



MINNESOTA AQUATIC INVASIVE
SPECIES RESEARCH CENTER

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Minnesota Organizations, Individuals, Honored for Aquatic Invasive Species Research Support

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ST. PAUL, Minn. — Three individuals/organizations have been announced as the recipients of the **2022 Research Partnership Awards**, as presented by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC). This award recognizes people, groups, and organizations who have gone above and beyond to contribute to MAISRC's mission: advancing aquatic invasive species (AIS) knowledge, and inspiring action to protect and restore Minnesota's cherished lakes, rivers, and wetlands. 2022 honorees include Sharon Natzel, Dan Cibulka, and the Association of Cass County Lakes.

MAISRC launched the Research Partnership Awards in 2021 to acknowledge the critical work that community partners have contributed to the field of AIS research and management. The recent advances using research to solve real-time threats to Minnesota lakes and rivers would not be possible without these champions:

- **GROUP/ORGANIZATION:** Created in 1988, the **Association of Cass County Lakes (ACCL)** is a member organization of lake associations in the Cass County, Minnesota area. They help their member lake associations by providing lake-related information and a forum for exchanging information with other members. ACCL is highly engaged with MAISRC's Stop Spiny campaign, including participating in a spiny water flea surveillance program. The ACCL also brought the AIS Detectors Core Course to Backus twice, which together created 39 certified AIS Detectors in the county. ACL members have been significant contributors to the over 1500 hours of volunteer service done by AIS Detectors volunteers in Cass County.
- **MANAGER/AGENCY: Dan Cibulka** is the Senior Water Resource Specialist with the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District. Dan's work includes strategic water resource planning, watershed monitoring & analysis, and of course, aquatic invasive species management. Dan served as a co-investigator on a golden clam rapid response monitoring project funded by MAISRC, providing significant technical and field support to the study. This work has helped MAISRC gain a much deeper understanding of the threat this species poses to Minnesota lakes. He currently serves on the MAISRC Technical Committee, a group made up of scientists from academic and governmental agencies that advise MAISRC on scientific and technical activities, including MAISRC's species and research needs prioritization. Dan

has been a local partner to one of MAISRC's Extension programs, Starry Trek, since the program launched in 2017. Dan is regularly able to recruit an impressive group of volunteers to participate in Starry Trek which has resulted in the discovery of the only two inland Minnesota lakes with live invasive freshwater golden clams in the state.

- **INDIVIDUAL: Sharon Natzel** is the President of the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations and one of MAISRC's most engaged and dedicated community leaders. A long-time AIS Detector, she has engaged with every MAISRC outreach opportunity available and worked to bring other local partners to the table. She led the local charge in multiple recent pilot projects: spiny water flea surveillance and zebra mussel safari pilot programs, as well as the Stop Spiny Campaign, Starry Trek, and other AIS Detectors activities. She is extremely attentive to the research outcomes and is always thinking about how to apply research findings to Hubbard County lakes. In 2022, Sharon worked with many other local partners to help host a day-long AIS Conference with MAISRC in Detroit Lakes. Her feedback and participation in MAISRC's research programs as a volunteer and local leader have made research on AIS more productive.

Nominations for the award were solicited from MAISRC research teams, and partner program staff. Final selections were made by MAISRC staff and were announced at the Center's annual Research and Management Showcase event on September 21, 2022.

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