



2025 Aquatic Invasive Species Program Report

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Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program:

The Crow Wing County Land Services Department plans and administers the county's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan in partnership with a network of public, private, state, and local stakeholders to combat the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the county. The mission of this program is to provide leadership in preventing the introduction and limiting the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in Crow Wing County (CWC) by coordinating inspections, decontamination, targeted treatment, and education efforts.

Activities and Budget:

The aquatic invasive species prevention program encompasses the following activities: Education and Awareness, County Staff Coordination, Early AIS Detection, Decontaminations, and Watercraft Inspections.

In 2025, Crow Wing County was allocated \$472,193 of State Grant AIS Funds and managed a rollover of \$51,049 funds from the 2024 program budget which brought the total 2025 program funding to \$523,242. The funds allocated from the available budget for those activities as well as the actual funds used in 2025 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Funding Allocations by Planned Activity

Activity	Planned Funds	Estimate Used Funds
Grant Programs & Rapid Response Fund	\$61,800	\$68,940
Education and Awareness	\$11,165	\$850
Decontaminations	\$31,610	\$19,067
Watercraft Inspections	\$356,212	\$391,560
County Staff Coordination	\$72,663	\$74,251

In the AIS Grant Program eligible activities can be reimbursed. Activities eligible for reimbursement include AIS preventions, AIS treatments, early detection efforts, and outreach efforts. Education and awareness activities include but are not limited to the production and distribution of education and outreach materials. Decontamination and watercraft inspection activities are allocated most of the planned funds from the annual budget. Both activities are carried out by a seasonal staff hired by Crow Wing County Land Services, overseen by full-time Land Services employees.

Staffing:

A total of 49 seasonal watercraft inspectors were hired throughout the watercraft inspection season, though the total number of active staff varied throughout the season.

Crow Wing County also hired a seasonal lead inspector to assist the Operations Specialists with the AIS watercraft inspection program. The lead inspector's responsibilities included: spot

checks, training, addressing inspectors' needs, assisting with fishing tournaments, checking data, and operating the mobile decontamination unit.

Watercraft Inspection Season Summary:

The 2025 AIS Watercraft Inspection Season began on May 10th and concluded on August 31st. Crow Wing County allocated 13,152 staffed watercraft inspection hours on 43 public access landings across the County. A total of 11,669 hours were fulfilled throughout the season by DNR Trained Level 1 Inspectors hired by the county. For information on how those landings were identified and hours were allocated, please see the 2025 CWC AIS Prevention Plan. In addition to hours funded by county allocated funds, Crow Wing County also fielded requests for 3,792 hours of expanded coverage outside of planned hours and days in the AIS prevention plan for several lakes. Of the requested expanded coverage hours, 3,355 hours were fulfilled.

According to inspector survey data, 39,914 level 1 inspection surveys were completed during the 2025 season during both planned and expanded coverage hours. Of that total 23,216 entering inspections and 16,683 were exiting inspections. Courtesy inspections account for the remaining surveys.

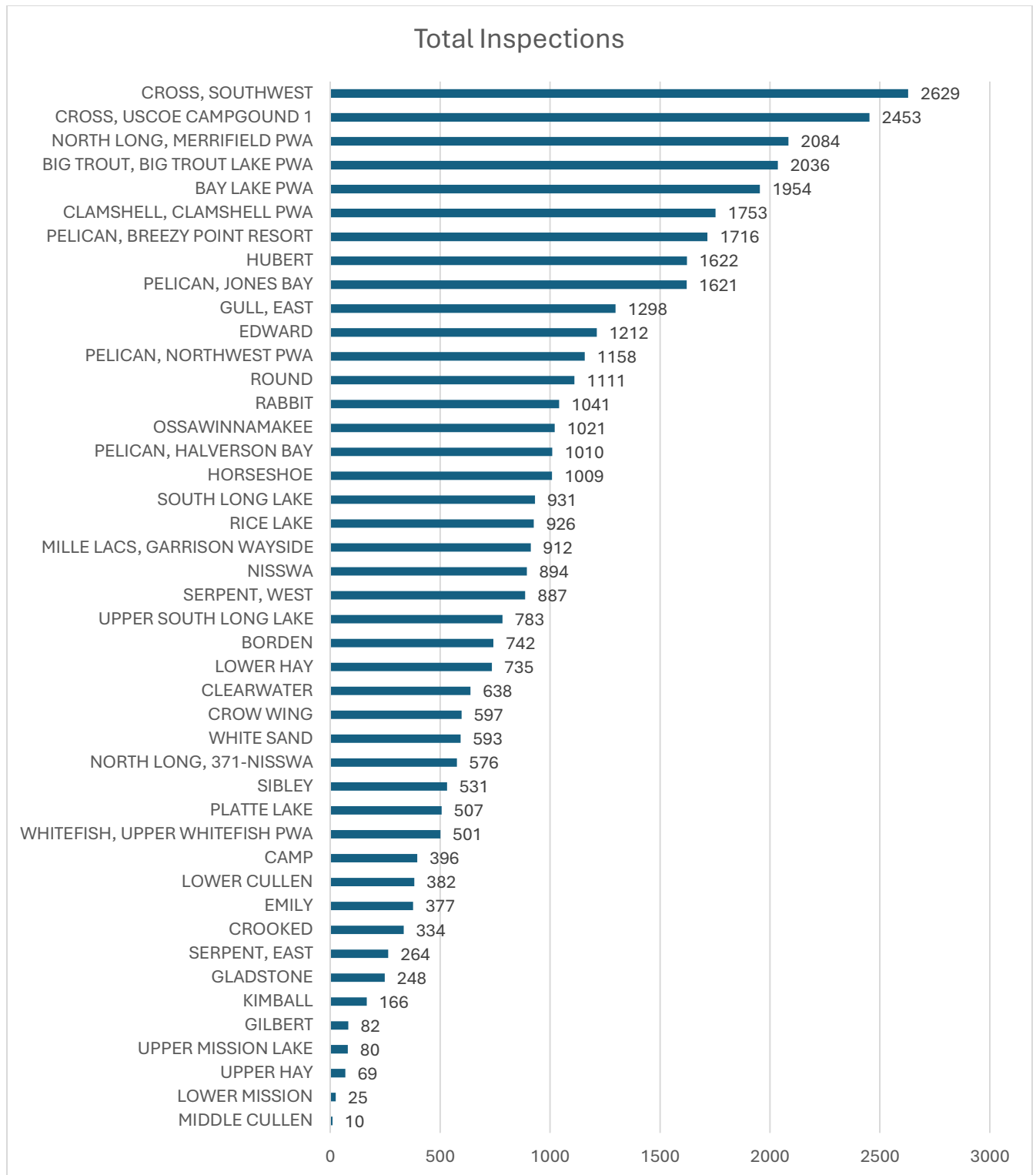
Lake / Public Access	Total Hours Fulfilled	Inspections	Inspections/Hr
BAY LAKE PWA	874.5	1954	2
BORDEN	288	742	3
CAMP	265	396	1
CLEARWATER	243	638	3
CROOKED	248	334	1
CROW WING	256	597	2
EDWARD	383.5	1212	3
EMILY	240	377	2
GILBERT	48	82	2
GLADSTONE	213	248	1
GULL, EAST	384	1298	3
HORSESHOE	400	1009	3
HUBERT	901	1622	2
KIMBALL	191.5	166	1
LOWER CULLEN	216	382	2
MIDDLE CULLEN	8	10	1
MILLE LACS, GARRISON WAYSIDE	256	912	4
LOWER MISSION	34.25	25	1
UPPER MISSION LAKE	34.25	80	2
NISSWA	312	894	3
NORTH LONG, 371-NISSWA	272	576	2
NORTH LONG, MERRIFIELD PWA	375.5	2084	6
OSSAWINNAMAKEE	368	1021	3
PELICAN, BREEZY POINT RESORT	408	1716	4

PELICAN, HALVERSON BAY	376	1010	3
PELICAN, JONES BAY	400	1621	4
PELICAN, NORTHWEST PWA	340.5	1158	3
<i>PELICAN AGGREGATE</i>	<i>1524.5</i>	<i>5505</i>	<i>4</i>
PLATTE LAKE	216	507	2
RABBIT	392	1041	3
RICE LAKE	400	926	2
ROUND	391.5	1111	3
SERPENT, EAST	248	264	1
SERPENT, WEST	367	887	2
<i>SERPENT AGGREGATE</i>	<i>615</i>	<i>1151</i>	<i>2</i>
SIBLEY	255.5	531	2
SOUTH LONG LAKE	407.5	931	2
UPPER SOUTH LONG LAKE	407	783	2
UPPER HAY	48	69	1
WHITE SAND	200	593	3
BIG TROUT, BIG TROUT LAKE PWA	798	2036	3
CLAMSHELL, CLAMSHELL PWA	789.5	1753	2
CROSS, SOUTHWEST	622.5	2629	4
CROSS, USCOE CAMPGROUND 1	757.5	2453	3
LOWER HAY	164	735	4
WHITEFISH, UPPER WHITEFISH PWA	224	501	2
<i>WHITEFISH CHAIN</i>	<i>3355.5</i>	<i>10107</i>	<i>3</i>
Total	15024	39914	2

- *Aggregate Lakes are subtotaled in Italics*

Of the 43 staffed landings, the largest quantity of inspections was performed at the Cross Lake, Southwest Public Water Access (2,629), however that is only 6.5% of all inspections in the county in 2025. When aggregated, the Whitefish Chain of Lakes has 6 landings and accounted for 25% of all level one inspections performed in the county as well as 22% of all staffed hours across the season. Pelican Lake as an aggregate also accounted for 14% of all inspection surveys performed in 2025.

Please note that the survey data analyzed herein does not account for additional hours, coverage, and inspections performed by Minnesota DNR Watercraft Inspectors hired by that organization or other local government units and associates who hire and staff landings with inspectors throughout the county.



The landings with the lowest reported surveys during the 2025 season were Middle Cullen, Lower Mission, and Upper Hay altogether accounting for less than 0.3% of inspection surveys performed. These landings were strategically allocated staff hours based on their AIS risk assessment in the 2025 CWC AIS Prevention Plan.

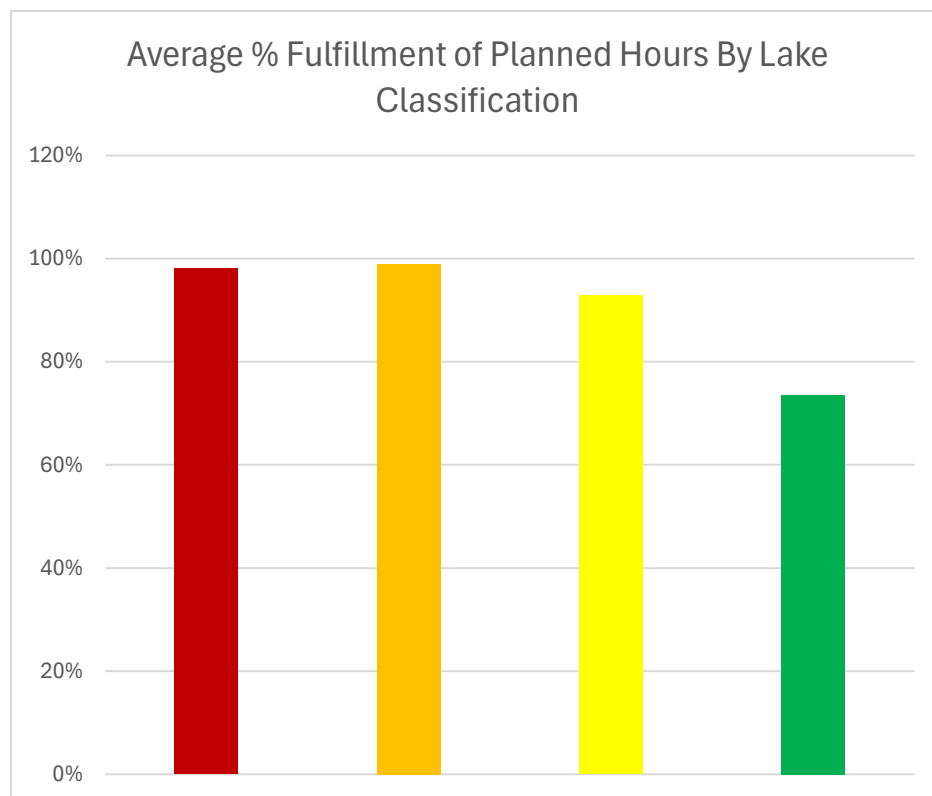
Allocated and Expanded Coverage:

In ideal circumstances with full staffing and resources, the county would have staffed up to 16,944 inspection hours in 2025. Crow Wing County allocated 13,152 hours coverage during the 2025 season. Lake Associations, Local Government Units such as Lake Improvement Districts, and other stakeholders can request expanded coverage hours which are hours staffed on requested lakes/landings on days outside of allocated coverage by CWC part-time watercraft inspectors but are billed to the requesting party after the fact. The county received requests for 3,792 hours of expanded coverage in the 2025 season.

With the available staff and resources, CWC was able to fulfill 11,669 (96%) of the allocated planned coverage hours. 3,355 hours of expanded coverage were also staffed on days not included in the CWC 2025 AIS Prevention Plan;

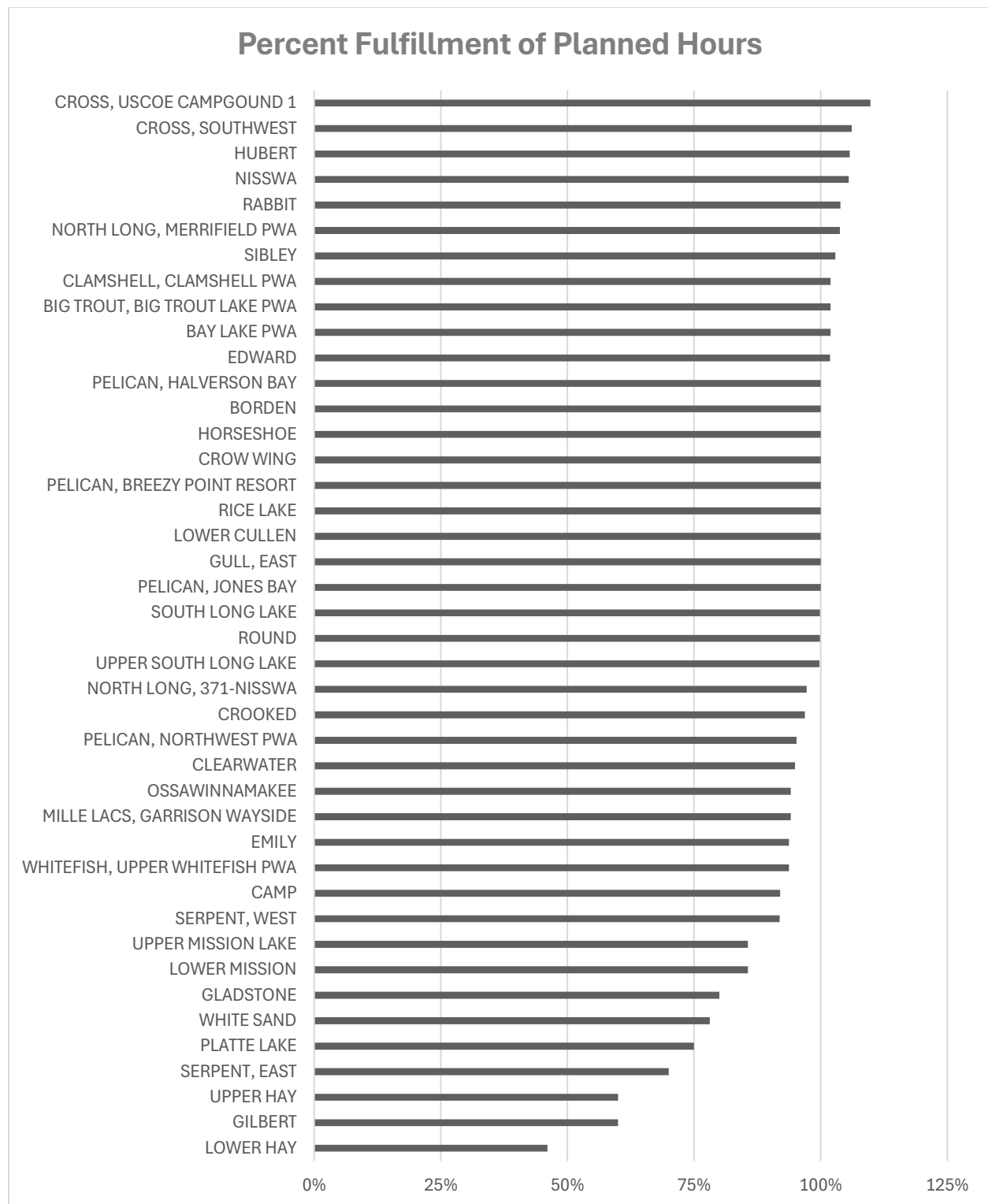
	Fulfilled Hours	Level I Surveys	Average Surveys/Hour
Planned	11,669	33,114	3
Expanded Coverage	3,355	6,770	2

88% of requested expanded coverage hours were fulfilled. In total, 15,024 inspection hours were performed by CWC Watercraft Inspectors in 2025. It should be noted that the Minnesota DNR also fields a staff of seasonal watercraft inspectors that also staff landings in Crow Wing County during a concurrent season. The best available information to the county reports that 1,016 inspection hours were staffed by the Minnesota DNR in 2025, though that number has not been confirmed or verified by their office.



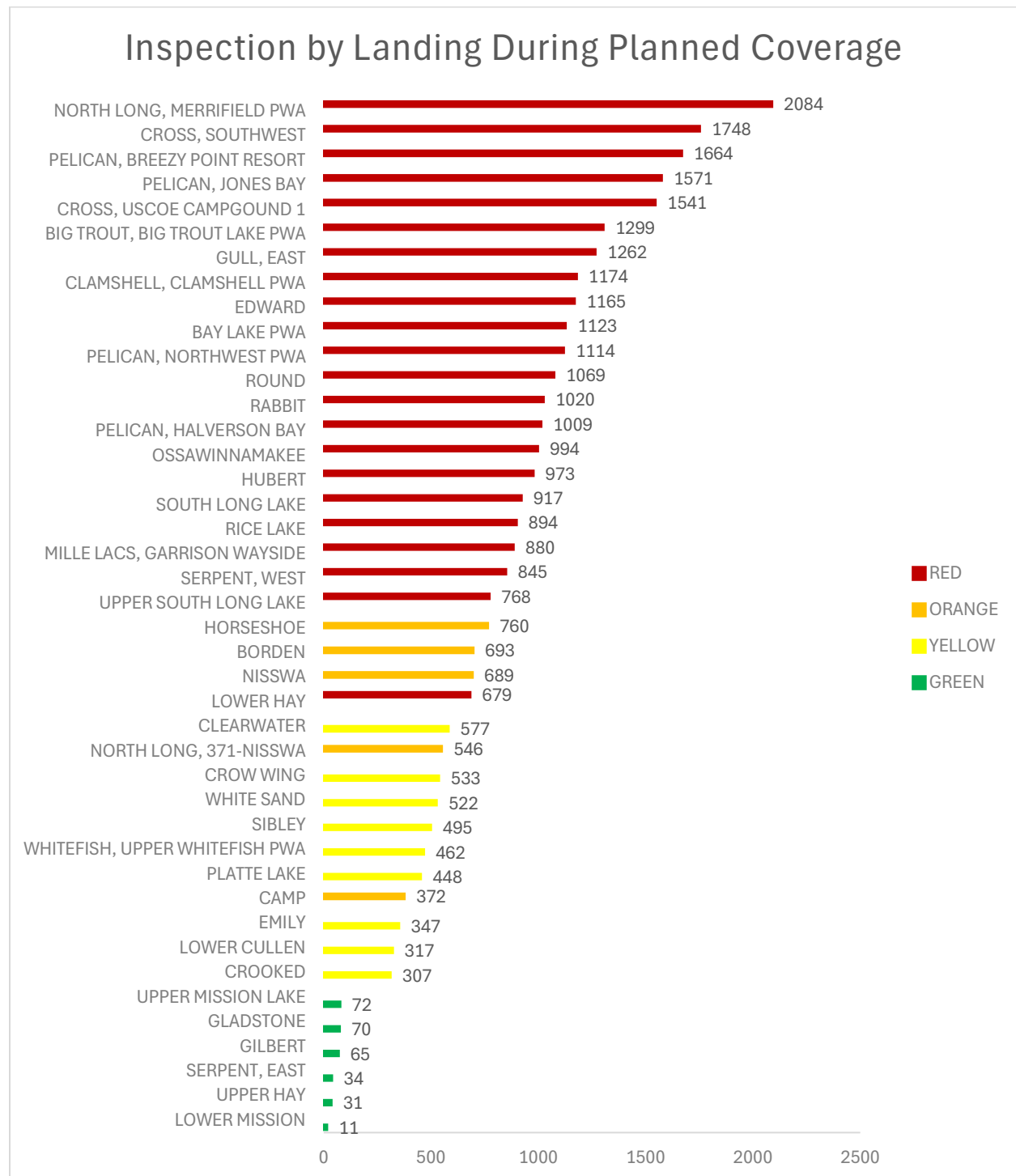
The landings are staffed based on their priority classification from the 2025 AIS Prevention Plan. Landings are classified as:

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk
- Very Low Risk



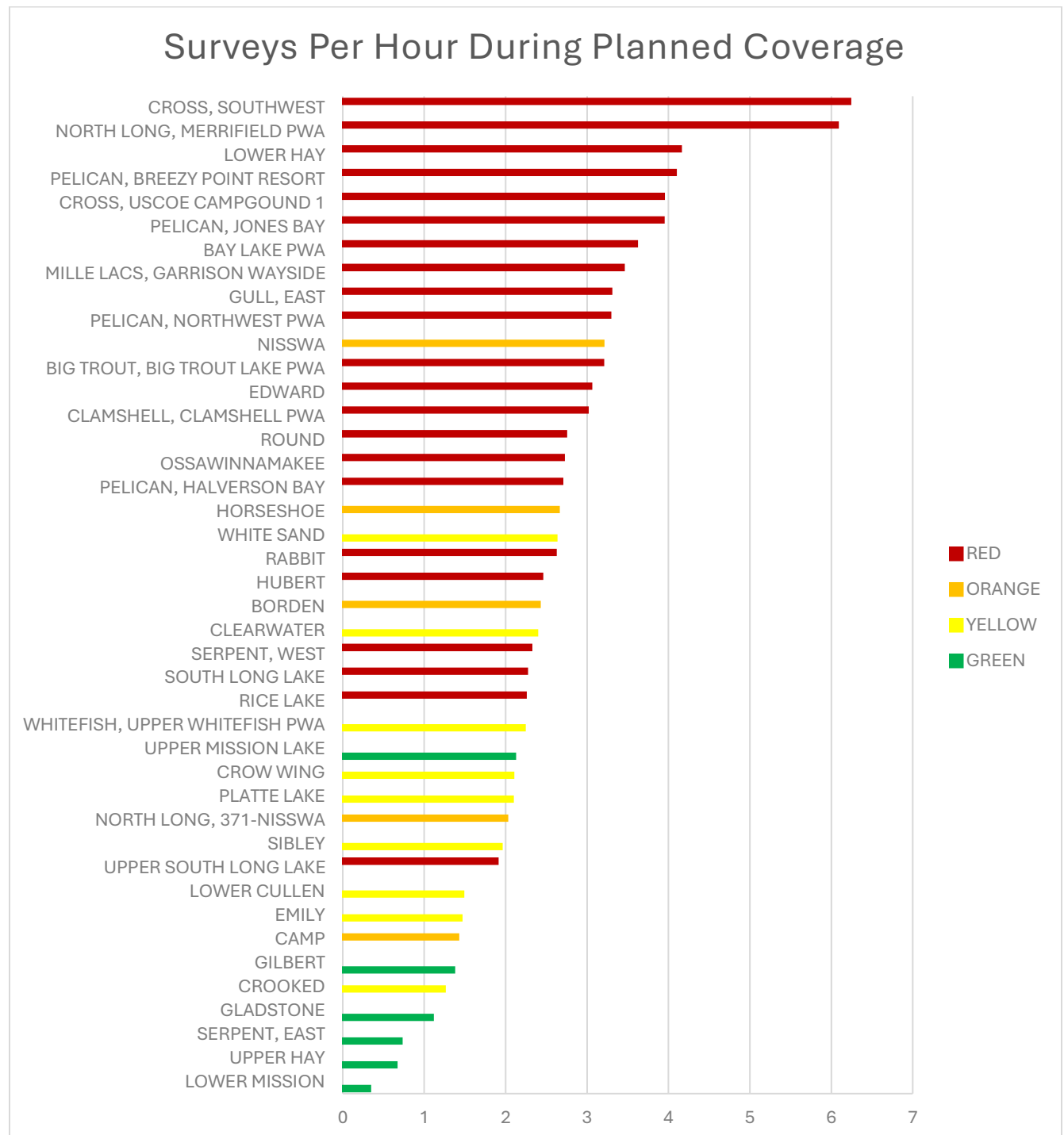
In 2025, 11 landings had over 100% fulfillment of planned hours staffed by CWC. 12 more landings were staffed for 100% of the planned hours. The next 14 landings were staffed between 75% and 95 % of their planned hours. Only 5 landings of the 43 landings included in the CWC AIS Prevention Plan were staffed for less than 75% of their planned hours.

In 2025, 83% of Level 1 Inspections were performed during planned coverage hours. The remaining 17% were performed during expanded coverage hours. All Decontamination Level 2 Inspections were completed during planned hours.



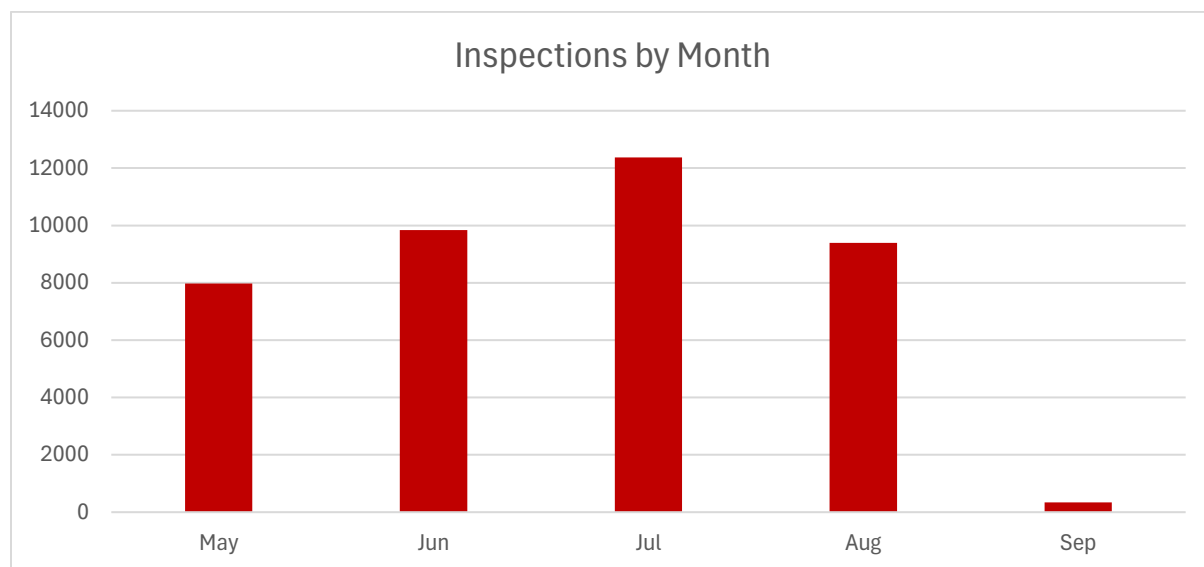
Camp Lake's Inspection level is more similar to low-risk landings than medium-risk landings. Likewise, Lower Hay's inspection level is closer in range to a medium-risk than high-risk.

Landings are not allocated the same amount of inspection hours during the season, therefore the average number of Level 1 inspection surveys performed per hour during planned hours was calculated to normalize for difference in coverage hours.



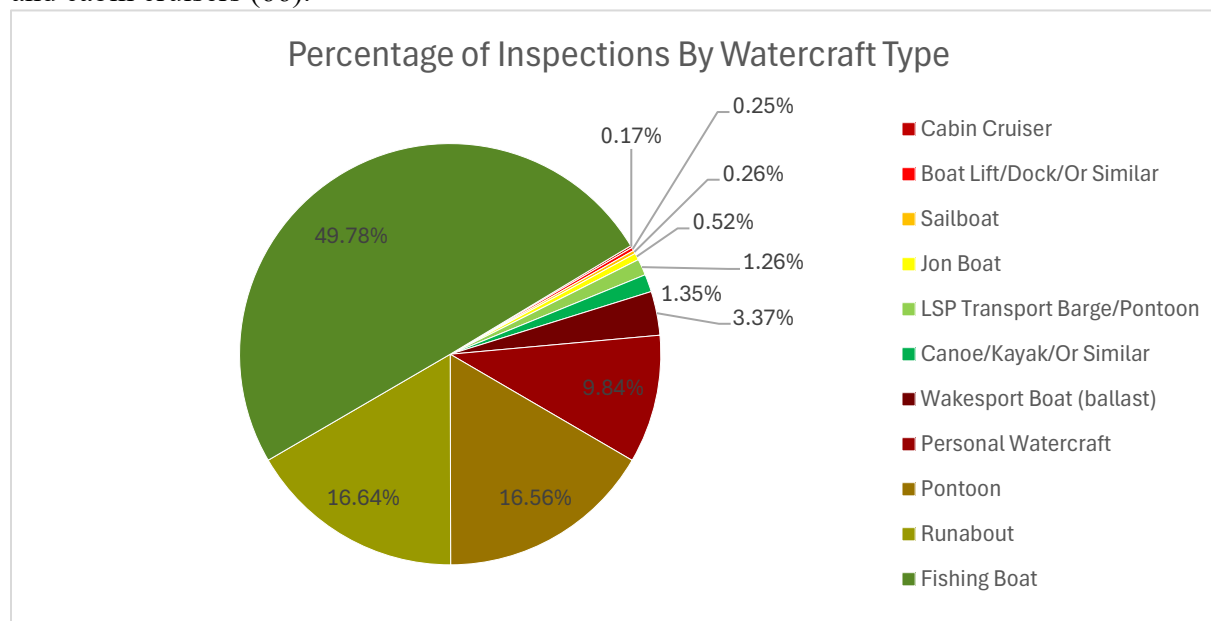
Medium-risk landings have the least consistency in surveys per hour across the landing risk groupings. Upper South Long, though classified as high-risk, garnered the lowest surveys per hour in that risk-category.

Insights from Inspection Surveys

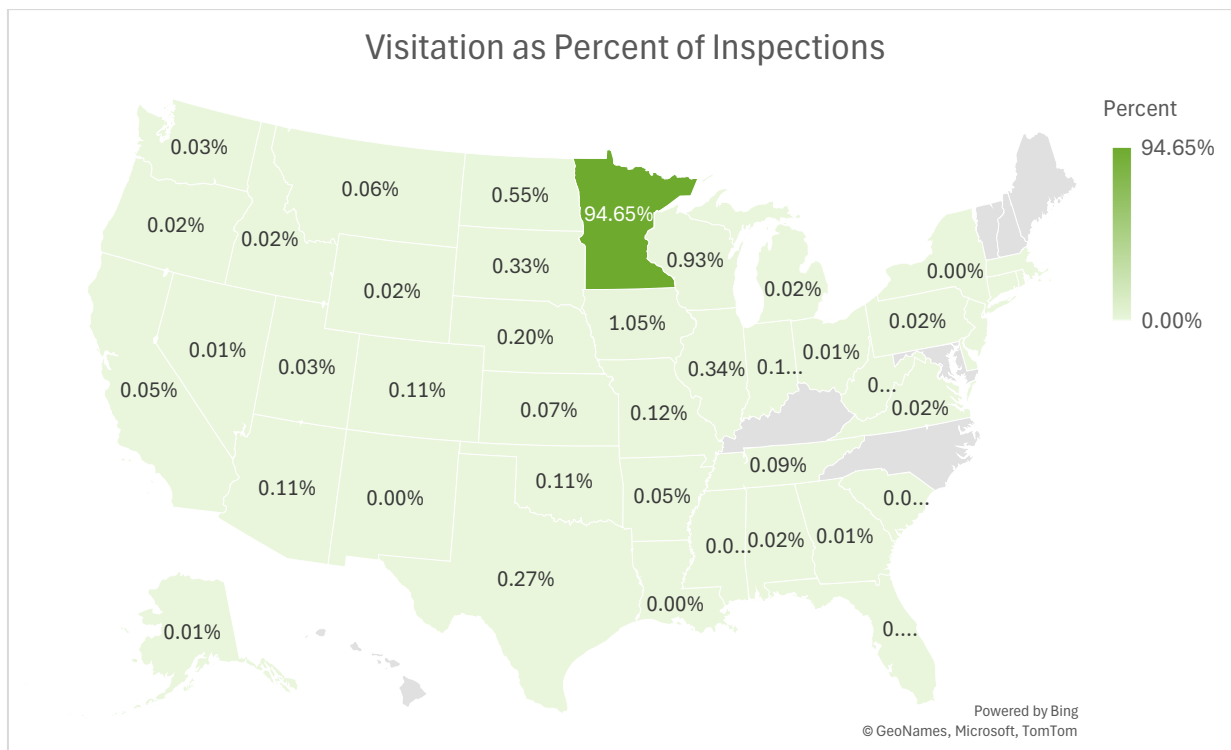


As expected, the trend of inspection surveys collected aligns and corroborates that mid-summer is the peak of inspection season and is lower at the beginning and end of the season. This trend may also be related to number of active staff during the middle of the season. Additionally, the date of specific holidays like Memorial and Labor Day falling in one month or another may also affect these trends.

Inspection survey data revealed that about half of all inspections (19,870) were conducted on fishing boats, while runabouts (6,642) and pontoons (6,611) accounted for another third of total inspections. The remaining 17% of inspected watercraft included wakesport boats with ballasts (1,345), personal watercrafts (3,929), canoes (539), jon boats (209), lifts (100), sailboats (102), and cabin cruisers (66).



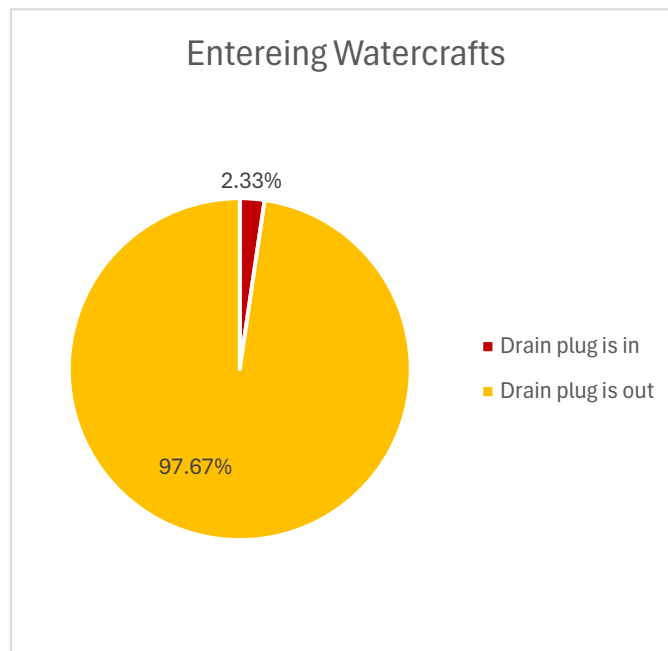
While most inspected watercrafts were surveyed as being from Minnesota (95%), the remaining watercrafts being brought in by out-of-state vehicles were primarily from Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Florida, and Illinois, respectively. Note that only the license plate of the vehicle putting in or pulling out the watercraft was used to determine state of origin.



Inspection Findings and Violations:

During inspections, watercraft inspectors ask a series of questions as well as physically inspect the watercraft and trailer or lift to determine if the watercraft is in violation of Minnesota AIS Laws. There were 14 inspections that were in violation of Minnesota AIS Laws. Only one of those 14 violations resulted in a criminal citation.

The 540 entering watercrafts that were identified as violating Minnesota's Drain Plug law. Those watercrafts account for only 2.3% of all entering watercraft inspected in the county meaning that 97% of entering watercraft had no detected violations during Level 1 inspections performed by watercraft inspectors.



Of the detected contaminations, inspectors categorized their findings by species as defined by the Minnesota DNR survey. Plants (86%) were the most common species found during entrance inspections. Water, mud, snails, and zebra mussels accounted for the remaining 14% of findings.

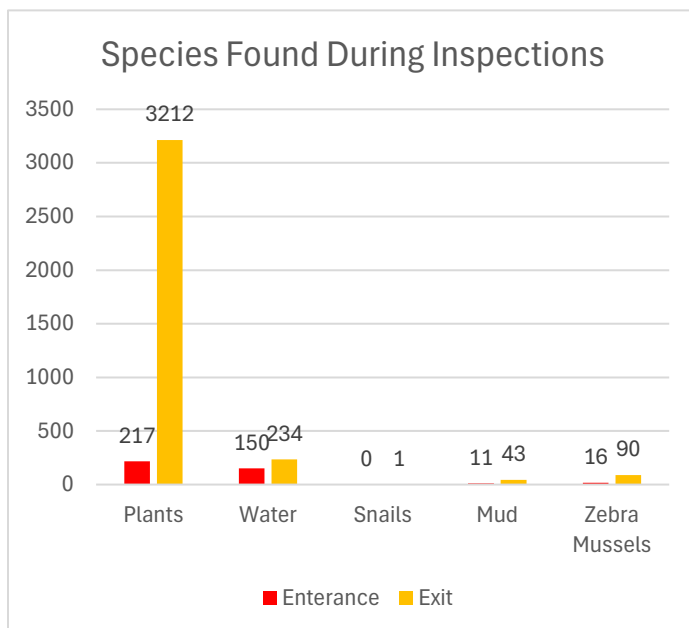
Type of Inspection	Total Inspections	Plants	Water	Snails	Mud	Zebra Mussels
Courtesy	15	2	0	0	1	0
Entrance	23,216	217	150	0	11	16
Exit	16,683	3,212	234	1	43	90

Zebra mussels were detected on less than 0.07% (16) of entering watercraft and on 0.5 % (90) of exiting watercraft the entire 2025 watercraft inspection season.

On the 16,683 exiting watercrafts inspected in the 2025 season, 3,580 surveys indicated that species as defined by the Minnesota DNR were present on exiting watercrafts. 21% of exiting watercrafts surveyed in the 2025 season had one of the defined species present upon exit.

Plants were detected most often, accounting for 90% of species found on exit. Only 3% of the surveys where species were detected upon exit inspection identified Zebra mussels as the contaminate.

Exit inspections detected higher occurrences of contaminate species, however, exit findings are not considered violations since they are addressed and resolved prior to the watercraft leaving the landing. Inspectors provide education to the public on AIS prevention practices and when necessary, require decontamination to be performed before a watercraft may enter a new waterbody.

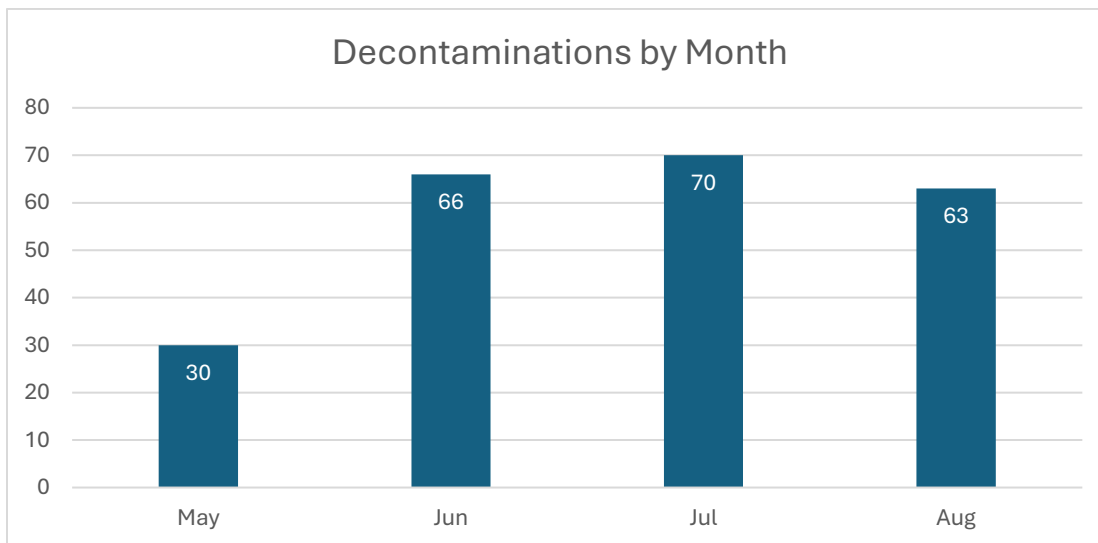


Decontaminations:

In addition to the watercraft inspection program Crow Wing County also has a decontamination program staffed by DNR Trained Level II inspectors to remove AIS from contaminated watercraft. The county offers two fully staffed mobile stations starting Fishing Opener weekend through Labor Day weekend, Friday through Sunday, 10:00AM-6:00PM. The decontamination program was allocated staffed 816 hours between the two mobile decontamination stations over the length of the season in 2025. A total of 824 hours were staffed in 2025 on the decontamination units.

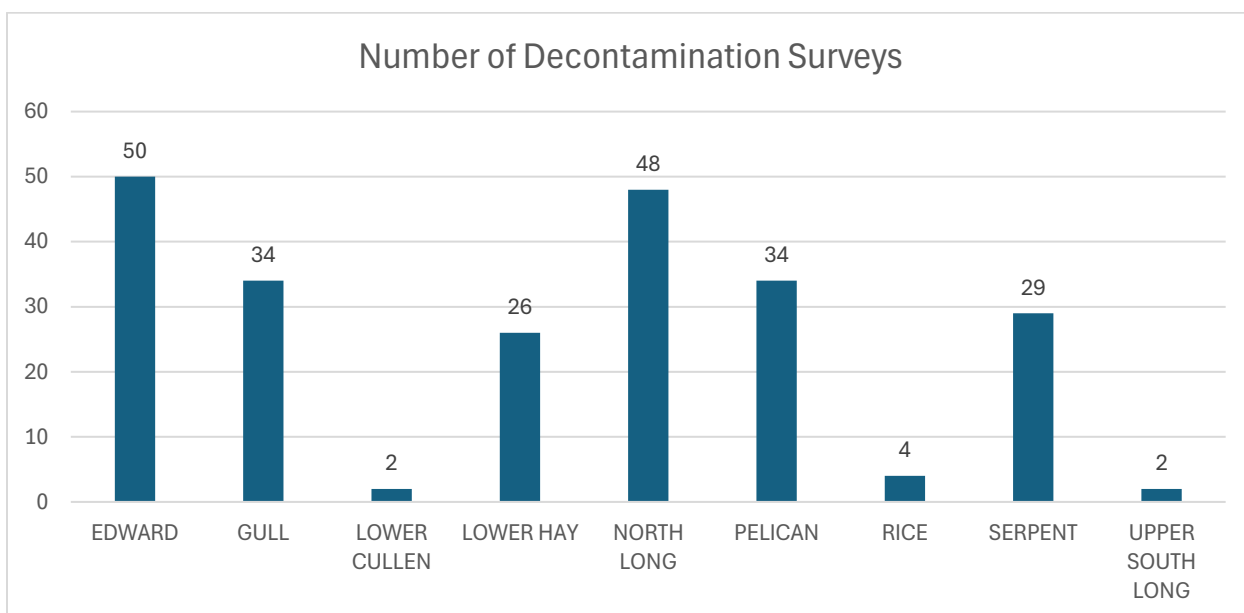
Watercraft may require decontamination depending on a myriad of circumstances such as the detection of a species on entrance or exit, time between launches and exits, and other information collected during level 1 inspections and surveys. Crow Wing County DNR Trained Level 2 Watercraft Inspectors perform both partial and full decontaminations depending on the required intervention.

In total, 229 decontaminations were performed on watercrafts by Crow Wing County Inspectors.



Decontamination surveys increased from the start of the season to the middle of the season. The majority of decontaminations were performed in June and July. These trends align with Level 1 Inspection temporal distribution as well.

The two mobile decontamination stations were strategically placed at 9 different locations during the season. Some landings hosted the mobile decontamination stations multiple times throughout the season such as Gull Lake East and North Long Lake.



Landings with CWC Planned Coverage & No Expanded Coverage

Lake / Public Access	Allocated Hrs	Fulfilled Hrs	% Fulfilled	Hours Left	Inspection s	Inspection ns/Hr	Est DNR Hours	Hrs Left Aft DNR	Overall % Fulfilled
EDWARD	408	383.5	94%	24.5	1212	3	32	-7.5	102%
GULL, EAST	408	384	94%	24	1298	3	24	0	100%
MILLE LACS, GARRISON WAYSIDE	408	256	63%	152	912	4	128	24	94%
OSSAWINNAMAKEE	408	368	90%	40	1021	3	16	24	94%
PELICAN, BREEZY POINT RESORT	408	408	100%	0	1716	4		0	100%
PELICAN, HALVERSON BAY	408	376	92%	32	1010	3	32	0	100%
PELICAN, JONES BAY	408	400	98%	8	1621	4	8	0	100%
PELICAN, NORTHWEST PWA	408	340.5	83%	67.5	1158	3	48	19.5	95%
RABBIT	408	392	96%	16	1041	3	32	-16	104%
RICE LAKE	408	400	98%	8	926	2	8	0	100%
ROUND	408	391.5	96%	16.5	1111	3	16	0.5	100%
SERPENT, WEST	408	367	90%	41	887	2	8	33	92%
SOUTH LONG LAKE	408	407.5	100%	0.5	931	2		0.5	100%
UPPER SOUTH LONG LAKE	408	407	100%	1	783	2		1	100%
LOWER HAY	408	164	40%	244	735	4	24	220	46%
BORDEN	288	288	100%	0	742	3		0	100%
CAMP	288	265	92%	23	396	1		23	92%
NORTH LONG, 371-NISSWA	288	272	94%	16	576	2	8	8	97%
CLEARWATER	256	243	95%	13	638	3		13	95%
CROOKED	256	248	97%	8	334	1		8	97%
CROW WING	256	256	100%	0	597	2		0	100%
EMILY	256	240	94%	16	377	2		16	94%
LOWER CULLEN	256	216	84%	40	382	2	40	0	100%
PLATTE LAKE	288	216	75%	72	507	2		72	75%
SIBLEY	256	255.5	100%	0.5	531	2	8	-7.5	103%
WHITE SAND	256	200	78%	56	593	3		56	78%
GILBERT	80	48	60%	32	82	2		32	60%
LOWER MISSION	40	34.25	86%	5.75	25	1		5.75	86%
UPPER MISSION LAKE	40	34.25	86%	5.75	80	2		5.75	86%
UPPER HAY	80	48	60%	32	69	1		32	60%
MIDDLE CULLEN		8		-8	10	1		-8	>100%
Total	13152	11669	89%	1483	39914	2	1016	904	95%
Aggregate Lakes									
Pelican	1632	1524.5	93%	107.5	5505	2	88	19.5	99%

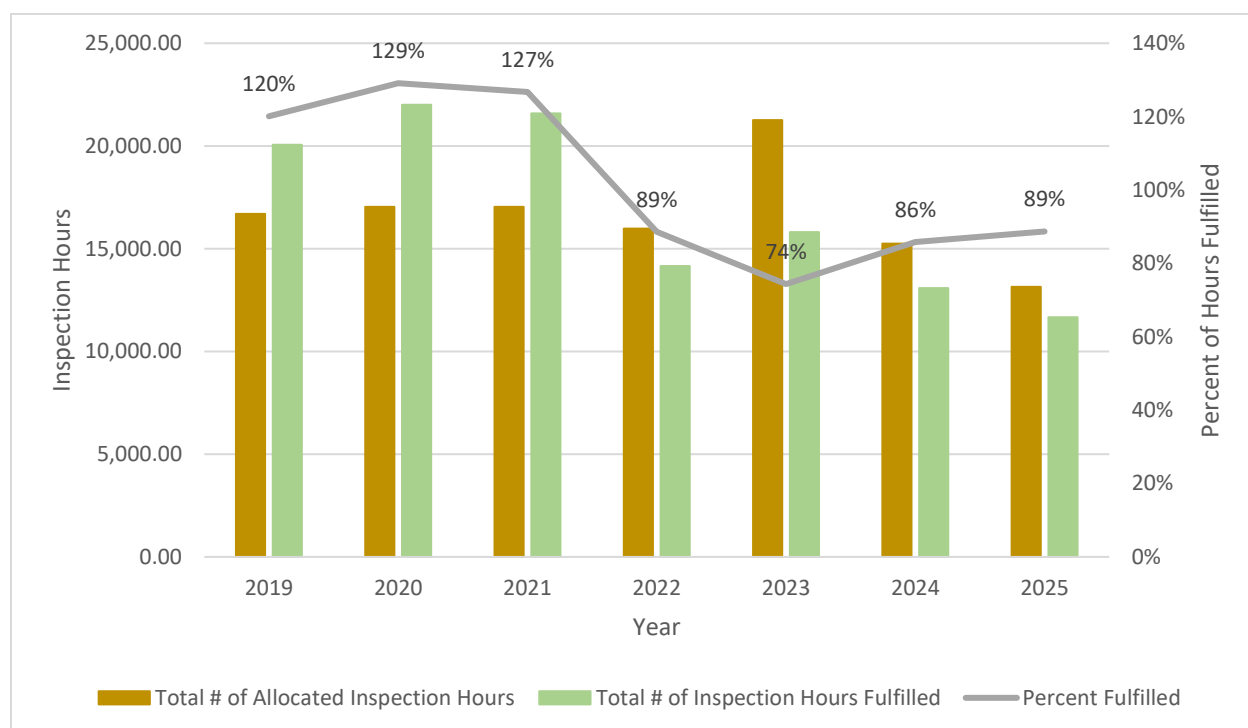
Landings with CWC Planned Coverage & Requested Expanded Coverage

				Planned		Request													
				Hours	Inspection	p/	Expanded	Fulfilled	%	Not	Total	Total	Total	%	Total	Total	Est	Hrs	Overall
Lake / Public Access	Allocated Hrs	Fulfilled Hrs	% Fulfilled	Left	s	Hr	d	Expanded	d2	Fulfilled	Hours	Fulfilled	d	s	ons/Hr	Hours	After	DNR	Fulfilled
BAY LAKE PWA	408	312	76%	96	1123	4	616	562.5	91%	53.5	1024	874.5	85%	1954	2	104	45.5	96%	
HUBERT	408	399.5	98%	8.5	973	2	496	501.5	101%		904	901	100%	1622	2	32	-29	103%	
NORTH LONG, MERRIFIELD PWA	408	343.5	84%	64.5	2084	6	48	32	67%	16	456	375.5	82%	2084	6	80	0.5	100%	
BIG TROUT, BIG TROUT LAKE PWA	408	408	100%	0	1299	3	408	390	96%	18	816	798	98%	2036	3	8	10	99%	
CLAMSHELL, CLAMSHELL PWA	408	392	96%	16	1174	3	408	397.5	97%	10.5	816	789.5	97%	1753	2	24	2.5	100%	
CROSS, SOUTHWEST	408	281	69%	127	1748	6	408	341.5	84%	66.5	816	622.5	76%	2629	4	152	41.5	95%	
CROSS, USCOE CAMPGROUND 1	408	392	96%	16	1541	4	408	365.5	90%	42.5	816	757.5	93%	2453	3	56	2.5	100%	
HORSESHOE	288	288	100%	0	760	3	120	112	93%	8	408	400	98%	1009	3		8	98%	
NISSWA	288	216	75%	72	689	3	120	96	80%	24	408	312	76%	894	3	88	8	98%	
WHITEFISH, UPPER WHITEFISH PWA	256	208	81%	48	462	2	32	16	50%	16	288	224	78%	501	2	32	32	89%	
GLADSTONE	80	64	80%	16	70	1	192	149	78%	43	272	213	78%	248	1		59	78%	
SERPENT, EAST	80	48	60%	32	34	1	224	200	89%	24	304	248	82%	264	1	8	48	84%	
KIMBALL							312	191.5	61%	120.5	312	191.5	61%	166	1		120.5	61%	
Total	13152	11669	89%	1483	33144	3	3792	3355	88%	437	16944	15024	89%	39914	2	1016	904	95%	
Aggregate Lakes																			
Serpent	488	415	85%	73	879	2	224	200	89%	24	712	615	86%	1151	2	16	81	89%	
Whitefish Chain	2296	1845	80%	451	6903	4	1664	1510.5	91%	153.5	3960	3355.5	85%	10107	2	296	308.5	92%	

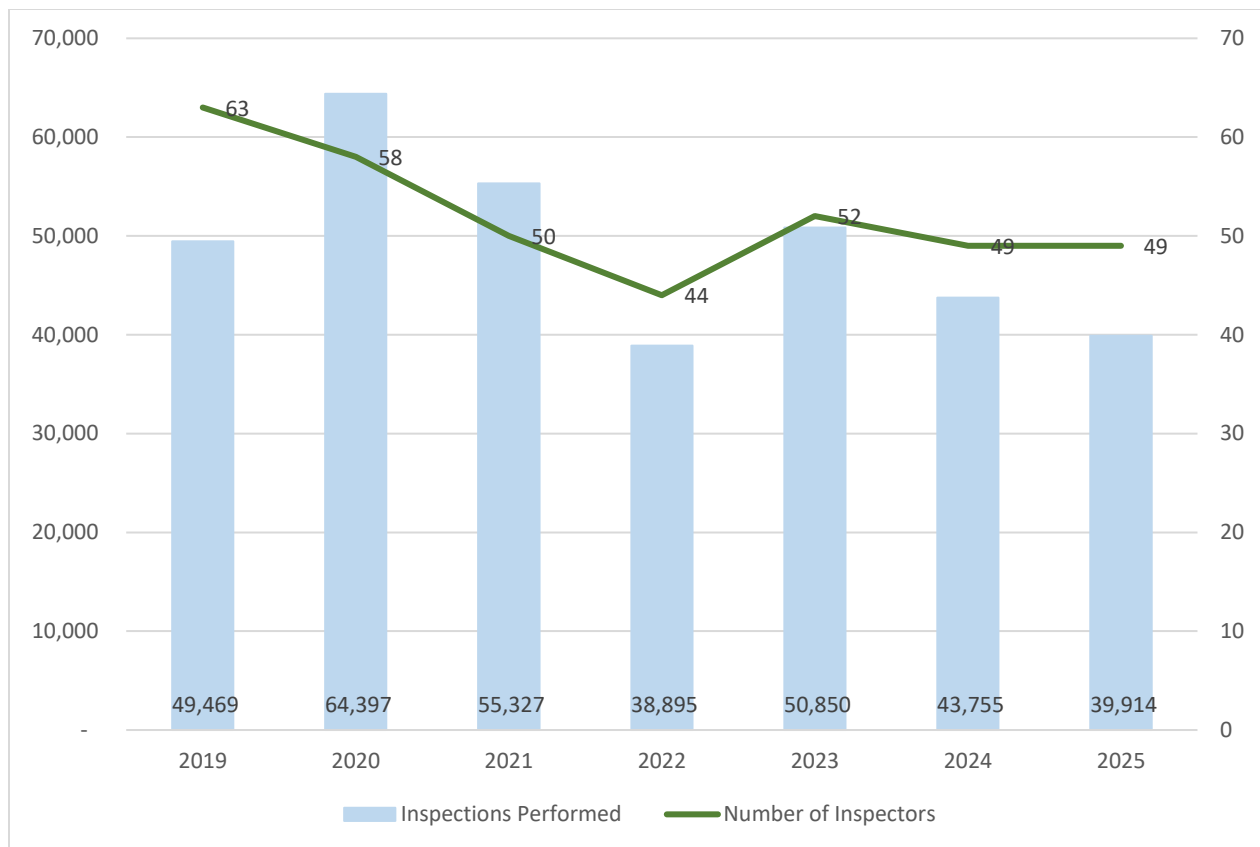
Trends:

Examining the year after year data for the AIS Prevention Program highlights trends in the watercraft inspection program that can lend insight into planning future years of programming and interventions.

From 2019 to 2025, an average of 16,633 hours were allocated for watercraft inspections under the AIS Prevention Program. The allocated hours for 2025 are below average by 21%, however the percentage of fulfilled hours in the last three years is trending closer to 90% so despite the reduction in overall planned hours, fulfillment is increasing closer to planned hours. This differs from 2023 when the highest number of allocated hours was set at 21,267, but fulfillment of that allocation was 74%.



Crow Wing County has achieved a high level of fulfillment of allocated hours over the years; when averaged over that span of time, 16,966 hours or 102% fulfillment has been attained throughout the program's documented history.



Inspection data from the same span of years reveals trends in activities executed within the watercraft inspection program. Staff retention is a managerial priority for the Crow Wing County AIS Prevention Program. Early years of high staffing lent itself to an over-execution of allocated hours. In recent years, 2022 to 2025, the seasonal staff size has hovered around 48 inspectors. Inspections performed appears to be coming into trend with staff size in recent years where the rise and fall of staff size matches the rise and fall in inspections performed.

Summary and Comments:

The Crow Wing County AIS Watercraft Inspection season began on Minnesota’s official fishing opener, May 10th, and concluded on Sunday, August 31st, spanning 17 weeks. The county fielded a staff of 49 seasonal watercraft inspectors who completed 39,914 watercraft inspections and 229 watercraft decontaminations. The county maintains a high level of execution of the watercraft inspection and decontamination activities in their annual Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan and continues to look for opportunities to improve the program with input from stakeholders and partners for years to come. The county wishes to thank the seasonal staff members, partnering lake associations, local government units, state agencies, and private organizations who make these activities possible through their time, resources, volunteer efforts, and expertise to prevent and limit the spread of aquatic invasive species in Crow Wing County.