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Mary,

As you are aware, the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District manages a watercraft inspection program, where we hire summer staff members to inspect incoming and outgoing watercraft for aquatic invasive species (AIS) at the public access on Comfort Lake. This program is jointly funded by the Watershed District and Chisago County. I would like to provide you with a summary of this year's watercraft inspection program. Please feel free to forward this summary to Comfort Lake Association members or anyone else who may be interested.

Total Inspection Hours and Number of Inspections

This summer we hired one full-time inspector to split their time between Comfort Lake and Bone Lake. The inspector was able to perform **442.5 hours** of inspections on Comfort Lake which amounted to **564 total inspections**. This compares to 538.5 hours and 588 inspections in 2015.

Inspection Rate

With regard to the inspection rate, or the average number of inspections per hour, the 2016 season totaled to **1.3 inspections per hour**, while the 2015 season totaled to 1.1 inspections per hour.

Survey Results

As mentioned above, a total of 564 surveys were performed on Comfort Lake this season. Below are some findings from the compiled inspection survey data:

- Number of watercraft arriving at the Comfort Lake with water, vegetation or mud on their watercraft = 8. This number was 3 in 2015.
- Number of watercraft requiring removal of the bilge drainage plug upon arriving at Comfort Lake = 2. This number was 7 in 2015.
- Number of watercraft exiting the Comfort Lake with vegetation or AIS animals attached or present = 22. This number was 34 in 2015.

Risk of New AIS

Zebra mussels, starry stonewort, and the spiny water flea are three examples of aquatic invasive species found in Minnesota that are not yet in Comfort Lake. Zebra mussels are currently found in Forest Lake, but starry stonewort and the spiny water flea are not found anywhere in the District.

Zebra mussels are an aquatic invasive species that grow to very high densities in invaded lakes. Zebra mussels are given their name due to the alternating black and white stripes on their shells. Due to their high densities in invaded lakes, zebra mussels are often found covering boat lifts and docks. Additionally, zebra mussels have sharp shells that can cut the feet of swimmers. Zebra mussels are filter feeders, meaning that they filter phytoplankton (algae) out of the water. Some lake residents may think that this is a good thing, as it often leads to an increase in water clarity. In reality, the mussels feeding on

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phytoplankton (algae) means that small animals called zooplankton will have no food and fish, which feed on zooplankton, will have no food once the zooplankton disappear. As this process continues, it is common for infested lakes to show declines in sport fish populations of species like walleye and northern pike.

Starry stonewort is an invasive algae that forms dense mats in lakes that impede boating and prevent the establishment of native (beneficial) plants. Starry stonewort was discovered in Lake Koronis near Paynesville, MN in 2015 and has since been discovered in eight additional lakes across the state.

The spiny water flea is an invasive species of zooplankton which is about the size of a grain of rice that competes with small fish for the same food resource (other zooplankton). The spiny water flea was first discovered in Lake Superior in the early-1980s and has since spread to more than 35 inland lakes in Minnesota including: Mille Lacs Lake, Lake Vermilion, Lake of the Woods, and others. All three of these invasive species are thought to be transported primarily by recreational watercraft.

Part of the inspection survey involves asking the boaters which lake they visited last and how long ago they were at that lake. I looked through this data to determine the risk of introduction for Comfort Lake from lakes infested with zebra mussels, starry stonewort, and the spiny water flea. Here is what I found:

- 98 boats launching into Comfort Lake came from lakes infested with zebra mussels. Nine of the 98 boats had been in the infested lake less than 24 hours before launching into Comfort Lake. All of these boats were inspected upon arrival at Comfort Lake and deemed acceptable to launch into Comfort Lake.
- 24 boats launching into Comfort Lake came from lakes infested with the spiny water flea. Two of the 24 boats had been in the infested lake less than 24 hours before launching into Comfort Lake. All of these boats were inspected upon arrival at Comfort Lake and deemed acceptable to launch into Comfort Lake.
- Seven boats launching into Comfort Lake came from lakes infested with starry stonewort. Zero of the seven boats had been in the infested lake less than 24 hours before launching into Comfort Lake. All of these boats were inspected upon arrival at Comfort Lake and deemed acceptable to launch into Comfort Lake.

These were the main results of the 2016 watercraft inspection program on Comfort Lake. We expect to continue the program next year. As mentioned to you previously, our cost to employ the inspectors is \$20 per hour, which includes the overhead costs such as uniforms, materials, etc. If the Comfort Lake Association would like to provide funding to the District, we could manage the hiring, training, and oversight of additional inspection hours at your public access. This year, we had an inspector at Comfort Lake for approximately 25 hours per week. We would likely plan on a similar schedule for next year, assuming we will receive the same amount of money from Chisago County. Anything that the CLA donates will add to this approximately 25 hours per week. We have a similar partnership established with the Forest Lake Lake Association, and I think they would agree that it works well. Another option is for you or other Comfort Lake Association members to talk with the City of Wyoming about contributing funds for additional inspection hours.

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We ask that you let us know how many hours you intend to contribute (at \$20 per hour) by early March, so that we can incorporate that into our planning and hiring processes.

If you, or any CLA members have questions or comments about this, please feel free to contact me. My email address is mike.sorensen@cflwd.org and my phone number is 651-395-5857.

Sincerely,

-Mike Sorensen