

**IMPORTANT NEWS** from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

## E-Newsletter September 2025



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## **Zebra Mussels and Starry Stonewort Confirmed in Anna Lake, Otter Tail County**

The DNR has published the first confirmation of Starry Stonewort in Otter Tail County.

Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations has focused on the threat of Starry Stonewort for 2025. A 5-part series was included in the OTC COLA E-Newsletter from November 2024 to March 2025.

- [November 2024](#)- Decade of Starry Stonewort Part 1- What is Starry Stonewort – How did it get here?
- [December 2024](#)- Decade of Starry Stonewort Part 2- What are biological characteristics of Starry Stonewort?
- [January 2025](#)- Decade of Starry Stonewort Part 3- Plant Community Interactions
- [February 2025](#)- Decade of Starry Stonewort Part 4- Critical Fish Habitat Impacts
- [March 2025](#)- Decade of Starry Stonewort Part 5- Starry Stonewort Management

The featured speaker at the OTC COLA lake property owner meeting on July 17, 2025 was Ezri Farnum. Ezri is the President of the Koronis Lake Association. Lake Koronis is located near Paynesville Minnesota. The lake has been combating the infestation of starry stonewort since 2015. [Ezri Farnum article](#), [Brochure](#)

Otter Tail County wants residents to know that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has found zebra mussels and starry stonewort in Anna

## What is Starry Stonewort?

Starry stonewort is an invasive aquatic alga. It can form thick mats that make it hard to swim, fish, and boat. It also crowds out local plants that fish and wildlife need. You can spot it by its white star-shaped parts. These parts are easiest to see in late summer. Since 2015, starry stonewort has been found in 36 lakes and rivers in Minnesota. Starry stonewort has never been completely removed from any lake or river in the U.S. However, finding it early helps manage it better. Treatment can help reduce the spread. These harmful species spread when pieces are not cleaned off boats and equipment.

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## Pelican Lake Area Echo Bay Park Development

In late 2021, land close to Fish Lake and near Dunvilla, northeast of Pelican Rapids, was given to Otter Tail County. This was done with the stipulation that the county make this into a county park, kept as much as possible in its natural state as a habitat for wildlife, fish, and plants.

The former property owner granted the Minnesota Land Trust a conservation easement to protect the property's natural features. To that end, Echo Bay County Park plans are being developed in harmony with the property owner's vision.

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## **Phelps Mill Celebrates New Features**

Otter Tail County celebrated the completion of significant upgrades to Phelps Mill County Park during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 7, highlighting new amenities such as a boardwalk and prairie restoration project.

### **What's New**

The first phase introduces visitors to a scenic boardwalk and prairie restoration, connecting them with the park's natural beauty and history.

“This project was a huge first step towards working through our Park Master Plan in building out a facility that can be enjoyed by many,” shared Kevin Fellbaum, park and trails director.

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## **Minnesota is Armoring Its Shorelines With Rocks, But Lakes Are Paying A Price**

MPR News

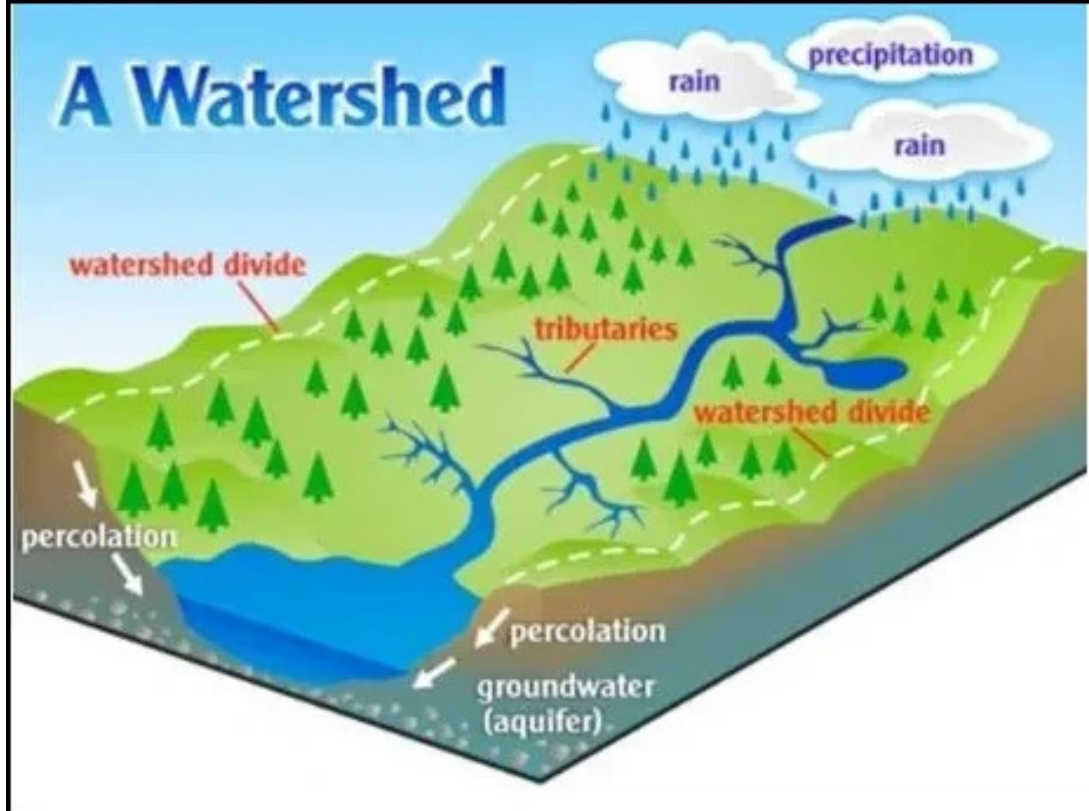
On lakes across Minnesota, it's common to see shorelines buffered with boulders, often stretching hundreds of feet across and several feet deep.

These barricades of large rocks, known as riprap, are designed to keep soil from crumbling into the lake due to waves or high water. For many home or cabin owners, riprap also creates a neat, aesthetically pleasing shoreline, a status symbol for up-north lake life.

But armoring lakeshores comes with an environmental cost. Rocks may stop erosion, but they're also hard and unyielding. They don't offer habitat for fish, turtles, birds or pollinators.

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## Watersheds, Runoff, and the Impact of Rain Deficits on the River-fed Lakes in Otter Tail County

When we think about healthy lakes and rivers, most of us picture clear water, good fishing, and recreation opportunities. What we don't always see is the invisible system that supports them—the watershed. Understanding watersheds and runoff helps explain why a lack of rain during the growing season (April through October) has such a direct effect on lake levels in river-fed systems, like many of the lakes in the Otter Tail River Watershed.

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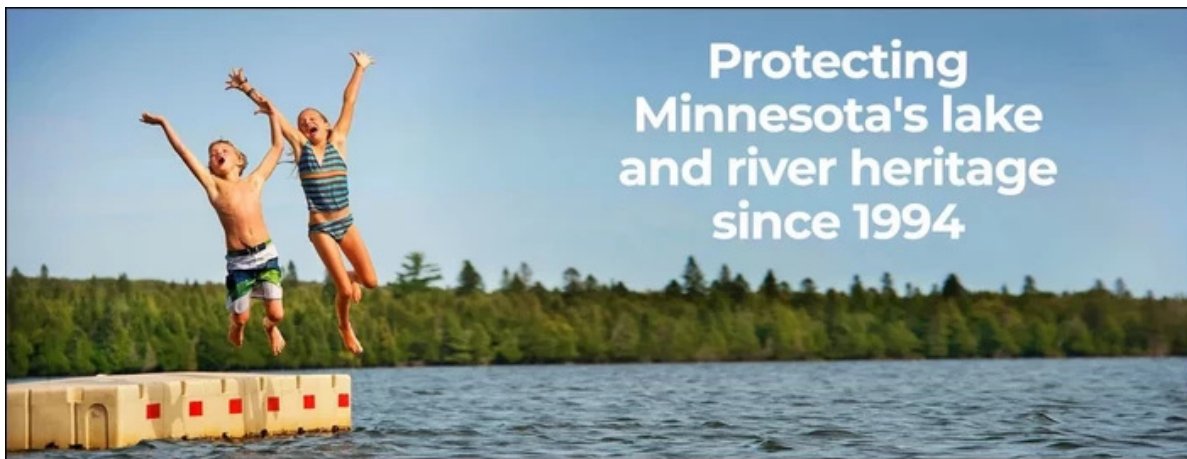


## RMB Laboratories Open in Pequot Lakes

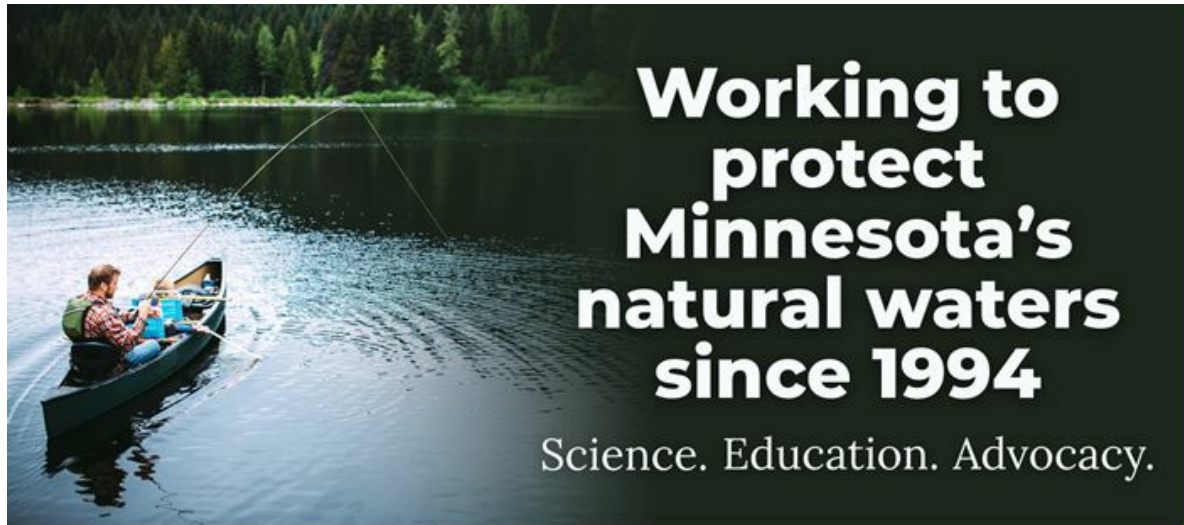
RMB Environmental Laboratories is excited to announce that we are now open in Pequot Lakes and continuing the trusted work of Central Water Testing Labs. We are proud to continue this legacy of local service and remain committed to delivering the same care and quality you value. Our new location is:

**30968 S Washington Avenue  
Pequot Lakes, MN**

More information- 218-828-2118



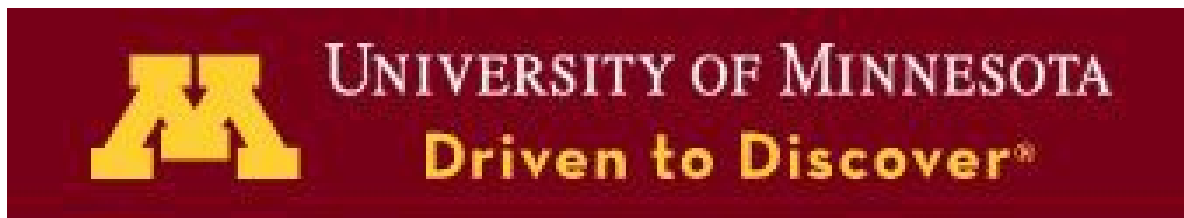
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protect  
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[September 2025 Newsletter](#)



**Starry Trek Volunteers Make Discovery**



New discoveries of the invasive algae **starry stonewort** (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) in Hubbard, Stearns, and Beltrami Counties have been confirmed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR), following reports made during this year's Starry Trek event.

**Starry Trek** is an annual, one-day event where the public meets at training sites across Minnesota to learn how to identify starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species (AIS). After the training, participants head out to local water access points to look for signs of these AIS. Since launching in 2017, the **Starry Trek event has mobilized volunteers to complete over 2,300 searches of public water access sites**, resulting in the discovery of over 90 previously unreported aquatic invasive species infestations.

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Photo: Michigan Recycling Coalition

## Boat Wrap Recycling Regulations In Minnesota

Shrink wrap is used across the country to protect boats from the elements. Unfortunately, the opportunities to recycle that plastic are



currently very limited. And we are talking about a lot of plastic. A 25-foot boat uses approximately 25 pounds of plastic and that's roughly equivalent to over 2,000 plastic shopping bags. Think about the 800,000 registered watercraft in Minnesota and how many of them are shrink wrapped every year. The amount of boat shrink wrap Minnesota uses just one time is staggering.

Legislation has been passed in the Minnesota legislature to address the problem. The Minnesota Boat Wrap Stewardship Law requires boat wrap producers to take full responsibility for the collection, recycling, and proper disposal of their products. Per the law, beginning September 1, 2025, no person may use, sell, or offer boat wrap for sale in Minnesota unless the producer responsible for that brand participates in an approved stewardship plan.

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Go [\*\*HERE\*\*](#) for a review of the benefits of joining MN COLA

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[\*\*David Helgerson\*\*](#), OTC COLA Director Liaison with MN COLA

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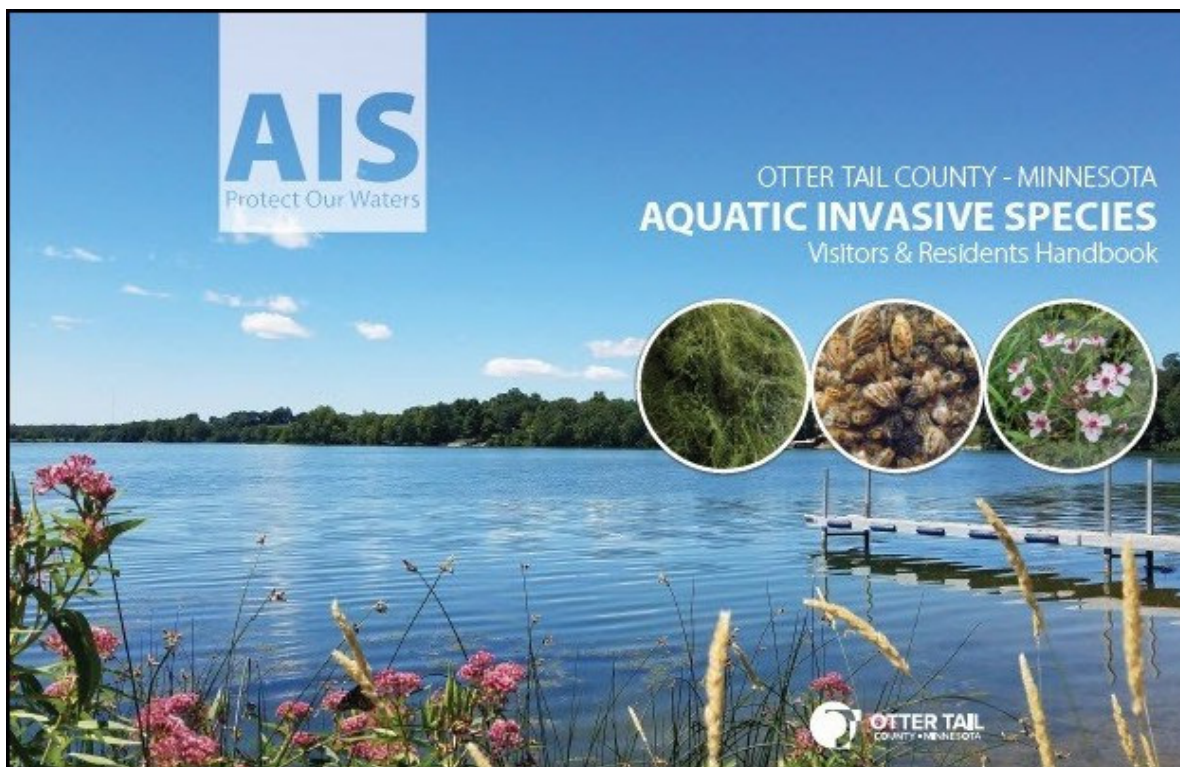


# **AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot 2024**

The AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot is prepared annually for submission to the state of Minnesota outlining use of funds provided for control of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota lakes and rivers. The Snapshot for 2024 has been created and submitted to the state of Minnesota. Supporting details for the Snapshot will be published in the Annual AIS Prevention Report currently in the process of being compiled.

[Spencer McGrew](#), Otter Tail County AIS Specialist

## **[AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot 2024](#)** **[AIS Prevention 2023 Report](#)**



## **AIS Handbooks Now Available**

The enthusiastically acclaimed AIS Handbook sponsored by the Otter Tail County AIS Task Force is now available. The Handbook will be distributed to lake property owners, resort owners, and civic organizations in Otter Tail County. Quantities can be reserved from Otter Tail County Land & Resource 218-998-8095. Besides disseminating AIS prevention best practices in the Handbooks, the AIS prevention information will also be published in area newspapers and included in social media posts.

[\*\*AIS Handbook for Visitors and Residents\*\*](#)

[\*\*AIS Handbook for Visitors and Residents Cover\*\*](#)

[\*\*Spencer McGrew, Otter Tail County AIS Specialist\*\*](#)

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# OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes

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**[John Kruse](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant**

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