



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 2023 Research Partnership Awards, as presented by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC). This award recognizes individuals, 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. 2023 honorees include Justin Swart, Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations, and the Leech Lake Band Division of Resource Management

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: Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations (MN COLA)** traces its origins to 2010 when a need was recognized among individual County COLAs and Lake and River Associations (LARAs) for an organization to network and collaborate, ensuring that their voice in the Minnesota agencies and legislature was unified. MN COLA has been an advocate for research-based solutions to our AIS problems from MAISRC's beginning. From the end of their docks to the state capital, MN COLA has been disseminating research findings and advocating for research and funding at the legislature - MN COLA is a powerhouse of positive change for our lakes.
- **MANAGER/AGENCY: Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe: Division of Resource Management** is dedicated to the protection of the water, land, forest, fish, wildlife, plants and other natural and cultural resources present upon the Leech Lake Reservation. Among their many duties, they enforce fish and game laws, regulate logging, wild rice harvesting, and plant resources, and generally protect the Band's many resources for the use of future generations. Kate Hagsten, Raining White, and their colleagues have been outstanding partners in MAISRC research. They have a long record of addressing AIS in waters of the Leech Lake reservation. They are now facing a challenge that they'd hoped wouldn't come: starry stonewort encroaching into an important wild rice bed. They have taken a proactive approach,

experimenting with diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH treatment) to mitigate starry stonewort without harming wild rice. With a commitment to learning while doing, they are increasing the impact of their work by collaborating with MAISRC researchers to better understand starry stonewort's impacts on wild rice and evaluate the effectiveness of DASH management. This will provide important information for other groups working to protect wild rice waters from AIS.

- **INDIVIDUAL: Justin Swart** is the AIS Prevention Coordinator and Environmental Planning Technician with Douglas County Land and Resource Management. Justin's work includes implementing the county watercraft inspection program, directing AIS monitoring projects, administering county AIS control grants, reviewing shoreland alteration projects, and providing information to the public regarding the county shoreland zoning ordinance. Justin is a local coordinating partner with Starry Trek, MAISRC and the University of Minnesota Extension's annual volunteer search for starry stonewort, and has been since the program's inception in 2017. He also coordinated recent aquatic plant surveys on 45 different Douglas County lakes which have been included in the PI Charter project. Justin's partnership is making a difference for our lakes and rivers!

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 20, 2023.

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