations contributing additional funds
	Communities Engaged \$5,000 spent on paid advertisements (billboards, radio, newspaper, etc.)
	Watercraft Inspected \$393,000 spent on watercraft inspection and decontamination 22,441 inspections performed 16,327 hours of inspections performed 34 accesses covered by inspectors 32 water bodies covered by inspectors 99.04 % of watercraft recorded as arriving with drain plugs out 1 decontamination unit in operation by Level 2 Inspectors 83 decontaminations performed
	Monitoring Conducted 13 people participated in the University of Minnesota Extension and Minnesota AIS Research Center's "Starry Trek" event 24 total lakes surveyed for AIS 28 public accesses sampled 0 new infestations found
	New Infestation Response Planning Our county has a new infestation response plan: Yes

Program Spending Summary

Budget Category	County: AIS Prevention Aid Spent in 2022	Description
Public Outreach and Education	\$5,000	Billboard, radio advertisement, flyers & hand-outs.
Watercraft Inspection	\$393,000	Staffing agency costs
Other	\$21,700	Administration & equipment costs

Plans for 2023

- Partner with Hubbard County COLA to expand an aqua weedstick pilot program started in 2022. We will be providing weedsticks at public accesses for use by the public to promote the removal of aquatic vegetation.
- Create decontamination-specific PSA's to increase the number of boat decontaminations.
- Conduct visits with local resorts, emphasizing SSW.
- Build off of this 2022's Starry Trek success. Sample more of the lakes experiencing increased boat traffic from SSW lakes.

2022 Highlights

- Starry Trek was a great success. A total of 13 volunteers took part. 28 public accesses were sampled on 24 waterbodies, representing roughly 10% of the statewide totals. Most importantly, no new infestations were found.
- A County watercraft inspector discovered zebra mussels attached to a watercraft attempting to launch into Lake Plantagenet, a designated non-infested waterbody.
- Again, on Lake Plantagenet, dead zebra mussels were observed on a boat trailer parked at the access. A Conservation Officer followed up with and properly educated the individual.