

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2015

TITLE: Authorization to enter into an agreement with the Initiative Foundation for AIS Grant Award

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 15-XXX

PREPARED BY: Eric Fieldseth

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REVIEWED BY: Administrator Counsel Director (Name): Craig Dawson
 Board Committee Engineer Other

COMMITTEE ACTION:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board mtg. Consent Agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board meeting for discussion prior to action.
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to a future workshop (date):_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to taskforce or committee (date):_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Return to staff for additional work.	<input type="checkbox"/> No further action requested.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):	

PURPOSE or ACTION REQUESTED:

Authorize execution of an agreement with the Initiative Foundation, and authorize the District Administrator, upon advice of counsel and with such further minor revisions as may be necessary to effect the intent of the parties, to enter into this agreement.

PROJECT/PROGRAM LOCATION:

Location of inspection/decontamination station to be determined
MCWD lakes with a public access

PROJECT TIMELINE:

September 1, 2015 – December 31, 2017

PROJECT/PROGRAM COST:

Fund name and number: 5005 (AIS Program)
Total Project Cost: \$764,000
MCWD Match over 2 years: \$382,000 (includes \$81,000 in-kind staff time)
Initiative Foundation Grant Award: \$382,000
2015 Budget: \$240,000 for programmed activities are eligible for the grant in 2016

Amount of funding for 2016: \$213,000 (\$40,000 could be deferred to 2017)
Amount of funding for 2017: \$88,000

PAST BOARD ACTION:

Operations and Programs Committee reviewed proposal on March 5, 2015, and was supportive of continuing pursuit of grant.

May 28, 2015: Board considered grant award and agreement with Initiative Foundation. It directed staff to secure approvals from all local units of government affected by parking ordinances that would need to be enacted, and to return the item to a Board agenda in two to three months.

BACKGROUND:

The Initiative Foundation will award up to \$3.6 million to fund a limited number of pilot projects that prevent the introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species. The grant was recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and funded by the Minnesota Legislature through the Outdoor Heritage Fund. The MCWD applied for a grant in February of 2015, and was officially authorized a grant of \$700,000 on April 10, 2015, pending the execution of an agreement with the Initiative Foundation. This initial grant involved a component revolving around 5 regional inspection stations and trailer parking restrictions around public accesses as a way to get people to use the regional stations. Following up on the Board's May 28 directive, that concept was further discussed with two of our key partners (Three Rivers Park District and Carver County), and staff from both agencies emphasized the difficulty and unlikeliness of their respective Boards passing a parking restriction ordinance.

That mandatory inspection to obtain a trailer parking permit was taken out of the grant proposal, and the current version was offered as an amendment to the Initiative Foundation. It still involves many of the initial program components, but only has one regional inspection/decontamination site that will be voluntary to users.

SUMMARY:

This grant opportunity allows the District to use available funds to implement activities it has been planning since 2014, and counts them as the local match to leverage additional funds from the Initiative Foundation Grant to expand the level of these activities. This grant proposal includes the following activities:

- voluntary regional/decontamination station
- improved AIS signage at public accesses
- roaming inspector program
- clean access pilot
- home lake program
- self-inspection certification program

A description of each pilot activity can be found further in this summary.

All of these activities have consensus of our key partners as activities that need to be evaluated. The District is not obligated to expend funds on these activities beyond 2017. The only capital costs included in this proposal are the purchase of a decontamination unit and the installation of AIS signage at public accesses in the District. No other permanent infrastructure is being proposed in this grant. Staff will have some evaluation completed by the winter of 2016/2017 to assess the effectiveness of the pilot, with the final evaluation wrapping up by end of year 2017.

The proposal is anticipated to achieve the following outcomes:

➤ **Effect a behavior change among boaters**

This proposal focuses on effecting a behavior change in boaters, and giving them the tools necessary to do the right thing in cleaning their watercraft. Long-term, the reduction of the spread of aquatic invasive species is going to rely on users making a cultural shift and behavior change in the way they use their watercraft, and trailering their boats from one lake to the next. Most people want to do the right thing, and given the appropriate tools, knowledge and convenience, will take the steps necessary to clean their watercraft properly.

➤ **Establish a known place for watercraft decontamination**

Currently, watercraft inspections are performed on-site at lakes across the District. Decontamination is only available at a few accesses on Lake Minnetonka, and they are not always there nor advertised well by the DNR. Christmas Lake now has a decontamination unit available at its public access as part of a different pilot

project, but it's a small access and could not handle large volumes of users. It has been well discussed among groups throughout the state about the lack of known places to go to get boats cleaned and decontaminated.

Since 2014, the District has made grant funds available to other private and public partners to purchase and establish decontamination stations in the District. To date, we have not had any partners take advantage of those funds. Carver County did get a decontamination unit through the Initiative Foundation Grant and placed the unit at Lake Waconia. Three Rivers Park District purchased a decontamination unit through a grant from Hennepin County, and placed it at the Lake Independence public access. Neither of those locations are close enough to serve most users in the MCWD.

This proposal includes the following activities:

Regional Inspection/Decontamination Station

Total Cost for 2 years: \$373,992

MCWD: \$45,000 (+\$72,000 in-kind staff time included)

Initiative Foundation: \$256,992 for inspector staffing and operating costs

\$100,000 was included in the 2015 AIS Work Plan as grants for our partners to purchase and establish decontamination stations in the District. There were no expenditures on this activity in 2015, and \$45,000 of these funds would be carried over into 2016 to establish a regional station. This station would serve as a known place users could go to get their boats decontaminated and inspected. The following program elements would incentivize visits to the facility:

1. A proof-of-inspection tag would be incorporated as an incentive for users to go to the station, which would allow the user to get an expedited inspection process at their next lake, saving them time at the boat launch.
2. A watercraft inspection raffle program, or a boater appreciation raffle could be included to get people to use the regional station. Modeled after similar programs by the Montana's Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department, as well as Wyoming's Game & Fish Department, a raffle is a way of thanking users for showing awareness about AIS and stopping at the regional station to get their boat inspected and cleaned. When individuals stopped at the stations to get their boats inspected, they would be given some type of ticket that they could go online with and fill out a quick survey, and be entered into a drawing for the prizes. It would not only serve as an incentive tool, but also an evaluation tool for the program.
3. The regional site would be programed with an interactive AIS display and other educational messaging that is yet to be determined. It could also serve as an educational site for groups who may be learning about AIS and the environment, and multiple other purposes to get the most out of the site and staff time of inspectors. Since inspections, and especially decontamination, can take some time (from 5 to 30 minutes), it makes sense to have an additional way of educating these users while they are at the station.

AIS Public Access Signage

Total Cost for 2 years: \$74,984

MCWD: \$74,984 (one time capital costs) - \$40,000 could be deferred to 2017

\$75,000 was in the 2015 AIS Work Plan to implement this signage at public accesses in the District. These funds would be carried over into 2016 and possibly 2017 to implement the signage and count towards the required local match for the Initiative Foundation Grant. This signage is modeled after a Hennepin County design for the North Arm boat launch on Lake Minnetonka. It utilizes social marketing techniques to provide prompts for users to perform certain AIS activities. This activity has been something the District has had in its workplan since 2014, and this grant provides an opportunity to implement this signage at public accesses across the District and use those expenditures toward the local match for the grant.

Roaming Inspector Pilot Program

Total Cost for 2 years: \$200,100

MCWD: \$110,000

Initiative Foundation: \$90,100

The roaming inspector program was started by the District in 2013, and places watercraft inspectors at lakes that would not otherwise get coverage by our existing partners. This activity allows for a further evaluation of a more comprehensive approach at public accesses, and feeds into more evaluation opportunities for these pilot projects. In 2015, the District contracted for 4,138 hours of roaming inspectors over six lakes, for a cost of \$55,000. This activity would maintain that level for 2016 and 2017, and leverage another \$90,100 from the Initiative Foundation and add additional coverage to Long Lake and Lake Minnetonka as well as the other six lakes (Piersons, Wassermann, Parley, Auburn, Zumbra and Steiger).

Clean Access Pilot

Total Cost for 2 years: \$40,000

MCWD: \$5,000

Initiative Foundation: \$35,000

\$5,000 was included in the 2015 AIS Work Plan, and would be carried over to 2016 to implement this pilot. This pilot focuses on managing aquatic vegetation at public accesses as a way to reduce the amount of potential AIS, including zebra mussels on vegetation, on watercraft exiting lakes.

Home Lake Pilot Program

Total Cost for 2 years: \$20,000

MCWD: \$20,000 (\$10,000 in 2016)

This concept would allow users who only trailer their watercraft to one lake in a given year, providing no real risk for transporting AIS to new lakes, the opportunity to bypass the inspection process. A method would be developed to mark these watercraft as having a home lake for their sole use. This pilot would work towards recognizing risk levels of certain users, and possibly incentivizing some users to pick a home lake, rather than using multiple waterbodies where the risk of spreading AIS increases.

Self-Inspection Certification Pilot Program

Total Cost for 2 years: \$20,000

MCWD: \$20,000 (\$10,000 in 2016)

\$5,000 was included in the 2015 AIS Work Plan that would be carried over into 2016 to implement this pilot. This concept would certify a small number of users, typically frequent users of boating and fishing, as self-inspectors, which would allow them to bypass the inspection process. A process and training would be developed for a small number of users to pilot this program, but it recognizes this group as users who will lead by example at the boat launch, and properly clean their watercraft. The goal is to further the recognition of this behavior as the norm, and prompt other users to take on the same behaviors.

Communication, Outreach and Program Evaluation

Total Cost for 2 years: \$35,000

MCWD: \$26,000 (+\$9,000 in-kind staff time included)

(\$13,000 budgeted for 2016)

An evaluation component for this grant is required. These funds would be used towards creating awareness of the pilot projects, as well as evaluating the individual pilots.

RESOLUTION

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- WHEREAS, the District's AIS Management Plan lists AIS Prevention as a high priority; and
- WHEREAS, in 2013 the District applied for a grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) which included a regional approach to watercraft inspections, but ultimately was not awarded a grant; and
- WHEREAS, the LSOHC recommended and the Legislature appropriated the Initiative Foundation with \$4 million to administer as grants for AIS Prevention pilot projects to local applicants; and
- WHEREAS, MCWD staff applied for funds from these grants in February 2015 for a proposal focusing on establishing designated watercraft inspection stations in the District, among other pilot programs; and
- WHEREAS, on April 10, 2015, the Initiative Foundation accepted the MCWD's proposal and authorized the District a grant of \$700,000 to implement the program pending the execution of an agreement with the Initiative Foundation; and
- WHEREAS, the Board considered on May 28 the grant award and agreement with the Initiative Foundation, and directed staff to secure approvals from all local units of government affected by the parking ordinances that would need to be enacted, and to return the item to a Board agenda in two to three months; and
- WHEREAS, District staff found local support would be lacking for the parking restrictions, and subsequently amended the grant proposal to provide one fixed-site watercraft inspection and decontamination facility; and
- WHEREAS, the Initiative Foundation has reviewed this amendment and reduction to the grant award to \$382,000; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers authorizes execution of an agreement with the Initiative Foundation, and authorize the District Administrator, upon advice of counsel and with such further minor revisions as may be necessary to effect the intent of the parties, to enter into this agreement.

Resolution Number 15-XXX was moved by Manager _____, seconded by Manager _____.
Motion to adopt the resolution ___ ayes, ___ nays, ___ abstentions. Date: _____.

Secretary

Date: _____