

2020

Lake Vermilion

AIS Prevention Plan



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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
An Important St Louis County Asset Needing Protection	3
Risk of AIS Introductions is Very High	3
The Fishery, Business Community and Property Owners Cannot Absorb Further AIS Stress	3
The Financial Risk for St Louis County of a Game Changing AIS Infestation at Lake Vermilion	3
Lake Vermilion Today: Existing AIS and Current Threats	4
Goals of the AIS Program at Lake Vermilion	5
Strategy to Achieve Prevention, Early Detection & Containment Goals	6
2020 Lake Vermilion AIS Projects	7
1. Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Project	7
2. Public Education Project	12
3. Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment Project	15
4. Early Detection of New Infestations Project	15
5. Management of Existing Infestations Project	17
6. Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat Project	18
Indirect Expense Allocations	19
7. Indirect Expense Allocations to Support AIS Prevention Activities	19
Summary of Required Resources	20

Introduction

An Important St Louis County Asset Needing Protection

Lake Vermilion is a St Louis County scenic crown jewel. The French voyageurs translated the Ojibway name *Onamuni*, "Lake of the Sunset Glow," to the Anglo-French word *Vermeillon*. It is St Louis County's largest lake (40,000 acres). It has the longest shoreline (341 miles) and the most islands (365). Few would dispute its legendary scenery and its breathtaking sunsets.

Lake Vermilion is an important financial asset for the local business community, drawing fishermen and recreational boaters who drive the local economy. Lake Vermilion's resorts and campgrounds host over 20,000 guests who spent \$7 million for lodging annually. When food, recreation, and retail purchases are included, the direct impact to local businesses likely exceeds \$20 million.

Lake Vermilion is an important financial asset for St Louis County. Its lakeshore property has an estimated 2019 market value of \$1057 million, easily the largest lake valuation in northern Minnesota and about 10% of the EMV outside Duluth. That valuation and the \$9 million net tax it generates for the county, school districts and local governments is at-risk should a game changing AIS invade Lake Vermilion.

Risk of AIS Introductions is Very High

Being a fishery and scenic "super star" can also be a problem. On summer weekends, there's a steady parade of trailered boats between AIS-infested lakes and Vermilion's 17 public access sites and 23 resort/campground private access sites for fishing and recreational boating. Approximately 16,000 trailered boats launch at Lake Vermilion annually.

As the fisheries at other major walleye lakes decline after AIS infestations, we are likely to see additional fishermen trailering their boats to Lake Vermilion, further increasing our risk of AIS introduction.

The Fishery, Business Community and Property Owners Cannot Absorb Further AIS Stress

Adding an AIS stressor to Lake Vermilion will clearly weaken the resiliency of its fishery and ecosystem. The DNR confirmed the presence of spiny waterfleas in Vermilion's east basin in July 2015. Spiny can now be found in all of Vermilion's deep bays.

The lake's west basin is still experiencing a walleye population anomaly – too many large fish and too few smaller ones – a population distribution which is not fully understood. An unknown combination of events triggered this situation in the mid-2000s. The inability of the west-basin walleye fishery to absorb those triggering events or to recover quickly suggests the walleye fishery may be more vulnerable to additional stresses than we'd like.

Lake Vermilion is a Canadian Shield lake, which tend to be less fertile than lakes in the central part of the state (e.g., Lake Mille Lacs). The fisheries of less fertile lakes – those with fewer nutrients to support organisms – may be more fragile and more readily disrupted by a new AIS infestation directly affecting the food chain. The presumed resilient "walleye factory" at Lake Mille Lacs, which has zebra mussels, spiny waterfleas and Eurasian watermilfoil, has collapsed and is not expected to recover for decades, if ever.

It's impossible to know beforehand which stressor is one too many and is the one that begins a downward fishery and business community spiral at Lake Vermilion.

The Financial Risk for St Louis County of a Game Changing AIS Infestation at Lake Vermilion

A major game changing AIS infestation at Lake Vermilion would be disaster in so many ways. Just how the slow-motion train wreck manifests itself depends on whether it's starry stonewort, hybrid watermilfoil, a soft-water vegetation we are not yet talking about, or localized zebra mussels adjacent to a calcium "hot spot." In all cases, a New Era for Lake Vermilion would have commenced.

Our understanding of the current AIS risks for Lake Vermilion is discussed in the next section. Invasive vegetation tops the list with a localized zebra mussel infestation possible. Here's a summary of what a lake might expect after invasion:

- **Eurasian or hybrid watermilfoil, starry stonewort.** Aggressive expansion after invasion. Cabin owners and recreational boaters contend with dense surface mats in depths to 10 feet, fouling equipment. Docks and swim platforms clogged. Native vegetation shaded out. Changing habitat favors some fish species, hurts others.
- **Zebra mussels.** This serious invader is perhaps limited to local infestations at Vermilion. Water clarity increases two-fold. Increased light penetration encourages plant growth. Fish move to deeper waters. Food web disruption. Loss of carrying capacity for walleyes. (Examples of lakes experiencing fishery disruption within 4 years of zebra infestation are Mille Lacs, Miltona, Ida, Minnewaska.)

The financial impact on St Louis County and county taxpayers might take several forms:

- **Lakeshore property values would drop.** A UW study (Horsch & Lewis 2009) on 17 northern Wisconsin lakes found land values declined 13% after Eurasian watermilfoil invasion. In Washington state, a study (Olden & Tamayo 2014) on over 170 lakes with and without watermilfoil showed a -19% difference attributable to infestation.
- **Tax burden would shift to other taxpayers.** With lakeshore property values in decline, the property tax burden would transfer to property owners away from Lake Vermilion.
- **Jobs would be lost.** Tourism at Lake Vermilion would decline. Resorts occupancy would take a hit, as would businesses which rely on tourism.
- **St Louis County would help pay for control.** DNR grants would help, but St Louis County AIS Prevention funds or general revenues would be diverted to help struggling local communities with control and mechanical harvesting.

We understand well that the resources – funding, trained volunteers, and proven contractors – to fully defend Lake Vermilion from all AIS threats will never be completely available. We're committed to deploying the resources we can muster efficiently on our highest priorities to protect Lake Vermilion and St Louis County.

Lake Vermilion Today: Existing AIS and Current Threats

Before we can set goals to protect Lake Vermilion and a strategy to meet those goals, we need to know where we are today.

• Existing AIS Infestations

Rusty crayfish	Initially discovered in Armstrong Bay in mid-1980s. Game changing to fisheries, but at a very slow pace. East-end fisheries appear to be adapting over the years.
Spiny waterfleas	Discovered in the water column in Big Bay in 2015. May have been present for years in low abundance before that. Potentially game changing to fisheries. So far, little evidence beyond impact to growth of Age-0 walleyes and perch.
Curly-leaf pondweed	Known to exist in Minnesota for 110 years. Appears to be in equilibrium with native vegetation statewide. Expansion unlikely.
Chinese mystery snail	Local nuisance in specific bays. Not likely to be game changing lake wide.
Purple loosestrife.	Wetland plant. Small infestations along shorelines. Not game changing.

• Current AIS Threats

Vermilion's water chemistry sets us apart from most Minnesota lakes. Our low calcium and low pH make us low risk for zebra mussels. Our risk for Eurasian watermilfoil may also be low, based on no known infestations and a high likelihood of introduction since the species was first discovered in Lake Minnetonka in 1987.

On the other hand, our susceptibility to hybrid watermilfoil and starry stonewort is unknown, as they are relative newcomers to our state. Until those risks are fully evaluated by researchers, both stay at the top of our threat table.

Research is underway on hybrids between invasive Eurasian watermilfoil and our native northern watermilfoil. Anecdotal reports suggest increased invasiveness and evidence of herbicide resistance. In Lake Vermilion, native watermilfoil co-exists with other native vegetation. We have no known Eurasian watermilfoil – an indication our habitat and water chemistry may not be suitable. However, at this point, no one knows whether a specific hybrid genotype may find our habitat suitable and overwhelm our native vegetation.








To understand better our risk that hybrid watermilfoil might be introduced at Vermilion, the VLA asked RMB Environmental Labs to check the Eurasian watermilfoil infestation at the Gilbert Pit for evidence of northern or hybrid watermilfoil. Neither was found during a 2018 visit.

At this point, it's unclear whether northern watermilfoil cannot live in the Gilbert Pit ... or it can but was largely displaced by the more aggressive Eurasian watermilfoil that dominates the waterbody. A hybrid watermilfoil incubator in the Gilbert Pit – a 45-min trip for a trailered boat to Vermilion – would be a significant risk.

The recent discovery of zebra mussel veligers (larvae) at Muskeg Bay in Lake of the Woods re-opens the question on whether zebras might get a foothold at a calcium "hot spot" at Vermilion. Lake of the Woods has generally low calcium levels – like Vermilion – below the levels suitable for zebras. East Two River, which empties into Lake Vermilion's east basin, has widely varying calcium concentrations which conceivably could support a local zebra infestation. We will re-evaluate that possibility when more is understood about the Lake of the Woods situation during 2020. In the meantime, zebras remain in the middle of our threat table.

Sea Grant has identified over 70 invasives in Lake Superior believed capable of moving to inland lakes. While our soft water protects us from many game-changing invasives that plague central Minnesota and much of Wisconsin and Michigan, it can also expose us to other invaders no one is talking about. We are working with Minnesota Sea Grant and the Minnesota AIS Research Center (MAISRC) to help us identify possible threats to Lake Vermilion. We're also looking toward the Canadian Shield lakes to our north for information about AIS that prefer a soft water habitat.

Currently, our threat table looks like this:

Species	Introduction Risk	Habitat Suitability	Impact if Population Established	
			Fishery & Ecosystem	Recreational Boating
 Hybrid and Eurasian watermilfoil	Hybrid increasing as more lakes become infested.	Hybrid unknown. May be suitable in specific bays.	Serious stressor. Unknown impact on each fishery.	Severe in bays with suitable habitat.
 Starry stonewort	Increasing as more Minnesota lakes become infested	Unknown. Limited to specific bays?	Serious stressor. Unknown impact on each fishery.	Severe in bays with suitable habitat.
 ? Unknown Soft-Water Specialist	Likely low. Connectivity to soft water lakes limited.	Presumed moderate/high.	Unknown	Unknown
 Zebra mussels	Very high.	Low. Limited to calcium hotspots with suitable pH?	Serious stressor. Filters zooplankton, limiting growth of fry.	Generally negative but water clarity appeals to some.
 Spiny waterfleas	Present in many bays. Discovered in 2015.	High in deep basins.	Varies by fish species. Consume zooplankton, limiting growth of fry.	Low. Gets tangled in fishing or recreational gear.
 Curly-leaf pondweed	Present in 4 small areas.	Moderate/high in specific bays.	Stress on native plant diversity. Unknown impact on each fishery.	May become severe in bays with suitable habitat.
 Rusty crayfish	Present in east basin and west to Niles Bay.	High for sandy, rocky, rubble bottoms.	Weed bed destruction impacting several fish species.	Low to moderate.

Goals of the AIS Program at Lake Vermilion

Based on our existing infestations and current threats above, the goals of our long-term AIS program are:

- Goal 1. Prevention.** Prevent all new aquatic invasives from being introduced at Lake Vermilion, with emphasis on those which would be game changers for our fishery, recreational lake use, and business community.
- Goal 2. Early Detection.** Detect all new AIS infestations quickly, before they have become established, when eradication options are most viable. Emphasis on those which would be game changers.
- Goal 3. Containment.** Prevent the expansion of all existing infestations, with emphasis on those which are game changers.

Strategy to Achieve Prevention, Early Detection & Containment Goals

Our strategy for preventing game changing AIS from becoming established or expanding is comprised of the following components. We're committed to deploying our resources on our highest priority activities:

1. Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination. [Supports [Goal 1: Prevention](#)]

- **Private Accesses.** Develop the means to inspect 100% of boats which arrive at resorts, campgrounds and marinas and to ensure those boats are safe to launch. Emphasize higher-risk boats from other states and Minnesota lakes other than Vermilion.
- **Public Accesses.** Develop the means and funding to inspect >60% of boats launching at Vermilion's 17 public accesses, with emphasis on higher-risk boats from lakes other than Vermilion.
- **Tournaments.** Develop the means to inspect 100% of boats participating in fishing tournaments during pre-fishing. Emphasize higher-risk boats from lakes other than Vermilion.

2. Public Education. [Supports [Goal 1: Prevention](#)]

- **Public Education.** Assure that all the people who share Lake Vermilion – especially those who bring trailered boats to the lake – understand our AIS risks, all AIS laws, and the best practices to clean and dry their watercraft.

3. Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment. [Supports [Goal 1: Prevention](#)]

- **Threat Assessment.** Continuously monitor AIS threats – both habitat generalists and soft-water specialists – which would be compatible with Lake Vermilion's habitat.

4. Early Detection of New Infestations. [Supports [Goal 2: Early Detection](#)]

- **Public and Private Accesses.** Check each public access and private accesses at resorts, campgrounds and marinas multiple times each year for new infestations, with emphasis on game-changing vegetation near the top of our threat list.
- **High Risk Habitats.** Survey weed-friendly bays every few years to discover new infestations, with emphasis on game-changing vegetation near the top of our threat list.
- **AIS Detectors.** Develop a team of trained AIS Detectors to respond to suspicious vegetation reports.
- **Rapid Response.** Work jointly with the DNR and North St Louis SWCD to respond quickly to new discovery.

5. Management of Existing Infestations. [Supports [Goal 3: Containment](#)]

- **Evaluation of Existing Invasive Vegetation.** In partnership with 1854 Treaty Authority and the DNR, survey known infestations of curly-leaf pondweed to evaluate appropriate control methods.

6. Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat.

[Supports [Goal 1: Prevention](#), [Goal 2: Early Detection](#), and [Goal 3: Containment](#)]

- **Building Local Capacity.** Develop the volunteer corps, leadership team, skills, and other resources to better protect Lake Vermilion from the AIS threat.
- **Regional and Statewide Partnerships.** Share information and exchange ideas among AIS prevention leaders regionally and statewide. Attend statewide conferences and meetings as a participant and as a presenter.

2020 Lake Vermilion AIS Projects

Based on our AIS program goals and the strategy above, we plan to pursue the following six projects in 2020. Each project addresses one of the six strategy components (above).

1. **Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Project**

Today, prevention of AIS infestations via boat inspection, boat decontamination, and boater education remains our best bet. Population control is very expensive. Eradication is generally not possible.


In 2019, the Vermilion Lake Association partnered with North St Louis SWCD to inspect over 13,200 boats at Vermilion's public accesses, including over 7,200 (55%) of the estimated 13,000 which launch annually at public accesses.

Our partnership also documented (via the tablet survey) the inspection of over 2000 incoming boats at Vermilion's private accesses, mostly resorts and a marina. Based on interviews with resort owners, we estimate the total number of private-access inspections to be over 3000 in 2019. Several major resorts did not use the private-access tablet survey, feeling it made greeting the incoming guest and inspecting his boat difficult.

While the inspection levels at both public and private accesses are significant achievements, even more is needed to protect Lake Vermilion. And that additional coverage needs to be achieved efficiently, taking the risk levels of incoming boats into account. Two areas will receive increased focus in 2020:

- **Expanding Boat Inspections at Private Resorts and Marinas.** Data on incoming resort boats tells us those boats were much more likely to have come from an out-of-state lake or a Minnesota lake with Eurasian watermilfoil or starry stonewort. We estimate the risk level to be twice that of a boat arriving at a typical public access. To address this risk, we have set a goal of eventually inspecting 100% of boats arriving at Vermilion's resorts and marinas. In 2020 we will work with resort owners to help them inspect more boats and document those inspections to track progress and to help us further understand risk.
- **Optimizing Inspector Staffing at Public Accesses Based on Traffic and Risk Levels.** Our team has made great progress on forecasting traffic to position public-access inspectors to intercept the most boats per hour. As our understanding of boat risk levels grows, we will integrate risk reduction into the traffic model to reduce the overall risk of AIS introduction.

In 2020, Vermilion's two watercraft decontamination units will be deployed to support resort and public access inspectors, one on each end of Vermilion. Hoodoo Point public access is the likely east-end location. The west-end location and staffing plan will be set before the season starts.

All activities in the Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination project are summarized below. Activities marked with  are new or expanded in 2020.

Project 1. Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
1.1 Public Access Inspections and Boater Education	180	90	\$2,610	\$1,100
1.2 Resort, Marina & Campground Inspections and Boater Education ↑	180	90	2,610	
1.3 Software Improvement for Private Access Inspector Certification and Inspection Survey	40	40	1,160	3,300
1.4 Expanded Training for Resort Inspectors	40	20	580	3,900
1.5 Pilot Project to Test Methods to Expand Saturday Inspections in the Resort Environment ↑	40	10	290	500
1.6 Fishing Tournament Inspection and Boater Education	160	20	580	
1.7 Watercraft Decontamination Stations and Boater Education	45	30	870	300
1.8 Ongoing Traffic Forecasting and Staffing Optimization ↑	160	80	2,320	300
1.9 Develop Methods to Adjust Inspector Staffing based on Watercraft Risk ↑	120	120	3,480	
Total	965	500	\$14,500	\$9,400

1.1 Public Access Inspections and Boater Education

Leaders: Natalya Walker, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: 5,400 inspection hours, 13,000 inspections, 50% coverage, risk reduction metric tbd.

Summary: Partner with North St Louis SWCD which will provide about 5,400 hours of L1/L2 inspectors at selected public accesses. Educate boat operators to self-inspect and to clean, drain and dry their equipment. Target 13,000 total inspections and 50% coverage of boats entering Vermilion at public accesses. Monitor and track progress. Assist SWCD as needed to solve problems.

Budget Detail: Volunteer support 180 hours at \$10/hr = \$1800 in-kind. VLA AIS program leader 90 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$2610. On-site materials: Pamphlets, ID cards, plug docks, and other materials \$500. CDD signage and banners, etc, from Wildlife Forever \$800 in-kind. Directional signage \$400. Misc expenses \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$3710, Volunteer hours 180, AIS Coord hours 90, Wildlife Forever \$800 in-kind

Funding Note: Funding for Level 1 and Level 2 inspectors, tablets, cleaning & safety tools, and SWCD supervisory team will be covered by North St Louis SWCD.

1.2 Resort, Marina & Campground Inspections and Boater Education

Leaders: Resort Ambassadors, Natalya Walker, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: 3500 private-access inspections (\$7 stipend & survey data), 1500 other private-access inspections, 70% coverage, risk reduction metric tbd

Summary: Partner with North St Louis SWCD to improve the online private-access inspector certification process and the methods for training and mentoring dock attendants during the season. Recognizing that each business is unique, work with owners to solve their individual inspection problems. About 24 business partners with private accesses expected in 2020. Target 5,000 total inspections at private accesses and >70% coverage of boats entering Vermilion at private accesses (90% coverage for boats entering at participating resorts).

Budget Detail: VLA volunteer “Resort Ambassadors” working with owners 180 hours at \$10/hr = \$1800 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 90 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$2610. Replacement/new CDD signage and banners from Wildlife Forever \$1200 in-kind.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$2610, Volunteer hours 180, AIS Coord hours 90, Wildlife Forever \$1200 in-kind

Funding Note: Funding for private inspection stipends, tablets, cleaning & safety tools, and SWCD supervisory team will be covered by North St Louis SWCD.

1.3 Software Improvement for Private Access Inspector Certification and Inspection Survey

Leaders: Natalya Walker, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: Improve certification and survey software; move survey to mobile phone platform

Summary: Work with SWCD and our resort partners to improve the inspector testing and certification “Flexiquiz” software. To improve acceptance of the private access survey by resorts, reduce the length to 2-4 questions and move to a mobile phone platform from a tablet. Survey contractor is Harvest Your Data. Pilot new survey with a few resorts. Cover ongoing monthly costs of the Flexiquiz and Harvest your Data.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteer 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$400 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 40 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$1160. Flexiquiz monthly fee 12 x 25 = \$300. Harvest Your Data annual fee \$800. One-time conversion to phone platform \$2000. Equipment and misc supplies \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$4460, Volunteer hours 40, AIS Coord hours 40

1.4 Expanded Training for Resort Inspectors

Leaders: Open position, Natalya Walker, Resort Ambassadors, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: Improved practical inspection training for private-access inspectors after certification

Summary: Work with SWCD and our resort partners to provide expanded training for private-access inspectors. SWCD trainer/mentor to visit 20 resort inspectors at 15 resorts about 3 times a year. Build skills for inspection and simple cleaning. First visit soon after certification, then 2 more times later as needed. Probably 3 hours per visit, counting travel.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteers 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$400 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 20 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$580. Contract with SWCD for L1/L2/intern hours: 20 inspectors x 3 visits x 3 hours x \$20 ave = \$3600. Equipment and misc supplies \$300.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$4480, Volunteer hours 40, AIS Coord hours 20

1.5 Pilot Project to Test Methods to Expand Saturday Inspections in the Resort Environment.

Leaders: Open position, Resort Ambassador team involved.

Key targets/objectives: Evaluate feasibility of 2-3 ideas at a couple resorts.

Summary: Work with our resort partners to come up with a few ideas – tailored to specific resort Saturday situation – which have the potential to move us closer to the 100% long-term inspection target. Test two or more ideas. Expand the test to additional resorts if shows promise.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteer 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$400 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 10 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$290. Equipment and misc supplies \$500.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$790, Volunteer hours 40, AIS Coord hours 10

1.6 Fishing Tournament Inspection and Boater Education.

Leaders: Dick Vohs, Terry Grosshauser

Key targets/objectives: 100% inspection coverage, risk reduction metric tbd

Summary: Partner with North St Louis SWCD, 1854 Treaty Authority, and Fortune Bay Marina to inspect boats during pre-fishing and tournament days. Use Level 1 inspectors from North St Louis SWCD, private-access inspectors at Fortune Bay and resorts, plus 1854 Treaty Authority inspectors and Landa decontamination unit. Provide tournament participants with proof-of-inspection certificate. Educate boat operators to self-inspect and to clean, drain and dry their equipment. Target: 100% coverage for all tournament participants entering Vermilion.

Budget Detail: Tournament director support at 8 tournaments by VLA volunteer 160 hours at \$10/hr = \$1600 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 20 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$580.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$580, Volunteer hours 160, AIS Coord hours 20

Funding Note: Funding for L1/L2 inspectors and private-access inspection stipend, tablets, cleaning & safety tools, and SWCD supervisory team will be covered by North St Louis SWCD.

1.7 Watercraft Decontamination Stations and Boater Education.

Leaders: Natalya Walker, Dwight Warkentin (west end), Jeff Lovgren (east end)

Key targets/objectives: 10 incoming decons, 100 total decons, risk reduction metric tbd

Summary: Partner with North St Louis SWCD which will provide about 1300 hours of Level 2 inspectors at Vermilion's two decon locations. Offer courtesy cleaning, corrective decontamination for boats denied entry, and decontamination for boats exiting. Educate boat operators to self-inspect and to clean, drain and dry their equipment. Select hours of operation based on traffic patterns. Find acceptable west-end location to support public accesses and resorts. Likely to be Dyke's Corner at the intersection of Hwys 115 and 24 near west-end resorts.

Budget Detail: Volunteer support 45 hours at \$10/hr = \$450 in-kind. VLA AIS prevention plan leader 30 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$870. On-site materials: Pamphlets, ID cards, etc, 50 sets, \$100. CDD signage and banners from Wildlife Forever, 2 sets, \$400 in-kind. Signage at Dyke's Corner \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$1170, Volunteer hours 45, AIS Coord hours 30

Funding Note: Funding for Level 2 inspectors, tablets, cleaning & safety tools, and SWCD supervisory team will be covered by North St Louis SWCD.

1.8 Ongoing Traffic Forecasting and Staffing Optimization.

Leaders: Jeff Lovgren, Susan Bies, Mark Schmidt

Key targets/objectives: Cumulative 3% boats/hour annual improvement without sacrificing coverage.

Summary: Using historical traffic data and the forecasting methods developed so far, provide a full-season forecast prior to Fishing Opener. Adjust the forecast as current-year traffic data becomes available. Tweak the forecasting methodology as needed. Work with risk analysis folks to incorporate risk into staffing.

Budget Detail: Volunteer winter support 2 x 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$800 in-kind. Volunteer summer support 2 x 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$800 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 80 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$2320. Additional trail cameras, camera signs, and related supplies \$300.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$2620, Volunteer hours 160, AIS Coord hours 80

1.9 Develop Methods to Measure Watercraft Risk and Include Risk in Ongoing Staffing Optimization.

Leaders: Open position. Jeff Lovgren interim.

Key targets/objectives: Risk based metric developed. Risk reduction target tbd.

Summary: Develop and test multiple methods to predict risk levels of incoming boats. Last-lake and boat-type data from survey may allow us to adjust probably of boats coming from infested lakes to various accesses at certain days/times. Resort arrivals from out-of-state boats may have a pattern. Develop a metric to supplement boats/hour to account for risk. Work with traffic forecasting team to incorporate risk into staffing.

Budget Detail: Volunteer support 120 hours at \$10/hr = \$1200 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 120 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$3480.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$3480, Volunteer hours 120, AIS Coord hours 120

2. Public Education Project

Launch-site education activities (Project 1) are tailored to a specific audience and focused on Lake Vermilion's most significant AIS risks. We propose to complement that work with an awareness and education package – still focused on Lake Vermilion's risks – but aimed at the general public in their daily life.

The campaign will be local, emphasizing the region within 50 miles of Lake Vermilion.


- AIS billboard on major artery leading to Vermilion west-end resorts
- Display ads and feature articles in the *Cook News-Herald*, the *Tower News*, and the *Timberjay* (Tower edition) complementing (and not duplicating) county-wide ads by Wildlife Forever.
- AIS content in the VLA quarterly newsletter, which is offered free to resort guests and in local businesses.
- AIS information booth at local fairs and similar events.

The campaign will seek out tourists when they visit local businesses.

- Lake service providers, such as resorts, campgrounds, marinas, boat dealers.
- Bait shops, grocery stores, cafes and restaurants catering to lake visitors.

The campaign will seek out the tech-savvy younger generation, a group hard to reach with traditional media.

- A significant increase in the AIS content of the VLA website, Facebook page, and Twitter.
- Focus: AIS news and practical videos on boat cleaning and AIS identification.

All activities in the Public Education project are summarized below. Activities marked with  are new or expanded in 2020.

Project 2. Public Education

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
2.1 Print Media: Newsletters and Newspapers	60	70	\$2,030	\$3,600
2.2 Electronic Media: Website and Social Media ↑	120	36	1,044	4,309
2.3 Public Events and Shows	66	10	290	400
2.4 Business Partnerships ↑	48	10	290	1,700
2.5 Stewardship Education and Materials for Resort Owners and Guests	90	30	870	3,870
Total	384	156	\$4,524	\$13,879

2.1 Print Media: Newsletters and Newspapers

Leaders: Lori Ptak, Terry Grosshauser, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: One feature article in newspapers, two display ads on milestones and partner recognition, three news releases, 4.5 AIS pages per newsletter

Summary: Informational articles in local newspapers and VLA newsletter to increase public awareness of AIS threats and prevention activities at Lake Vermilion. Complement AIS info and display ads from Wildlife Forever. News releases to *Cook News-Herald*, *Tower News*, the *Timberjay*, and, at times, the *Mesabi News* and *Hometown Focus*. One or two AIS feature articles for same. Display ads, especially for AIS milestone announcements and “thank yous” to partners and donors. Regular AIS presence in VLA newsletter, which is offered free to resort guests and in local business establishments catering to lake visitors.

Budget Detail: Display ads: 2 placements in 3 newspapers \$800. Articles: 3 news releases or articles with photos, 3 newspapers, none paid. VLA newsletter: Target 4-1/2 AIS pages per issue, 4 issues, expense allocation based on page ratio, estimate \$2800. Content development: VLA AIS prevention plan leader 70 hrs at \$29/hr w burden = \$2030. Volunteer support 60 hrs at \$10/hr = \$600 in-kind.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$5630, Volunteer hours 60, AIS Coord hours 70

2.2 Electronic Media: Website and Social Media.

Leaders: Lori Ptak, Steve Lenertz, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: Per week during summer, 1 website post, 1 Facebook, 1 Twitter

Summary: Maintain up-to-date AIS information on the VLA website, Facebook, and Twitter to increase public understanding of AIS threats and prevention activities at Vermilion. Focus on reaching the tech-savvy younger generation. Provide dedicated landing pages where appropriate. Outreach to potential AIS volunteers. Utilize Google Analytics and other tools to understand what’s working. Content development, hosting and analysis by WA Fisher (Virginia).

Budget Detail: Volunteer AIS content support 120 hours at \$10/hr = \$1200 in-kind. VLA AIS prevention plan leader 36 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$1044. Website hosting, posts and maintenance: \$420/mo x 12 mo, 63% expense allocation based on AIS content = \$3175. VLA Facebook and Twitter posts and maintenance \$150/mo x 12 mo, 63% expense allocation based on AIS content = \$1134.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$5353, Volunteer hours 120, AIS Coord hours 36

2.3 Public Events and Shows.

Leaders: Lori Ptak, Pat Michaelson, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: 1 or 2 events per season

Summary: Staff AIS information tables at a small number of local fairs, carnivals, parades, and similar events. Examples: Antique and Classic Boat Show. Utilize 10x10 EZ-Up canopy when outdoors. Organize event staffing.

Budget Detail: Volunteer coordinator 30 hours at \$10/hr = \$300 in-kind. VLA booth staff volunteers 36 hrs at \$10 = \$360 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 10 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$290. Equipment and canopy maintenance \$200. Misc expenses \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$690, Volunteer hours 66, AIS Coord hours 10

2.4 Business Partnerships.

Leaders: Dwight Warkentin, Gary Haugen, Jim Graham

Key targets/objectives: Add 10 business partnerships, add literature distribution at 15 new businesses, provide one AIS article to an internal newsletters or website at a business.

Summary: Provide AIS educational materials and assistance to local businesses. Emphasis on those catering to lake visitors. Reutilize materials created for local fairs. Create special-purpose materials (e.g., placemats, bar coasters) unique to a business segment. Provide display racks.

Budget Detail: Volunteer support 48 hours at \$10/hr = \$480 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 10 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$290. AIS placemats \$1200. Other materials \$500.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$1990, Volunteer hours 48, AIS Coord hours 10

2.5 Stewardship Education and Materials for Resort Owners and Guests.

Leaders: Gary Haugen, Jim Graham, Marilyn Johnson, Jeff Lovgren

Key targets/objectives: Provide educational materials and pre-travel messaging as needed

Summary: Support resort and campground partners by supplying AIS information and educational materials for their guests. Provide AIS identification materials tailored to the resort environment. Cover native and invasive vegetation and invertebrates. Provide front-desk reference materials and signage for their guests. Provide owners with AIS content for their website, email and print communications with their guests. Pre-visit informational materials and mailings, including explanation of inspection and cleaning process upon arrival. Develop a recognition program to publicly recognize business owners who have been trained and have implemented key AIS practices.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteer 90 hours at \$10/hr = \$900 in-kind. VLA paid admin support 30 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$870. Front desk AIS Detector ID guide and reference materials/photos, 20 sets at \$45 = \$900. Front desk AIS hand-outs for guests, 30 participating resorts at \$60 = \$1800 (for 5500+ customer rentals). Recognition supplies for 40+ resorts, banners, posters, decals, signage \$450. Recognition publicity, newspaper articles, ads \$720.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$4740, Volunteer hours 90, AIS Coord hours 30

3. Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment Project

Habitat evaluation is important to assess risk of establishment. We need to know what to look for and where in Vermilion to look.

While our soft water protects us from many game-changing invasives that plague central Minnesota and much of Wisconsin and Michigan, it can also expose us to other invaders no one is talking about. We are working with the Minnesota AIS Research Center (MAISRC) to help us identify possible threats. We're also looking toward the Canadian Shield lakes to our north for information about AIS that prefer a soft water habitat.

The recent discovery of zebra mussel veligers (larvae) at Muskeg Bay in Lake of the Woods re-opens the question on whether zebras might get a foothold at a calcium "hot spot" at Vermilion. We will watch that development closely.

All activities in the Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment project are summarized below.

Project 3. Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
3.1 Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment	120	60	\$1,740	\$300
Total	120	60	\$1,740	\$300

3.1 Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment.

Leaders: Open position, Jeff Lovgren, Mary McNellis

Key targets/objectives: Assessment threats and prevention of surprises

Summary: For all AIS threats, understand our "risk of establishment" once introduced. Compare Vermilion's habitat (e.g., water chemistry, bottom structure, water temperature, nutrient content, etc) with that of infested lakes and with the preferred and minimum requirements for each species. Evaluate each bay's risk where micro-habitats exist.

Budget Detail: Volunteer 120 hours at \$10/hr = \$1200 in-kind. VLA paid admin staff support 60 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$1740. Travel mileage, etc, for research meetings \$300.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$2040, Volunteer hours 120, AIS Coord hours 60

4. Early Detection of New Infestations Project

If a new invasive were to evade our inspection and decontamination firewall, we rely on early detection to give us the best chance of eradication or control.

Vermilion's current top threats are both vegetation: Eurasian/hybrid watermilfoil and starry stonewort. Vegetation almost always is first apparent at the access where it was introduced. In 2019, we extended our "sentry" early detection project to all 17 public accessess. In 2020, the project will be further extended to 20+ private accesses. Support for our access sentries by AIS Detectors as coaches and identification experts.

The recent discovery of zebra mussel veligers (larvae) at Muskeg Bay in Lake of the Woods re-opens the question on whether zebras might get a foothold at a calcium "hot spot" at Vermilion. Two veliger tows are planned outside the mouth of East Two River in 2020.

All activities in the Early Detection of New Infestations project are summarized below. Activities marked with ↑ are new or expanded in 2020.

Project 4. Early Detection of New Infestations

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
4.1 Early Detection of Invasive Vegetation at Public Accesses	212	10	\$290	\$1,350
4.2 Early Detection of Invasive Vegetation at Resort, Campground, and Marina Accesses ↑	122		0	500
4.3 Early Detection of Zebra Mussel Veligers near East Two River ↑	20	5	145	600
4.4 AIS Detector Training and AIS Hotline	100	10	290	948
Total	454	25	\$725	\$3,398

4.1 Early Detection of Invasive Vegetation at Public Accesses.

Leader: Mary McNellis

Key targets/objectives: All public accesses covered 3 times each summer

Summary: Monitor all 17 public accesses for new invasive vegetation infestations. Three total visits at each site in mid-June, mid-July, and mid-August by trained sentries who each will become familiar with their assigned site. Focus on vegetation matched to our water chemistry and habitat at access. Sentry training, coaching and supervision by VLA volunteer. AIS Detectors follow up when suspicious vegetation found.

Budget Detail: Volunteer leader 60 hours at \$10 = \$600 in-kind. Volunteer access Sentries cover 17 total accesses. Sentry training and monitoring hours, 17 sites x 2 hours/visit x 3 visits per year + 50 hrs total training at \$10 = \$1520 in-kind. VLA paid admin staff support 10 hrs at \$29/hr w burden = \$290. Vegetation ID guide for 17 sentries x \$50 = \$850. Misc supplies \$500.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$1640, Volunteer hours 212, AIS Coord hours 10

4.2 Early Detection of Invasive Vegetation at Resort, Campground, and Marina Accesses.

Leader: Resort Ambassadors. Additional coordinator may be added.

Key targets/objectives: All resort and marina accesses covered 3 times each summer

Summary: Work with our resort partners to monitor all resort accesses for new invasive vegetation infestations. Three total visits at each site in mid-June, mid-July, and mid-August by AIS Detector or trained resort employee. Focus on vegetation matched to our water chemistry and habitat at access. AIS Detectors follow up when suspicious vegetation found by resort employees.

Budget Detail: Volunteer coordinator 20 hours at \$10 = \$200 in-kind. Volunteer resort ambassadors 3 x 10 each at \$10 = \$300. Volunteer AIS Detectors cover (estimated) 12 accesses x 2 hours/visit x 3 visits per year at \$10 = \$720 in-kind. Misc expenses \$500.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$500, Volunteer hours 122, AIS Coord hours none

4.3 Early Detection of Zebra Mussel Veligers near East Two River.

Leader: Bob and Renee Pearson, Jeff Lovgren assisting.

Key targets/objectives: Check Pike Bay near East Two River twice a year in August for veligers

Summary: With the discovery of veligers in Lake of Woods ... a lake thought to have calcium too low to sustain a zebra population ... conduct precautionary veliger tows downstream from East Two River. In addition, increase sentry checks in the Tower harbor and near Your Boat Club on East Two. Purchase new plankton bag, if needed.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteers 20 hours at \$10 = \$200. VLA paid admin staff support 5 hrs at \$29/hr w burden = \$145. Plankton bag \$0. RMB analysis of samples 2 x \$200 = \$400. Misc expenses \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$745, Volunteer hours 20, AIS Coord hours 5

4.4 AIS Detector Training and AIS Hotline.

Leader: Open Position. Experienced AIS Detector interim.

Key targets/objectives: Four AIS Detectors covering Lake Vermilion

Summary: Maintain a crew of 4 AIS Detectors at Vermilion to respond to hot line calls and cover certain resorts as a sentry. If possible, 2 AIS Detectors on each end of the lake. Maintain an AIS Hotline phone number forwarded to an AIS Detector mobile phone on rotating basis.

Budget Detail: AIS Detector volunteer hours per season 25 hours x 4 detectors at \$10/hr = \$1000 in-kind. Travel and training fees for 1 Detectors = \$400. VLA paid admin staff support 10 hrs at \$29/hr w burden = \$290. Hotline expense \$6/mo x 12 months = \$48. Misc expenses \$500.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$1238, Volunteer hours 100, AIS Coord hours 10

5. Management of Existing Infestations Project

With help from DNR’s Rich Rezanka, RMB Environmental Labs, and technicians from 1854 Treaty Authority, we will continue to monitor existing infestations of curly-leaf pondweed in Everett Bay and spiny waterfleas throughout the lake. Vegetation in Everett Bay, a soft-bottom bay which has proven to be very weed-friendly, will receive special focus.

All activities in the Management of Existing Infestations project are summarized below.

Project 5. Management of Existing Infestations

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
5.1 Annual Evaluation of Existing Invasive Vegetation and High-Risk Habitats	20	20	\$580	\$4,000
Total	20	20	\$580	\$4,000

5.1 Annual Evaluation of Existing Invasive Vegetation and High-Risk Habitats.

Leader: Jeff Lovgren, Mary McNellis

Key targets/objectives: One visit by RMB team, one visit by Rich Rezanka.

Summary: DNR AIS Specialist Rich Rezanka continues to visit Everett Bay and, perhaps, Stuntz Bay, each June to evaluate our curly-leaf pondweed infestation. No treatment is expected. RMB Environmental Labs visits Vermilion for 2 days to look at high-risk bays and accesses from the water. 1854 Treaty Authority technician and VLA volunteer assist RMB in the boat.

Budget Detail: VLA volunteer 20 hours at \$10 = \$200. DNR and 1854 personnel no cost. RMB Labs 2 persons x 2 days \$3800. VLA paid admin staff support 20 hrs at \$29/hr w burden = \$580. Misc expenses \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$4580, Volunteer hours 20, AIS Coord hours 20

6. Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat Project

The Vermilion Lake Association will work with nearby AIS partners and statewide to share information and exchange ideas among AIS prevention leaders. We will attend conferences and meetings as a participant and as a presenter, building contacts and partnerships at the county level and statewide.

We will also develop our own AIS leadership team and volunteer corps, recruiting volunteers to fill specific needs and building the skills of our team to better protect Lake Vermilion.

All activities in the Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat project are summarized below.

Project 6. Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
6.1 Building Local AIS Team	160	40	\$1,160	\$700
6.2 Statewide Information Sharing and Involvement	40	40	1,160	1,150
Total	200	80	\$2,320	\$1,850

6.1 Building Local AIS Team.

Leaders: Jeff Lovgren, Pat Michaelson

Key targets/objectives: Add volunteer leaders as needed, new and current volunteer leaders attend one collaborative meeting

Summary: Develop the volunteer corps, leadership team, skills, and other resources to better protect Lake Vermilion. Recruit volunteers to cover specific AIS needs. Build AIS knowledge, skills and relationships by attending conferences like MAISRC Showcase, Lake of Woods – Rainy Lake Conference, DNR seminars and webinars. Encourage one-on-one collaboration with person doing same work in other counties. Some overnight travel possible.

Budget Detail: Volunteer recruiting 40 hours at \$10/hr = \$400 in-kind. Volunteer conference attendance 120 hours at \$10/hr = \$1200 in-kind. VLA paid AIS leader conference attendance support 40 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$1160. Travel mileage, etc, for local meetings \$500. Misc expenses \$200.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$1860, Volunteer hours 160, AIS Coord hours 40

6.2 Statewide Information Sharing and Involvement.

Leaders: Jeff Lovgren, VLA AIS Team

Key targets/objectives: 3 collaborative meetings, 1 major conference

Summary: Share information and exchange ideas among AIS prevention leaders statewide. Attend statewide conferences and meetings as a participant and as a presenter. Build partnerships to share resources at the regional and statewide levels. MAISRC Advisory Board, Aquatic Invaders Summit, etc. Estimate 3 collaborative meetings and presentations annually. Estimate 1 major conference annually. Some overnight travel.

Budget Detail: Volunteer 40 hrs at \$10/hr = \$400 in-kind. VLA paid AIS leader 40 hours at \$29/hr w burden = \$1160. Travel mileage, hotels, etc, for statewide meetings with some overnight stays 3 trips x \$350 average = \$1050. Misc expenses \$100.

Cost Estimate: Cash \$2310, Volunteer hours 40, AIS Coord hours 40

7. Indirect Expense Allocations to Support AIS Prevention Activities

Certain indirect expenses are required to support the Vermilion Lake Association’s AIS prevention activities. When it is not practical to assign these expenses to a specific AIS project, they are included here.

Indirect Expense Allocations are summarized below:

Project 7. Indirect Expense Allocations to Support AIS Prevention Activities

Description of Activities	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
7.1 Liability Insurance Allocation				\$ 2,430
7.2 Additional Insurance Required by St Louis County				994
7.3 Workers Compensation Insurance Allocation				397
7.4 Financial Services Allocation				1,300
7.5 General Office and Equipment				200
Total				\$ 5,321

7.1 Liability Insurance Allocation.

Budget Detail: Based on 2019 premiums, general liability, boat size liability, employment practices liability, directors & officers (D&O) liability, and mandatory terrorism adder \$3856. Assume no year-to-year increase. Allocation 63% to AIS based on approximate 63% AIS paid and volunteer hours vs total. AIS total: Cash \$2430.

7.2 Additional Insurance Required by St Louis County.

Budget Detail: Named insured, business auto, and increased commercial liability coverage \$965 based on 2019 premium. Add 3% year-to-year increase. Allocation 100% to St Louis County. Total: Cash \$994.

7.3 Workers Compensation Insurance Allocation.

Budget Detail: Workers comp coverage \$385 in 2019. Add 3% year-to-year increase. Allocation 100% to St Louis County since only employee is AIS Prevention Plan leader. Total: Cash \$397.

7.4 Financial Services Allocation.

Budget Detail: Based on 2019 data, volunteer VLA treasurer 396 hours at \$10/hr = \$3960 in-kind. Quote from Walker, Giroux and Hahne for 2019 taxes and audit = \$2600. Allocation between VLA (50%) and St Louis County (50%) based on AIS grant approximately doubling the complexity of accounting activities. AIS total: Cash \$1300 + \$1980 in-kind = \$3280.

7.5 General Office and Equipment

Budget Detail: Average expenses for stamps, ink, toner, paper, envelopes, etc. \$50/mo or \$600 annually. Since it's difficult to manage and submit small purchases, the majority will be handled as VLA match. Cash \$200, in-kind match \$400.

Summary of Required Resources

Summary of Required Resources by Project

Description of Projects	Resources Required			
	Volunteer Hours	AIS Coordinator Hours	AIS Coordinator Expense @ \$29/hr	Contracts and Other Expenses
1 Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination	965	500	\$14,500	\$ 9,400
2 Public Education	384	156	4,524	13,879
3 Habitat Evaluation and Threat Assessment	120	60	1,740	\$300
4 Early Detection of New Infestations	454	25	725	3,398
5 Management of Existing Infestations	20	20	580	4,000
6 Growing Capacity to Handle AIS Threat	200	80	2,320	1,850
7 Indirect Expense Allocation to Support AIS Activities				5,321
Total	2,143	841	\$ 24,389	\$ 38,148