

## Sherburne County AIS 2023 Spring Update

### AIS Grant Program

In March, the SWCD Board approved 15 grant projects totaling \$21,042.75. These grant dollars leverage an additional \$55,976.38 in AIS efforts. The projects include:

- **Five** AIS management planning projects such as lake vegetation surveys or AIS mapping / detection surveys)
- **Six** AIS control projects for curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian water milfoil and purple loosestrife
- **Four** AIS Volunteer / Education projects for public access watercraft education projects and [MN AIS Research Center Scholarships](#).

### Early Detection Monitoring

Several long-standing programs will continue in 2023 to keep watchful eyes out for potential new introductions of AIS. Additionally, a new initiative is being planned:

- **Existing** – Over 60 volunteers are equipped with zebra mussel settling plates on Sherburne County lakes. These plates are deployed each year in early summer and monitored occasionally for signs of zebra mussels. The hard surface provides an ideal substrate for mussels to latch on to, and the ease of lifting these lightweight plates in and out of the water makes for an efficient means of monitoring.
- **Existing** – Dock and water equipment cleaning educational materials will be distributed by SWCD media channels as well as the Sherburne County Coalition of Lake Associations near Labor Day Weekend. By examining docks, float platforms, or other water equipment, one can easily inspect for potential zebra mussel infestations.
- **Existing** – Starry Trek 2023. Save the date for August 19<sup>th</sup>! Starry Trek is a fun play on the popular TV series but with a focus on a notorious invader, starry stonewort. This citizen-science led event empowers volunteers to become knowledgeable on native and non-native aquatic life as well as AIS inspection methods. Through the 15+ volunteers that annually participate we are able to effectively able to monitor the major lake and stream access points in Sherburne County for signs of AIS.
- **New in 2023** – Spiny Water Flea Surveillance. A newly developed protocol by the Minnesota AIS Research Center provides an effective and efficient way to gain a better picture of the distribution of this invader state-wide. Interested in helping and have a few hours to spare on your favorite waterbody? Sherburne SWCD has the equipment necessary to assist you. Sign up at the MAISRC website [here](#), monitoring is anticipated for mid to late summer.

## Education

Educational initiatives will continue in 2023 in several ways. Roughly 46 children enjoyed an interactive and fun AIS-themed presentation from CLIMB Theater through a Youth Water Festival held on April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Sherburne History Center. A purple loosestrife management workshop was held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> for roughly 30 attendees who learned of biological control techniques. Promotional AIS items such as identification cards, can koozies, etc. have been provided for two lake association meetings and a Becker Bass Team meeting. Social media outreach and education will continue throughout the summer on the SWCD's Facebook page and [MN Traditions](#) channels.

## AIS Population Monitoring

Numerous lake associations, districts, and several cities are assisting with monitoring of curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil and purple loosestrife on and along county lakes. Additionally, SWCD staff and volunteers are keeping watchful eye on a number of other species:

- **Golden clams** – detected in both Briggs and Big Lake, an overwintering population was documented initially however following a long and harsh 2021-2022 winter all clams were found deceased. With a relatively short 2022-2023 winter and fewer extremely cold days (but lots of snow!), surveillance will continue to determine if survivors exist.
- **Phragmites** – the tall giant reed is known to exist in several areas near Princeton, SWCD staff are working with the University of Minnesota and landowners to eradicate an early detected population and monitor surrounding areas.
- **Common carp** – A grant proposal to pursue carp management on Eagle Lake was unsuccessful. The Lake Fremont Improvement Association is pursuing carp surveying work to determine the extent of the carp population in Lake Fremont.

## Watercraft Inspections

The Sherburne SWCD will again contract with WaterGuards LLC for Level 1 watercraft inspection services in 2023. 610 hours of inspections have been allocated towards 11 public access locations. Additionally, the Briggs Chain Lake Association and Three Lakes Improvement District have contributed funds for 300 extra hours on Briggs Chain Lakes while the City of Big Lake will contract WaterGuards LLC separately for added hours. Level 1 Inspectors are trained and certified by the [Minnesota DNR](#) to conduct inspections of watercraft for AIS, educate lake visitors on the importance of cleaning watercraft and trailers, and collect important data on watercraft movement that feeds statewide databases and [AIS research](#) on strategic placement and utilization of inspection resources.

## Watercraft Enforcement

Funding has been allocated to the Sherburne County Sheriff's Department Water Patrol for outreach time on AIS. In past years, Water Patrol staff have averaged nearly 60 hours and engaged nearly 700 people on AIS laws on our county lakes, a similar outcome is anticipated for 2023.