

June 17, 2015

## FILIA AIS Inspection

The Minn. Legislature in 2014 allocated about \$275,000. to Aitkin County for AIS boat inspection and for AIS educational use. Certain lakes in the county were designated as higher risk and FIL was one of them. FILIA, in December 2014, submitted a grant application to Aitkin County to have trained inspectors at both north & south access point for 8 hours per day on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from opening fishing weekend thru the week after Labor Day. The inspectors are recruited, trained and paid by an employment agency in Brainerd to remove any liability from our lake association. The grant request was for \$14,515.. In February 2015, we were awarded our full request. Our only expense was our 20% match which if fully utilized would be \$2903.00

The hiring process was slower than expected with about a dozen inspectors in place for Aitkin County by mid May for opening fishing. As of last weekend, there were 18 inspectors in place for Aitkin County with several more being trained. The County hopes to have a total of about 25 to cover the lakes that submitted grant applications or deemed at higher risk. As of last weekend, all planned lakes have an inspector with multiple inspectors at Big Sandy, Minnewawa and Farm Island. Aitkin County covers the cost of a coordinator who supervises and assigns the inspectors to different lakes. All coordination is thru Steve Hughes at Aitkin County Soil & Water. The 'roll out' was a little bumpy but I think the process is improving and will only get better. As of today, we are under utilizing the requested/allocated funds because of the slower roll out of the program at the beginning of the boating season.

The danger of infestation of AIS is very real. Crow Wing County is a couple of years ahead of us in their plan to head off these nasty critters. We are learning from them and plan to apply for any future grant money available to improve our attempt to save Farm Island. When you use the boat access points or if you are driving by either access, stop and talk the inspector and tell them how much we appreciate their efforts. If you talk to your legislator, tell them to approve the State funding to fight AIS currently at \$10 million.

Submitted by Greg Anderson