

Hello Senator or Representative \_\_\_\_\_ ;

My name is Ron Ray, President of the Garfield Lake Association, and am writing this message on behalf of the Garfield Lake Association. We are members of the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations, HC COLA, which represents 32 lakes within Hubbard County. I wish to bring to your attention to the issue of inflationary loss of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) boat landing inspection hours for 2023. This loss in inspection hours is the result of the increase in hourly AIS Inspector cost, changing from \$22 per hour to \$25 per hour. This wage increase caused a decrease in the AIS inspection hours on Garfield Lake from 549 hours to 470 or a 79 hour decrease in AIS inspection.

We are asking that the Minnesota legislature increase statewide funding of the Aquatic Invasive Species to cover this increased cost and make the funding of this program adjusted to any inflationary changes.

Per the article on the value of Minnesota lakes, published in the Minneapolis Tribune Jan 16, 2023, written by Ron Schara, he outlines the following:

1. Minnesota sells 1 million fishing licenses generating \$20 million in revenue annually.
2. Minnesota sells 300,000 non-resident licenses generating \$10 million in revenue annually.
3. Over 1/3 of Minnesotans fish at least once per year.
4. Minnesota has over 830,000 registered boats, second to Florida.
5. Minnesota is #1 in the nation in boat ownership per capita.
6. Minnesota fishing employs 27,000 employees and generates \$4.2 billion in revenue.

My understanding is that AIS funding for the counties is from the MN Dept of Revenue general fund and not the DNR; MN Statute 477A.19. I understand that \$10 million is set aside to support AIS local management. Hubbard County gets approximately \$250,000 and the impact of the wage cost increase of almost 14% has significant loss to all AIS inspection in our county and all over the state.

We are asking that you act quickly to increase the funding for 2024 AIS boat inspection to cover the 14% loss we have in inspection hours plus increase that will occur in 2023. We also ask that you somehow, arrange that this funding is indexed to wage or other cost changes.

Our Lake Association works hard on keeping Garfield Lake, clean and healthy. We do routine monitoring and sampling of different lake species and conditions such as Zebra Mussel Veliger's and spiny water flea. We take routine measurements within the lake such as water clarity, total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and temperatures. We do so at our own expense and all of our data and information is shared with the DNR, the MPCA and other Minnesota agencies.

We believe we are doing our part to Keep Our Lakes Healthy. We ask that the State of Minnesota do the same. We thank you for your support on this matter and ask that you advise us in how we might be able to get others to do the same.

Ron Ray

President Garfield Lake Association

Copy: Sharon Natzel, President HC COLA; Aaron Anderson, Hubbard County Environmental Specialist