



Cass County AIS Program 2021 Inspector Annual Report



Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Lake Report - Leech Lake

The 2021 AIS inspection numbers for Leech Lake showed 5,903 boats inspected by Cass County Inspectors during 2,280 hours of inspection time. This is equivalent to 2.6 boats per hour inspection rate. Leech Lake had a 99.7% compliance rate for Minnesota boat plug law. This is similar to the 99.3% county wide compliance rate. The AIS inspectors did not find any new AIS going in or going out of Leech Lake this year, although inspectors did stop a boat from launching with zebra mussels attached. Starry stonewort was discovered on the western edge of Steamboat Bay in July of 2021.

Highlights from the 2021 Cass County Aquatic Invasive Species Program

- New AIS infestations confirmed by MN DNR were starry stonewort in Leech Lake and zebra mussels in Pine Mountain, Woman, and Thunder Lakes. Girl Lake was also listed as infested in 2021 for zebra mussels due to close connectivity to Woman Lake.
- Partnered with Le Seur County to produce docks and lifts handout with 21-day dry laws for transporting used docks, lifts, and swim platforms from one lake to another.
- Conducted boat inspections for 21 major fishing tournaments and a handful of smaller tournaments
- Inspectors stopped boats with zebra mussels from entering Roosevelt, Gull, and Leech Lake in July. An inspector also found a juvenile zebra mussel on a pontoon coming out of Woman Lake, which aided the DNR in listing Woman Lake as infested.
- Provided 10,000 bait bags and posters to 15 local bait retailers to increase education on bait laws and encouraging anglers to be prepared for exiting the lake by keeping water in their vehicles if they wish to keep bait.
- Supported Mississippi Headwaters Board AIS Outreach Campaign with Minnesota Traditions
- AIS monitoring completed by Cass AIS Lake Technician at 32 lakes, 41 public accesses, and 13 resorts, additionally the Cass County Volunteer dive team dove at 11 different locations in 8 different lakes in search of AIS.
- Partnered with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe for monitoring all public accesses, resorts, and some private harbors around Leech Lake after starry stonewort was first discovered in Steamboat Bay.
- Hosted a Starry Trek event location on August 21st, 11 volunteers searched 7 lakes and 8 accesses on the only cold, windy day of the summer.
- Distributed Clean, Drain, Dry campaign materials at boat launches throughout the season. Additionally handed out nearly 20,000 coasters to local bars, restaurants, and resorts with AIS information.
- Cost share with Lake Associations on projects: signs, aquatic plant studies, zooplankton and water quality studies, AIS advertisement, and education.

| 2021 Cass County Statistics: |
|-------------------------------------|
| • Inspection hours – 14,263 |
| • Inspections done – 26,653 |
| • Decontaminations - 316 |
| • 107 Inspection days |

| Cass County AIS boat plug compliance rates by year: |
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| 2017 – 98.8% |
| 2018 – 97.6% |
| 2019 – 98.2% |
| 2020 – 97.9% |
| 2021 – 99.3% |