



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Needed for “Starry Trek” 2025

Volunteers are needed to participate in a statewide search for starry stonewort, one of Minnesota’s aquatic invasive species, on Saturday, August 9th. This year’s Starry Trek will start at 8:30 am and go until approximately 1 pm. Participants who wish to volunteer must register online at z.umn.edu/StarryTrekRegistration. The Crow Wing County rendezvous location is All Veterans Memorial Pavilion which is located at 326 Laurel St. This event is **free**, but registration is requested. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

“This event is so important to bring the community together to protect our lakes. This will give us an opportunity to perform early detection for Starry Stonewort and other aquatic invasive species,” said the Operations Specialist team with Crow Wing County Land Services. “Last year we had our first infestation in two lakes in Crow Wing County, Middle Cullen and Rush Lake on the Whitefish Chain. Whitefish Area Property Owners Association was quick to get a plan in place to remove the starry stonewort. Our staff were onsite to assist with hand pulling.”

No experience or equipment is necessary to participate in Starry Trek. Expert training on monitoring protocols and starry stonewort identification will be provided on-site. A map of the route and supplies will be provided to volunteers as they travel to different landings throughout the county to sample starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species. Once the route is completed, volunteers will come back to the rendezvous location to report and identify species with the event coordinator.

Hundreds of volunteers will gather at local training sites statewide to learn how to identify starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species and search for them in area lakes. Starry stonewort is an invasive alga that was first found in Minnesota at Lake Koronis in 2015 and has since spread to thirty-one Minnesota lakes. Early detection of this species is critical for control. Starry Trek volunteers have found starry stonewort in four lakes as well as other aquatic invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels during this event.

“This event is a terrific way for people to get outdoors, get educated about aquatic invasive species, and help protect their area lakes,” said Megan Weber, Extension Educator with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center. “The information we gain at this event helps researchers and managers understand its current distribution and potentially take action if new infestations are found.”

“We’re delighted to be partnering with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center for this event,” said the Operations specialist team with Crow Wing County Land Services. “Protecting our lakes for future generations is really important to us all, and we want to make sure we’re doing the best we can to prevent the spread of AIS.”

The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center works across the state to develop research-

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based solutions that can reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive. A portion of the funding for this program is provided by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Learn more at maisrc.umn.edu

There are currently **23 local training sites** around the state, including one at Crow Wing County. Volunteers will meet at their local site for training, then will be sent to nearby public water accesses to check for starry stonewort. At the end of the day, they'll return to the local training site to report their findings. For a full list of the sites and other FAQs, please visit starrytrek.org.

Information about Crow Wing County AIS prevention efforts, including interactive maps, please visit www.crowwing.gov/aais

The Land Services Department is committed to providing excellent customer service while helping landowners make wise choices that protect Crow Wing County's extraordinary natural resources. Citizens are encouraged to contact the Land Services Office at (218) 824-1010 or landservices@crowwing.gov to discuss AIS or other land use related activities.

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