

Ten Mile Lake Association AIS Committee

Preliminary Plan for Control of Aquatic Invasive Species in Ten Mile Lake

January 2012

The Preliminary Plan for the Control of Aquatic Invasive Species was prepared by the Ten Mile Lake Association's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) committee. The committee's recommendation is that the TMLA Board approve the plan for immediate implementation.

Background

AIS (primarily Eurasian Water Milfoil - EWM) have been a significant problem in Minnesota for many years, primarily in the Twin Cities metro area. Recently EWM has been found in Leech Lake as well as Town Line and Washburn lakes in Cass County as well as in Lake Mille Lacs and ten Crow Wing county lakes. In the last several years, new aggressive AIS species including zebra mussels (ZM) and the spiny water flea have been spreading throughout the state at an accelerating pace. Zebra mussels are now present in the Gull Lake chain and four other Cass County lakes. Most AIS are spread to newly-infected lakes by contaminated watercraft or trailers. Boat lifts and docks transported between lakes are another possible means of infestation.

The impact of AIS on lake quality is enormous. AIS control is very expensive, if even possible. Lakes infested with EWM spend tens of thousands of dollars annually on control. No method for control or eradication of zebra mussels has been proven. Property values on many AIS-infested lakes have dropped sharply.

In response to this threat, the Ten Mile Lake Association Board approved the formation of a TMLA AIS committee in September 2011. The committee has been meeting by phone and e-mail since that time, resulting in this plan.

Objective

The objective of the TMLA AIS Plan is to prevent the introduction of any Aquatic Invasive Species into Ten Mile Lake.

Strategies

The near term strategies for AIS prevention are the education of TML users and the inspection of watercraft and trailers before they enter Ten Mile Lake. A key goal of the plan is to initiate AIS inspections early in the 2012 open water fishing season. An intermediate term goal is to ensure the availability of an AIS decontamination facility within a short distance of the lake.¹

Action Plan

Continued AIS-prevention education of all users of Ten Mile Lake will be a priority throughout this effort.

¹ The possibility of an Access Control approach was considered, but would almost certainly take more than a year to implement and is not currently supported by DNR policy.

The main inspection-related tasks in the plan are *Gather Support*, *Secure Funding*, *Recruit and Train Inspectors* and *Conduct Inspections*. The additional tasks for decontamination are *Evaluate Possible Decontamination Locations*, *Develop a Decontamination Business Model*, *Procure a Decontamination Unit*, *Train Decontamination Operators* and *Decontamination*. The steps are illustrated on the attached flowchart.

The two key immediate tasks for inspection and decontamination are *Gather Support* and *Secure Funding*.

Gather Support

Communication with and support from stakeholders in the TMLA AIS plan are critical and need to begin immediately. A letter to all TML property owners (including those who are not TMLA members) will address the AIS threat, summarize the prevention plan and seek their support to ensure all watercraft, trailers, boat lifts, docks and other objects entering Ten Mile Lake are free from any AIS. The owners of Happiness Resort and Quietwoods campground have been informally contacted and support AIS prevention efforts, but continued contact and possibly inspection training will be needed. Starting this year, all Lake Service Providers must be registered and trained by the DNR; follow up will be done by the TMLA committee to elicit their support. Continued contact with and support from Cass County Environmental Services and the DNR officials charged with AIS prevention will be important to the plan's success. Finally, communication with other area lake associations will help coordinate area-wide AIS prevention efforts and will be key for support of a centrally-located decontamination unit.

Secure Funding

Both the inspection and decontamination efforts will require financial support. At this point, it is not known whether enough trained volunteer inspectors can be recruited to cover the main (DNR-owned) lake access during the fishing season, so paid inspectors may be needed.² We are very fortunate that Bruce Carlson has secured a \$5,000 grant from the Initiative Foundation that will help pay the costs for inspections. Grant opportunities are also provided by the DNR, but they are primarily targeted at lakes that are or are near AIS-infested waters. Additional funding sources will be researched and applied for as they are identified.

Funding for decontamination equipment will be a challenge. The estimated cost of a cold water decontamination pressure washer with the accessories needed for cleaning live wells, motors, etc. is over \$10,000. (Hot water decontamination pressure washers needed to remove mature zebra mussels cost up to \$30,000.) Some form of partnership with a government entity (e.g., Cass County), other area lake associations and / or a private business is a potential path forward and will be explored by the committee.

² A rough estimate of the hours required is 17 weekends (May 12 – Sept 3) X 10 hours / day X 2 inspectors = 680 inspection-hours.

Recruit and Train Inspectors

Regardless of whether we use volunteer inspectors, paid inspectors (typically, young adults are used at other lakes) or a combination, the DNR requires a several hour long (free) training course before inspections can begin. We will need to recruit inspectors in the February through April period so that they can receive the training before the start of the open water fishing and boating season. We are in contact with the DNR personnel responsible for setting up this training.

We will also need to set up a system for scheduling the inspectors and monitoring their performance. The inspectors have no authority to demand that a watercraft be inspected or to deny access to the lake, so coaching the inspectors on their interaction with boaters will be important.

Decontamination Tasks

The work involved with evaluation of possible decontamination locations³, development of a business model and procurement of decontamination equipment are interrelated. The committee is currently favoring a decontamination location that is centrally located and on or near a main highway. Such a location would make it easier for boaters to utilize and could service watercraft from many lakes which would potentially help with the economics of decontamination. Possible decontamination business models include partnering with Cass County and / or other area lake associations; one of the DNR AIS control grants is aimed at this type of model. Another possible model is privately-run, pay for service decontamination.

Conclusion

This plan for AIS control on Ten Mile Lake is an initial step toward the objective of keeping TML free of invasive species. The pace of AIS-control knowledge, experience gained through contacts with other lake associations and the DNR, and the development of AIS control policies and funding by the DNR will continue. As it does, the TMLA AIS control plan will continue to evolve. The TMLA AIS committee will prepare a year-end report to cover progress on the tasks, accomplishments and areas for future improvement.

³ Two possibilities that will be explored are the Hackensack car wash and Northwoods Dock.