

# Beltrami County 2025 AIS Program Report



# Foreword

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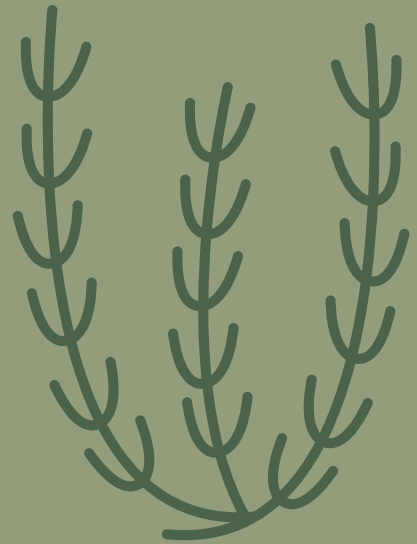


The Beltrami County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program was implemented in 2015 to develop a plan for combating AIS that have entered county waters over time. This program is funded through the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid on an annual basis.

Since its inception, the AIS Program has supported a full-time AIS Lake Technician position, the Watercraft Inspection Program, courtesy Watercraft Decontaminations, AIS surveys and removals, and numerous educational and/or outreach activities.

In December 2025, an updated 'AIS Prevention and Management Plan' was approved and adopted by the Beltrami County Board of Commissioners for implementing future program activities. The '2025 AIS Program Report' is intended to offer insight on program activities, and the value of AIS Prevention Aid funds for Minnesota waters.

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# Watercraft Inspection Program



The Watercraft Inspection Program is a vital service administered by Beltrami County AIS Program under the delegation of the Minnesota DNR. **Public water accesses (PWA) are a major contact point for engaging with watercraft owners and operators.** Surveys completed by inspectors are also used to **inform AIS mitigation + add to data for AIS research.**

Beltrami County's **Watercraft Inspectors are staffed at high-use PWAs** to prevent the unintentional entrance of AIS to a waterbody. The inspection season for 2025 ran from **May 30<sup>th</sup> through September 7<sup>th</sup>, staffing 10 PWAs** around the county.

DNR-trained Level 1 + Level 2 **inspectors are experts in educating + assisting watercraft owners** to 'Clean, Drain, Dry' + do their part to prevent the spread of AIS.

In addition to watercraft inspections, **Level 2 Inspectors are authorized to perform Courtesy Watercraft Decontaminations\* for watercraft owners** seeking compliance for entering a waterbody.





# Inspection Program Breakdown



## County-Wide Inspections

Season Length: May 30<sup>th</sup> - Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>  
6 Inspectors  
2,028 Total Inspection Hours  
3,828 Total Inspections  
\$30,954.65 Total Cost



## Watercraft Decontamination

Season Length: May 30<sup>th</sup> - Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>  
723.75 Total Decontamination Hours  
26 Decontaminations Performed  
\$19,940.30 Total Cost



## Donations

Additional inspection hours in the 2025 season were made possible by generous donors:

City of Bemidji  
Big Lake Association  
Farden Township  
Grace Lake Association  
Turtle River Watershed Association



Using 140°F water for 10+ seconds is effective in killing live zebra mussels. Decontaminations are also useful in flushing live wells + bait containers to kill zebra mussel veligers!

# Education + Outreach Activities



AIS Table at the Beltrami SWCD Water Festival, October 2025



Starry Trek volunteers learn how to ID starry stonewort, August 2025



1 of 6 'Cleaning Tool Stations' installed for TRWA PWAs, September 2025

In 2025, the AIS Technician made connections, **educated over 150 students** on AIS identification + prevention at two 5th grade Water Festivals, **assisted local resort owners** in identifying AIS at private accesses, **presented at numerous lake association meetings**, hosted a **local training site for Starry Trek**, + aided the Turtle River Watershed Association in **installing 6 Cleaning Tool Stations at local PWAs**.

**The AIS Technician is a readily available resource** for AIS identification + management, AIS education, or any other related tasks. **Lake + river associations, shoreline owners, shoreline resort owners, + lake enthusiasts** are encouraged to reach out to the AIS Technician for AIS information in Beltrami County.

# Monitoring + Management



In 2025, **licensed harvesters were contracted to remove starry stonewort (ssw) on four lakes:** Wolf, Big Turtle, Beltrami, + Pimushe.

**Beltrami County shares many of our waterbodies with neighboring counties + tribes**, which is why it is important to include our neighbors in AIS management decisions. We partnered with the **Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's (LLBO)** Plant Resources team to deploy **DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting)** to harvest **over 6,000lbs. of ssw on Wolf + Pimushe.**

Additionally, a licensed harvester was contracted to remove **over 500 lbs. of ssw on Beltrami + Big Turtle** in July + August 2025.



**Routine vegetation sampling is conducted across all Beltrami County lakes to monitor growth of known infestations, gauge management decisions, + for early detection of any possible AIS.**



LLBO's DASH crew removes starry stonewort on Pimushe Lake, July 2025

The most **cost-effective way to combat AIS is early detection and prevention**; once an AIS is established, the cost for mitigation begins to climb. The AIS Program utilizes **Prevention Aid funding, state grants, and donations from local groups** to organize surveys + AIS removals on county waters.



# AIS in Beltrami County Waters

**Beltrami County's waterbodies are most impacted by zebra mussels + starry stonewort.**

Zebra mussels are **extremely difficult to eradicate once established**; they multiply incredibly fast + take over any submerged surface in congregate masses. **Zebra mussels are also a hazard** to swimmer's feet and are known to clog underwater pipes + dock equipment.

**Starry stonewort is an invasive macroalgae** first found in Moose Lake (Beltrami Co.) in 2016. **Starry spreads easily via watercraft** + equipment, and is typically **found around public water access sites**. It is **expensive** to treat and requires extra care to remove; **any broken fragment has the potential to propagate an entirely new plant!** Starry is best identified by its **star-shaped, white bulbils** that anchor the plant to the sediment.

**Beltrami County has 38 infested waters** as of December 2025 - that's **only 4.8%** of Beltrami County's lakes!

**2025 confirmed infestations:** starry stonewort at **Gull Lake + Three Island Lake**, zebra mussels at **Lake Beltrami and Lake Marquette**.

Check the **DNR 'Infested Waters List'** for an **updated list of infested waters** across the state!

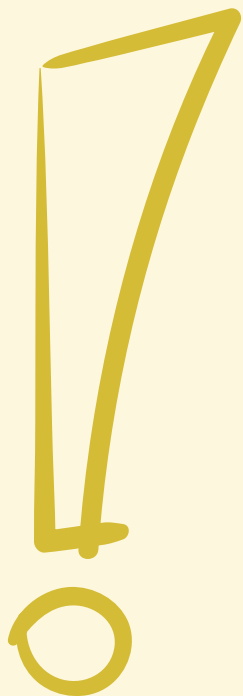




# AIS Prevention Aid

## 25-27 Prevention + Management Plan

Counties receiving Prevention Aid funding are **required by state statute to complete + submit an updated AIS Management Plan** to the Minnesota DNR annually. Since 2015, **\$10 million is allocated to MN county AIS Programs**; distribution is based on a calculation of watercraft trailer launches + parking spaces. **Beltrami County received \$204,218.00 in AIS Prevention Aid for 2025.**



In 2025, the **State announced a 50% reduction to AIS Prevention Aid** to be implemented in 2027 + every year thereafter; additionally, a total phase-out of Prevention Aid by 2029. This **cut will directly impact MN County's AIS Programs +** drastically reduce the feasibility of AIS management + detection in Minnesota Waters.

With potential budget cuts on the horizon, **Beltrami County's AIS Program is focused on preserving funds** for the future to continue valuable AIS work.

The Beltrami County AIS Program '**2025-27 AIS Prevention + Management Plan**' can be found on the county website at **[co.beltrami.mn.us](https://co.beltrami.mn.us)**, under the Aquatic Invasive Species page.

# Get Involved!



**Are you...**

A private water access administrator? A shoreline owner? A resort owner or outfitter? A local educator? A naturalist? An angling enthusiast? A lake association?

**YOU CAN HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD!**

**To learn more about AIS Program events or how you can take steps to identify + prevent the spread of AIS, visit the [AIS page](#) on the Beltrami County website, or contact Beltrami County's AIS Lake Technician at (218)-333-8281.**



**\*Appointments for Watercraft Decontaminations** can be made by calling **(218)-760-8519** at least 15 minutes ahead to allow for equipment set up.

Courtesy Decontaminations located at **2405 Adams Ave NW in Bemidji**, next to the Beltrami County Highway Dept.

To view additional documents + information on the Beltrami County Aquatic Invasive Species Program, visit [co.beltrami.mn.us](http://co.beltrami.mn.us).

#### **Additional AIS Resources:**

University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Aquatic Invasive Species Program  
Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates  
Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations  
Minnesota Sea Grant

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