

**A WATERSHED'S ROLE IN AIS:
FROM COMMITTEE CONCEPTS TO RAPID RESPONSE**

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Like many watershed organizations, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) found it difficult to define what their role should be in aquatic invasive species (AIS) management. The BCWMC knew AIS was a significant concern among some watershed residents and realized that many entities had varying levels of involvement in AIS issues. The BCWMC set out to determine what was being done already and how they could fill gaps.

The BCWMC convened an Aquatic Plant Management/Aquatic Invasive Species (APM/AIS) Committee in 2016 to discuss and consider the BCWMC's possible role in these issues. The committee included BCWMC and city staff, and multiple partners including representatives from lake groups, Three Rivers Park District, Minneapolis Park and Rec Board, Hennepin County, Met Council, and the MnDNR. First, the committee identified activities needed to address AIS—early detection, monitoring, vulnerability assessments, rapid response needs, boat launch management, education, AIS treatments. Then, the committee identified

the entities already filling all or parts of these roles and determined how the BCWMC could assist with and augment these activities.

The BCWMC approved the committee's recommendations, including a new APM/AIS budget, and development of an AIS rapid response plan. The rapid response plan was completed in early 2018 for key AIS species (starry stonewort, Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels) in priority lakes. It was developed after in-depth discussions with the BCWMC partner organizations and is the first of its kind to involve multiple partners. The plan outlines the actions required to address new AIS infestations including communication, surveys, containment, and treatments, and it defines the roles of the BCWMC and partnering entities so they can efficiently and effectively respond to new infestations. The BCWMC is already implementing the rapid response plan to address a new zebra mussel infestation in Medicine Lake.