MINNESOTA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH CENTER

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Announcing the 2025 Research Partnership Award Honorees for Advancing Aquatic Invasive Species Solutions

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ST. PAUL, Minn. — Three individuals/organizations have been announced as the recipients of the 2025 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. 2025 honorees include the 1854 Treaty Authority, Justin Townsend, and Jim Meinz.

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: 1854 Treaty Authority:** 1854 Treaty Authority is an inter-tribal natural resource management organization that safeguards and carries out the off-reservation hunting, fishing, and gathering rights of the Grand Portage and Bois Forte bands in the lands ceded under the Treaty of La Pointe of 1854. Their knowledge and guidance have strengthened MAISRC research: helping identify study sites, evaluate methods, and providing critical insight, such as advancing research on the impacts of rusty crayfish on wild rice. Beyond their work in the field, 1854's active engagement on MAISRC's Technical Committee and Research Needs Assessment teams has shaped research priorities that benefit AIS and natural resource managers across the state. Their commitment to collaboration truly embodies the spirit of this award.
- **MANAGER/AGENCY: Justin Townsend:** Justin has spent nearly two decades building both expertise and passion for tackling invasive species - from pulling Eurasian watermilfoil by hand and experimenting with weevils, to more recently leading on tools like eDNA detection. Along the way, he's shown that real progress comes from collaboration and working with partners across the state. As the AIS Coordinator for Ramsey County, Justin is constantly finding new ways to work with others to reduce the spread and impact of invasive species. He's also been a strong supporter of MAISRC, helping shape key tools like AIS Explorer and

eDNA testing, serving on our advisory board, supporting AIS Detectors, and partnering on research projects.

- **INDIVIDUAL: Jim Meinz:** Jim is semi-retired but stays very involved volunteering as a Certified AIS Detector and Stearns County Starry Trek coordinator. In fact, at the very first Starry Trek in 2017, Jim discovered starry stonewort at the Grand Lake access. That early detection has been key to successfully managing and containing it for the past eight years. Since then, Jim has been a tireless supporter of AIS detection and management, shoreline restoration, and stormwater mitigation.

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 October 9, 2025.

The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center was founded in 2012 with funding from the Clean Water Fund and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and with the support of the Minnesota Legislature. Its mission is to develop research-based solutions that can reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota by preventing spread, controlling populations, and managing ecosystems; and to advance knowledge to inspire action by others. Learn more about findings and current research at maisrc.umn.edu.

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