

Aquatic Invasive Species - A New Invasive Arrives - Starry Stonewort

In late August the MN DNR listed two connected lakes in Stearns County, Lake Koronis and Mud Lake, as infested with a new aquatic invasive species, Starry Stonewort. It is perhaps the most destructive "plant" now in the state. Starry stonewort is actually an algae, and grows in thick stringy mats in depths from 2 feet to 20 feet. It will overpower even Eurasian watermilfoil, fills in bass and panfish spawning beds, and makes it nearly impossible to use a lake recreationally - boats have a hard time getting through the stringy mats.

Even small fragments of the plant can start an infestation elsewhere, and the starry stonewort was growing all around the DNR access on Lake Koronis. It is impossible to get a boat in or out of the lake without churning through this pest, picking up these fragments. MLR immediately called for closure of this access site, but the MN DNR stalled, claiming that Minnesota has a long history of providing lake access.



The central question became what is the resource that the MN DNR must protect, access to lakes or the health of those lakes - the resource. The Stearns County Commissioners, the local lake association, and even a local resort owner all called for closure of the access until a mitigation plan could be executed. MLR urged closure at the AIS Advisory Committee meeting. Finally the [MN DNR decided to close the access](#), and try to treat the infestation to reduce the risk of spread.

MLR advocacy combined with local civic action gets results. It is a model that will improve the water quality and health of our lakes and rivers in Minnesota.