



**www.mnlakesandrivers.org \* P.O. Box 22262, St. Paul, MN 55122 \* (952) 854-1317**

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Re: Emerging Issues Account

January 10,, 2024

Greetings,

We are writing today to request additional funding for the ENRTF grant Stop Starry Invasion - Community Invasive Species Containment, ID Number: 2021-313. This work plan was approved on July 21, 2021 and must be complete June 30, 2025.

There is an urgent need for both an increase in funding and an extension of the Stop Starry program.

1. While we were able to get special use permits or no-cost lease agreement to place equipment on watercraft access sites owned by the tribes, counties, townships or USFS, the process has been extremely protracted with the MN DNR. In fact, the last two boat cleaning stations were only able to be placed in December, 2023 on MN DNR accesses. For this reason we have been slower to promote and build the civic engagement around use of this equipment that leverages the utility of it.
2. In 2021 there were 16 lakes (31 accesses) infested with starry stonewort. Under the grant we have deployed 31 boat cleaning stations covering 6 lakes where starry stonewort was discovered after the grant was approved. We used a risk model to cover the highest risk accesses, but there are a number of critical accesses that have no protection. Some infested lakes and accesses have no protection at all.

In 2021 there were 16 lakes infested with starry stonewort. Today the MN DNR infested waters list shows 27 lakes infested with starry stonewort, including the Mississippi River and Leech Lake.

We are requesting an additional \$385,000 to be able to protect high risk accesses that currently have not protection and cover any high risk accesses that might become infested in the next few years, and extend our Civic Organizing efforts through 2027 to ensure that we can build a local cultural norm to use the equipment to Clean, Drain and Dry every time they leave an infested waterbody.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Forester".

Jeff Forester

## **Project Manager Qualifications & Organization Description**

Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, will serve as the project manager on this effort. Minnesota Lakes and Rivers has long worked at the nexus of local civic engagement, local government resource managers, university researchers and state agencies. One clear example is the many diverse partners MLR pulled together to host three Aquatic Invaders Summits since 2015.

Since 2021 MLR has built a coalition of partners to install and promote use of free boat cleaning equipment and Clean, Drain and Dry Best Practices including lake associations, county resource managers, city park managers, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and 1854 Treaty Authority, USFS, Quetico Provincial Park, MAISRC, MN Sea Grant, Watershed District and Soil and Water Conservation District resource managers, Community of Minnesota Resorts, local businesses and the MN DNR.

Jeff Forester is a Humphrey Public Policy Fellow and Shannon Leadership Fellow and a designated Lead Organizer through the Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative.

MLR seeks to protect Minnesota's lake and river heritage for current and future generations by forging powerful links between lakes, lake advocates and policy makers. Aquatic Invasive Species are a unique threat to Minnesotans' lake and river heritage because our heritage is based on use of the resources. When attempting to manage AIS, the suggestion is sometimes made that once a lake becomes infested it should be quarantined. While this would indeed prevent the further spread, it would also destroy the ecosystem services our lakes and rivers provide. Quarantining AIS infested lakes would destroy our lake and river heritage.

Likewise, if a lake or river becomes over-run with AIS, then the use is impaired and heritage impacted. Both AIS infestation and quarantine harm "lake and river heritage", a tradition of people in a place over time.

MLR's solution has been to focus energy on the "forging powerful links" aspect of our mission statement. MLR has strong working relationships with people at all levels of the lake and river resource management world. This project is in MLR's tradition of forging links as a way to reach a solution, bringing together local government resource managers, local civic organizations, state agencies, business interests and university researchers to see if it is possible to protect the values of a starry stonewort infested lake while still shielding other lakes in Minnesota from the risk of infestation.

MLR is the largest lake association organization in Minnesota, with over 250 Lake Association members. But our membership also includes resort owners, lake service providers, WD and SWCD personnel. We have long term relationships with many DNR staff, county AIS coordinators and the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center.

MLR is celebrating its 30th year, is stable, and well supported by a dedicated staff, volunteer board and large volunteer base.