

Newsletter – Spring 2023

One year ago, a group representing a number of South Dakota lake associations met to reorganize and revitalize South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association. A new board of directors was formed, and officers elected. This provided a platform for all of us to work together on issues and initiatives that we believe are important to protect our South Dakota lakes and streams. We are driven to protect these precious water resources, educate the public and inspire public and private efforts to improve and preserve our waters for generations to come. We have adopted the tag line ***“Protecting Waters For Life”*** to highlight this mission.

There are countless opportunities for our lake associations and other organizations to collaborate, share resources and work together to address common issues. Without question, the initial driving force behind this reorganization effort was aquatic invasive species (AIS) and it has been the primary focus of the SDLS Board this past year. We have been alarmed by the spread of invasive zebra mussels over the last several years and are concerned that AIS prevention and early detection efforts in South Dakota are insufficient and lagging behind the level of resources devoted by most of our neighboring states. Our efforts over this past year have been focused on calling attention to these concerns and advocating for stronger, more effective measures in South Dakota. This newsletter will highlight the work that has been undertaken this past year and the strides that have been made. It’s been a difficult, frustrating road at times, but we are persisting on your behalf and are truly appreciative of your involvement and support.

Engagement with SD Game Fish and Parks

From the start, it has been our goal to collaborate with SDGFP as partners to strengthen AIS prevention, early detection, and containment efforts. Quite frankly, this has been a difficult journey. There hasn’t been much interest in devoting more state resources toward fighting AIS and the general approach has been primarily focused on communicating a “Clean, Drain, Dry” message. Several of our Board members met with SDGFP Secretary Robling and his leadership team last August. We reviewed areas where we believe the AIS prevention efforts in SD are lacking and we presented a list of specific, pragmatic measures that could easily be implemented. We have had several meetings with SDGFP leadership since then and have now agreed to meet bi-monthly to share new information and discuss ideas and concerns. While we still aren’t satisfied with the AIS efforts in SD, it’s been gratifying that SDGFP is implementing a number of our recommendations, including the following:

- Large, easily visible signs have been installed at AIS infested lakes to alert boaters to the presence of invasive species. The signs include a QR code (recommended by SDLS) that links to the [sdleastwanted](http://sdleastwanted.com) website with information on AIS regulations and prevention practices.





- A roving watercraft inspection crew, based out of Watertown, has been hired to conduct roadside and public boat launch inspections in northeast SD. This crew will be able to have a presence in strategic locations with high boater traffic, fishing hot spots and scheduled fishing tournaments.
- Hiring practices for seasonal help have been improved by getting an earlier start, being more flexible and expanding marketing efforts.
- SDGFP fisheries staff will begin sampling lakes for AIS as part of their work surveying fish populations in 155 lakes. Improved early AIS detection efforts allow contaminated lakes to be identified and contained earlier. This will help prevent its spread to other lakes.
- State park staff in some locations will add boat launch monitoring to their duties on a limited, time available basis. It's at least a start!
- SDGFP is exploring installation of clean water boat washing stations in selected state park locations where access to clean water is available near the boat launch. This isn't as effective as high temperature decontamination equipment but is much better than having nothing available to help boaters clean AIS from their watercraft and trailers.
- An AIS Awareness Week will be launched during the week leading up to Memorial Day. This is intended to heighten awareness of AIS and recommended prevention practices as boaters return to open waters for the season.

Each of these SDLS recommended enhancements that SDGFP is implementing represent incremental improvements requiring a minimum amount of SDGFP budget resources. Collectively, they move the needle toward a stronger statewide AIS prevention effort. Much, much more needs to be done, but we are pleased that SDLS persistence has made a difference.

Media Awareness Efforts

Our organization has been particularly active this past year in calling attention to the AIS threat to SD waters. We have been instrumental in regularly bringing this issue to news media from a number of different angles suggesting that greater urgency and more focus needs to be devoted to fighting the spread of AIS in South Dakota. One of our key messages has been that this fight isn't just about zebra mussels and that there are several other particularly harmful AIS just across the border that we need to work harder to keep out of our state. Links to nearly a dozen different media articles initiated by SDLS can be found on our website [News](#) page.

Legislature Engagement

SDLS made a strategic decision not to pursue legislative solutions to address the AIS issue during the past legislative session. We felt that our efforts needed to be focused on making our elected representatives more aware of the issues, confronting misconceptions and building our political connections. This doesn't mean we weren't engaged with legislators. SDLS was instrumental in assisting the legislature Audit and Operations Committee develop a list of pointed questions for SDGFP, challenging their weak response to the legislature's request for a report on enhanced SDGFP efforts to fight the spread of AIS. Several of our Board members



invested a tremendous amount of time researching what other states are doing to stop the spread and locating supporting documents to debunk misinformation that was being used to create a perception that SD was already doing a great job slowing the spread of AIS.

Forging New Collaborations

We are beyond excited about new collaborations we are undertaking this year, which have been focused on two important projects.

- ✓ AIS Citizen Monitoring Training
 - SDL&S, SDSU Extension and University of MN are collaborating to jointly develop a program to provide training for lake association members to be able to identify the various aquatic invasive species and learn methods for conducting searches for AIS in an effort to detect any new species early. Isolating a new infestation of invasive species increases the chances that it can be contained or eradicated. The initial training session is scheduled for August 10 and will be limited to 25 participants. Watch for an email with details and sign-up information.
- ✓ Economic Impact Study
 - During Committee hearings, legislators asked why there hasn't been a study to determine what the adverse economic impact would be to South Dakota if invasive zebra mussels were allowed to spread unchecked. Legislators from both parties indicated that this information would help them assess whether additional investment of state funds would be worthwhile to substantially slow or stop the spread of zebra mussels. Other states have conducted studies and used this information to support beefed up efforts to fight AIS. SDGFP has declined to pursue an economic impact study for SD, so SDLS has been pursuing a collaborative effort to organize, fund and launch a study on the economic impact of dreissenid mussels (zebra mussels and quagga mussels) in South Dakota. We are forging a collaboration with state universities and several water project districts to conduct this economic impact study. We'll have more news about this in the months ahead.

SDLS Fall Forum

We are in the early stages of planning for a Fall Forum, tentatively scheduled for September 26 in Watertown, SD. We will be sending out more information as the detailed plans are pulled together, but please save the date and make plans to attend.

Annual Meeting

The SDLS bylaws require our organization to hold an annual meeting. Our 2023 annual meeting is scheduled for 2pm May 16, 2023, at the East Dakota Water Development District office located at 132B Airport Avenue in Brookings, SD. The primary agenda item will be the election of officers and directors, but we will also be discussing some of the topics covered in this newsletter. All SDLS members are welcome to attend this meeting.





Support South Dakota Lakes & Streams Association

Your support is vital to the success of SDLS! Volunteer engagement as well as financial support is needed to allow the organization to continue to pursue our mission of ***Protecting Waters For Life***. Please send your organization and individual contributions to support our work in 2023.

You can go to the [Membership](#) page on our website for information on how to renew your annual membership and options for different levels of financial contribution. Please give serious consideration to moving your contribution to one of the higher levels. You can also now make your contribution online by clicking the [Donate](#) page.

Thank you for supporting the work of SD Lakes and Streams Association!

