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FEATURED

# Lake association calls for closing of Medicine Lake boat access

By Kristen Miller [kristen.miller@ecm-inc.com](mailto:kristen.miller@ecm-inc.com) Aug 24, 2018



(SUN SAILOR STAFF PHOTO BY Kristen Miller)

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Concerned citizens are asking the Plymouth City Council to close the boat access at West Medicine Lake Park, which is open for three weekends in the spring and summer, providing a secondary access to the lake for residents with boats.

*Plymouth City Council to vote on the proposal Tuesday, Aug. 28*

Concerned citizens are calling for the closure of the West Medicine Lake Park boat access this fall in an effort to prevent the spread of the recently discovered starry stonewort in the lake.

The invasive aquatic species was found by a Three Rivers Park District watercraft inspector earlier in the month. The inspector recognized it on a boat propeller. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources confirmed a widespread growth of starry stonewort, an alga that looks similar to other native plants, around French Regional Park's public access, covering about 14 acres of the 924-acre lake.

Starry stonewort can form dense mats, which can interfere with use of a lake and compete with native plants, according to the DNR. Starry stonewort can also be difficult to identify because it looks similar to native plants.

"Starry stonewort can be difficult to identify without the presence of the tiny star-shaped bulbils," said Keegan Lund, invasive species specialist for the DNR. "We ultimately used a microscope to examine the algae and confirm that bulbils were present."

Since starry stonewort was first confirmed in Minnesota in 2015, most new populations have been reported in the month of August, when the "telltale star-shaped bulbils are most abundant and visible," Lund noted.

Medicine Lake is the 12th lake in Minnesota to have confirmed presence of starry stonewort.

After the assessment, the park district and DNR came up with a rapid response plan to treat the 14 acres with a low-dose of chemicals permitted by the Environmental Protection Agency. Treatments, paid for by the DNR, can only be administered every 14 days, according to Brian Vlach, senior manager of water resources for the park district.

"We're already starting to see some positive results in the 14-acre area we're treating,"

Vlach said, particularly around the access, which is a critical area in order to prevent it from being transferred to other lakes.



(Photo courtesy of the MN DNR)

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Starry stonewort, an invasive aquatic species, was identified in 14 acres of Medicine Lake, located near the boat launch of French Regional Park. This makes Medicine Lake the 12th lake in Minnesota to have a confirmed infestation since 2015.

While Vlach said he hopes to get good control over the starry stonewort this year, there is no way to ever eradicate it.

“It is going to control the plant and hopefully keep it from spreading through other parts of the lake and other water bodies,” he said, adding it’s too early to know how the plant will respond to long-term treatments.



(Submitted photo)

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A Three Rivers Park District staff member decontaminates a police boat.

In the meantime, Vlach expects multiple treatments this year and next year and “then assess the situation to see what type of control we have for the future.”

Because the invasive species is most likely spread when fragments have not been properly cleaned from trailered boats, personal watercraft, docks, boat lifts, anchors or other water-related equipment, the Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens are calling for the closure of the boat access at West Medicine Lake Park, owned and managed by the City of Plymouth.

This is not considered a public access and is only open three weekends in May and September to allow residents a secondary access for boat launch and removal. Three Rivers Park staff provide inspections during limited hours when the access is open. The public access at French Regional

Park, however, has daily boat inspections and has a decontamination unit for boats suspected of harboring invasive species. And since the discovery of the starry stonewort, the park district has extended its inspection and decontamination hours 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Joel Spoonheim, a Plymouth resident and president of the association of citizens, presented a petition of signatures from shoreline residents on the west side of the lake, asking the council to close the access this fall in lieu of the recent findings in order to prevent the invasive species from contaminating other lakes.

The association, also known as AMLAC, is made up of members who live and use the lake, meeting monthly to identify “critical issues regarding the lake, or in this case, important issues for regional lakes,” Spoonheim said.

Closing the access this fall at West Medicine Lake Park has garnered positive support by lakeshore residents.

“People recognize it might be an inconvenience but it’s the right thing to do as lovers and stewards of lakes,” Spoonheim said.

Funneling all boats through the access at French Regional Park would reduce the risk of boats being missed in regard to inspection and decontamination, thereby, preventing the potential spread of invasive aquatic species to other lakes, Vlach said.

Preventing the spread has been a collaborative effort between the City of Plymouth, AMLAC, Hennepin County, Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and Three Rivers Park District, Vlach said, noting the decontamination unit was purchased through Hennepin County grant dollars and applied for by the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission, which is then staffed by Three Rivers Park District with trained inspectors.

“All of us are working together to reduce the risk of spread to other lakes,” Vlach said.

The Plymouth City Council is expected to act on the proposal during its meeting 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 28.

## **More about AMLAC**

The Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens offers membership to anyone who lives near or uses the Medicine Lake. This is a lakeshore owners association, said Spoonheim.

A \$20 in dues per household is recommended for the budget, which is predominantly spent on communications and assist with offsetting inspection costs at French Park.

A volunteer association, AMLAC will host conduct various projects. For example, last spring members walked the shoreline of the entire lake, in partnership with Three Rivers Park District, to inspect docks on shore for zebra mussels. "It was a fun outdoor project," Spoonheim said.

Members will also receive more timely updates about issues relevant to the lake.

To join, visit the closed group "Medicine Lake (Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens)" on Facebook.

The group typically meets at 7 p.m. the third Wednesday of the month at the City of Medicine Lake town hall. Everyone is welcome.

## **CLEAN, DRAIN, DISPOSE**

The DNR reminds boaters and anglers to follow Minnesota laws to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species:

- Clean aquatic plants and animals from watercraft.
- Drain all water by removing drain plugs and keep drain plugs out while transporting watercraft.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.

Some invasive species are small and difficult to see at the access. To remove or kill them, take one or more of these precautions before moving to another body of water, especially after leaving infested waters:

- Spray with high-pressure water.
- Rinse with very hot water (120 degrees for at least two minutes or 140 degrees for at least 10 seconds).

- Dry for at least five days.

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