



Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District 2025 Yearend Watercraft Inspection Program Report



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Introduction

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are nonnative species that can affect water quality, recreation, and overall system health. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) initiated the Watercraft Inspection Program in 1992 with a goal “to prevent the spread of invasive species within Minnesota through boater education, watercraft inspections, and watercraft decontaminations at public water accesses.”

The Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD or “the District”) was granted authority to conduct boat launch inspections by entering into an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Delegation Agreement states, “The purpose of this agreement is to enhance Minnesota’s capacity to prevent the spread of AIS by enabling local governmental entities to perform AIS inspections and manage access to water resources,” meaning, this agreement authorizes individuals to inspect water-related equipment for aquatic macrophytes, aquatic invasive species, and water.

In 2025, the District continued its partnership with Chisago County by entering a Joint Powers Cost-Sharing Agreement between Chisago County and CLFLWD for Boat Launch Inspections. Through this partnership, Chisago County hired, trained, oversaw, and managed payroll and human resources for two inspectors and received reimbursement from the CLFLWD for hours worked within the District. Chisago County inspectors were stationed at public lake accesses within the CLFLWD (which covers portions of Washington and Chisago counties) as well as throughout the rest of Chisago County. The two inspectors rotated through the District’s five accesses and focused their hours Monday–Thursday.

The District also hires watercraft inspectors, primarily focusing its hours Friday–Sunday. CLFLWD hired 8 inspectors in 2025; 4 inspectors returned from previous seasons. The District greatly values its returning inspectors and has made efforts to retain them through yearly pay raises, among the other compensation offerings available to all, which include competitive starting wages, holiday pay, and performance bonuses. Of the 8 inspectors from CLFLWD and Chisago county, 7 inspectors worked through October, when the season ended.

Throughout the season, inspectors conducted inspections at five different public boat launches within the District:

- Bone Lake,
 - Comfort Lake,
 - Forest West (located on the west basin near Lakeside Park),
 - Forest Central (located on the middle basin on the east side of Willow Point), or
 - Forest East (located on the east basin on the east shore).
-

The DNR has two levels of authorized inspectors, level one or level two, both of which are required to complete annual watercraft inspection training. Both levels are trained by the DNR to inspect watercraft for any violations of state regulations regarding the potential transportation of AIS and deny access if necessary. Level two, however, can also use decontamination equipment at the access. The decontamination units are self-contained, high pressure, high heat wash units that spray the watercraft to remove plants, animals such as mussels, and other potential contaminants from watercraft. All inspectors hired by CLFLWD are level one inspectors, however DNR decontamination units rotate between Forest West and other East Metro accesses. Chisago County also operates a decontamination unit that rotates between fourteen high-traffic accesses throughout CLFLWD and Chisago County including Forest West, Forest East, Comfort Lake, and Bone Lake.

Funding and Goals

The CLFLWD Watercraft Inspection Program would not be nearly as successful without the funding contributions from a variety of entities. In 2025, there were 6 other entities, besides the District, that contributed to funding the 2025 season; this included the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid Program for both Washington and Chisago counties, City of Scandia, Bone Lake Association, Comfort Lakes Association, and Scandia-Marine Lions Club. Organizations can allocate funding to a specific waterbody, such as a lake association's donation allocation to its respective lake.

Goals and hiring needs were based on the estimated financial contributions using the billing rate of \$23.50/hour. The 2025 pre-season funding estimate for the program was about \$69,500, which could have funded 2957.5 hours ($\$69,500 \div \$23.50 = 2957.5$ hours). This, however, does not include the in-kind hours provided by the DNR. District staff estimated the DNR would contribute 525 hours (about \$12,340 in-kind) to the District's season goal, bringing the total goal to 3,482.5 hours.

Once the number of goal hours is determined, District staff divide inspection hours by the number of weeks during the watercraft inspection season, providing an average number of hours to work per week. There were 26 weeks of inspections during the 2025 season. The average number of hours to work each week was 133.9 ($3482.5\text{-hour goal} \div 26\text{ weeks} = 133.9$ goal number of hours per week).

In 2025, the yearend watercraft inspection program contributions totaled \$85,386; this includes the 676 hours (a value of \$15,886) of service provided by the DNR. Figure 1 illustrates the yearend financial contributions to the 2025 watercraft inspection program.

2025 Watercraft Inspection Program Funds Per Lake (includes DNR in-kind)

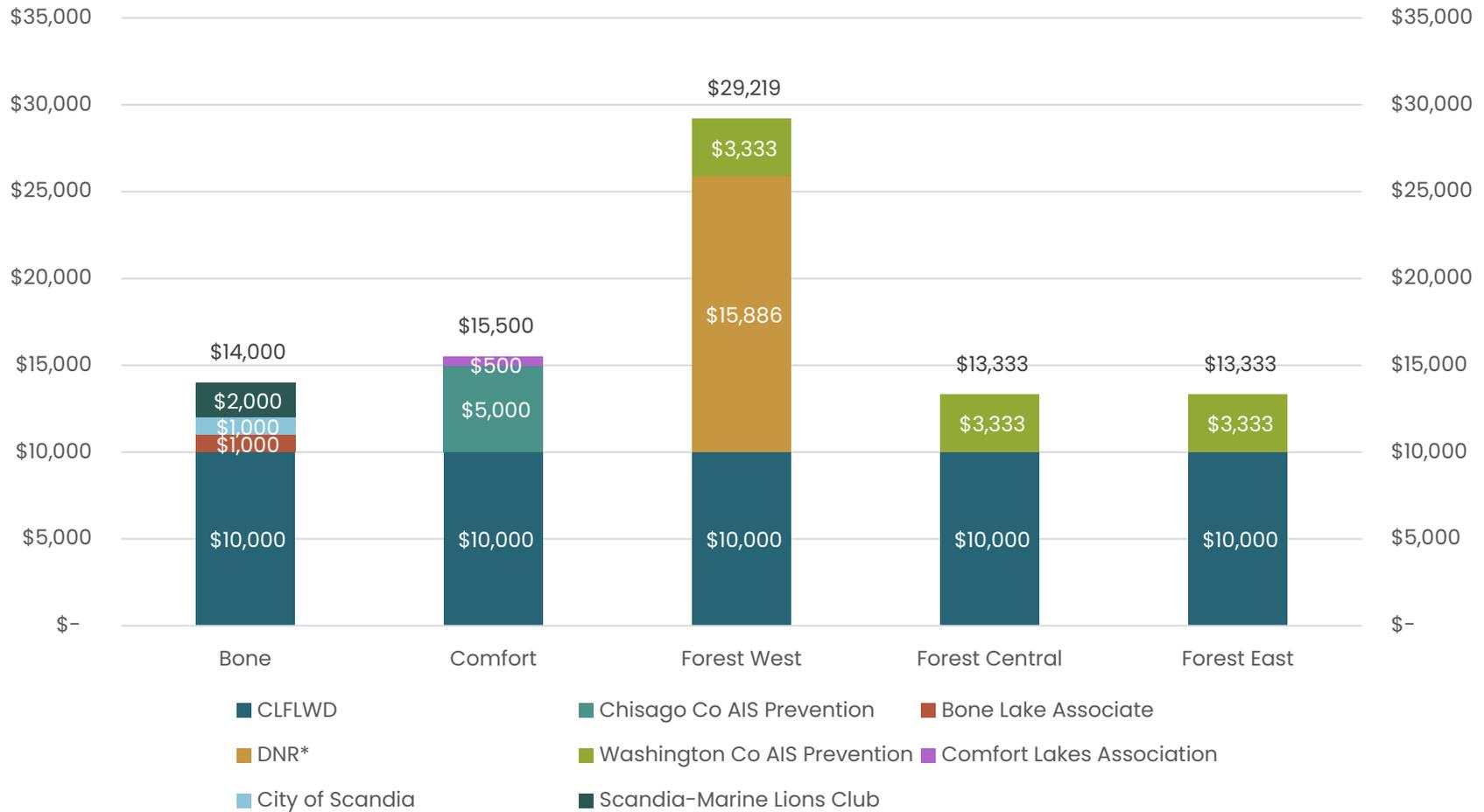


Figure 1. 2025 Watercraft Inspection Program Funds per Lake

*The MN DNR donated 676 inspection hours. Valued at \$23.50 per hour, the DNR donated hours equals about \$15,548.

Results

District-Wide

In 2025, district-wide, watercraft inspectors performed 6,053 inspections and worked 3562.75 hours, averaging 1.70 inspections per hour. Since 2014, the average total hours equal 3417.04 hours, the average total inspections equal 6454.83 inspections, and the average inspection rate was 1.87 inspections per hour. Figure 2 summarizes the total number of inspection hours and inspections completed District-wide since 2014.

Figure 3 shows the inspection hours at each access and the percentage of the total hours in 2025. During the 2025 season, inspectors spent 38% (1346.5 hours) of all the inspection hours at Forest West. Forest East had the second highest hours completed with 642.75 hours, about 18% of all hours. Comfort and Bone only had a twenty-hour difference with Comfort completing 562 hours (16%) and Bone completing 542 hours (15%). The least amount of inspection hours was completed at Forest Central, coming to 13% or 469.5-hours total.

Of the 6,053 inspections performed, 4,548 inspections (75%), over the duration of 2,390.25 hours (67%), were performed by CLFLWD Watercraft Inspectors. The partnership and collaboration with Chisago County & the DNR help provide great coverage across the District. Chisago County Inspectors worked 496.5 hours (14% of all hours) and performed 577 inspections (10% of all inspections). The DNR worked for 676 hours, about 19% of all hours, completing 928 inspection surveys (15%). The total number of inspections completed by each of the 3 parties can be found in Figure 4 and the total number of hours worked by each of the 3 entities is shown in Figure 5.

As stated in the Funding and Goals section, the goal for the number of hours worked per week was 133.94. This goal was met 15 of the 26 weeks. There are some spikes during the season in inspections per hour attributed to holidays, seasonal changes, and watercraft inspector availability. The number of District-wide Inspections, hours, and inspection rate throughout the season can be seen in Figure 6 with the inspection goal, too.

The District prioritizes its Watercraft Inspectors' hours during the weekends due to the general higher level of activity to maximize cost effectiveness and inspection numbers. Besides holidays, inspections are typically performed by Chisago County and DNR staff Monday through Thursday. In 2025, 80% of inspections, over 71.6% of the total number of hours, occurred Friday-Sunday. Figure 7. shows the number of inspections and hours per day of the week for the 2025 season.

District Wide Inspection Hours and Number of Inspections per Season (Includes DNR and Chisago)

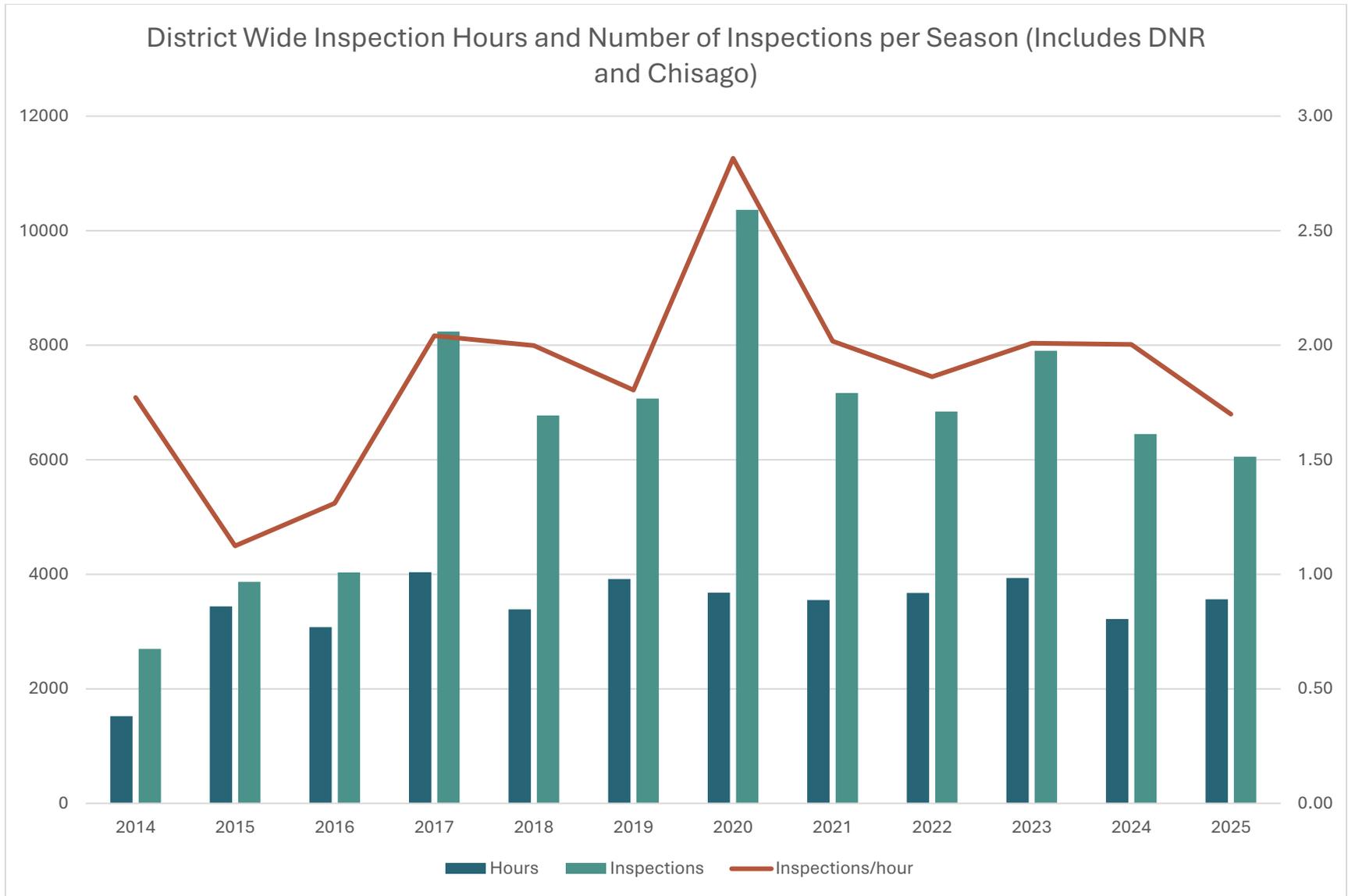


Figure 2. District-wide inspections and hours per season

Inspection Hours at Each Access and % of Total Hours
(DNR and Chisago Included)

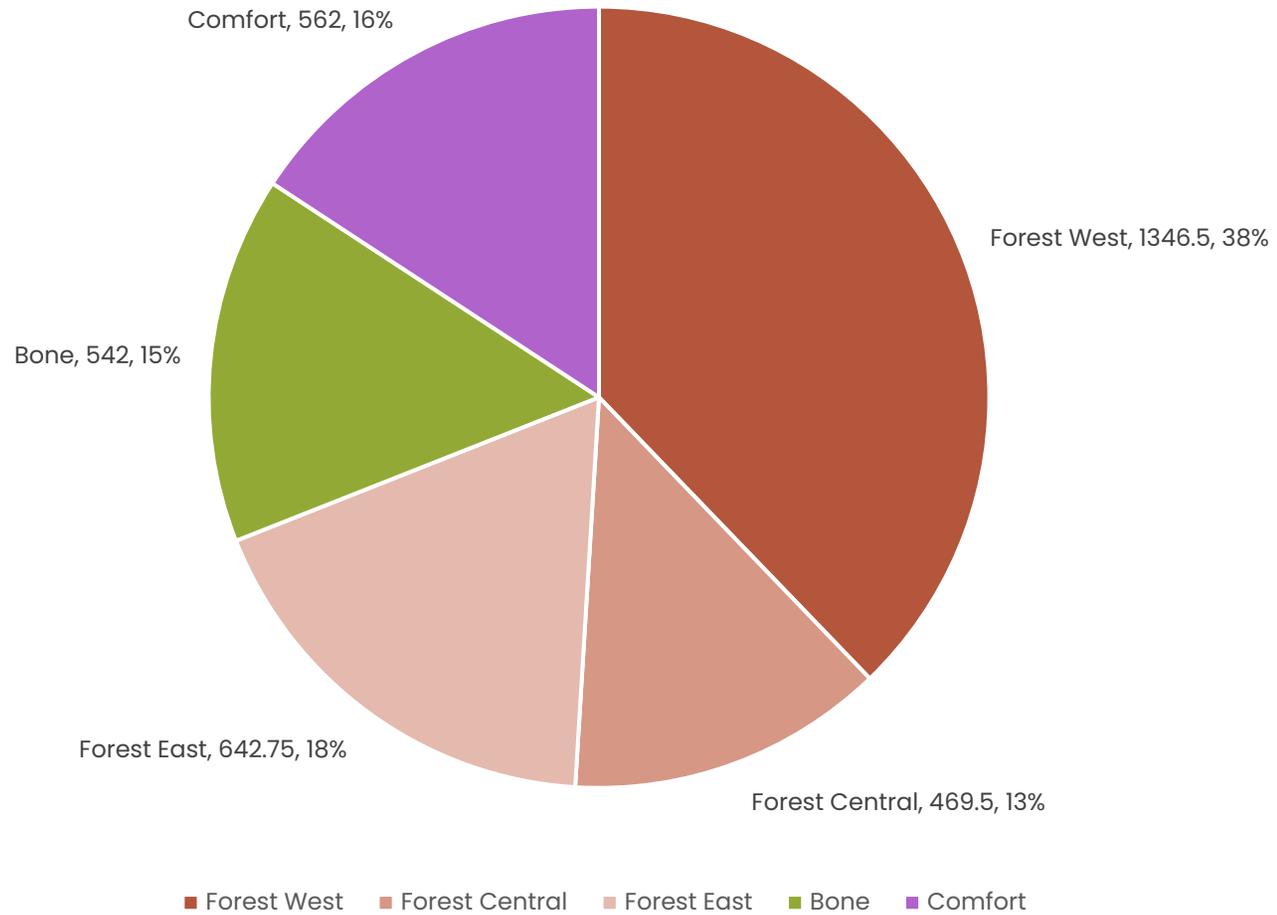


Figure 3. Inspection hours at each access and percentage of total.

Total Inspections Completed in 2025

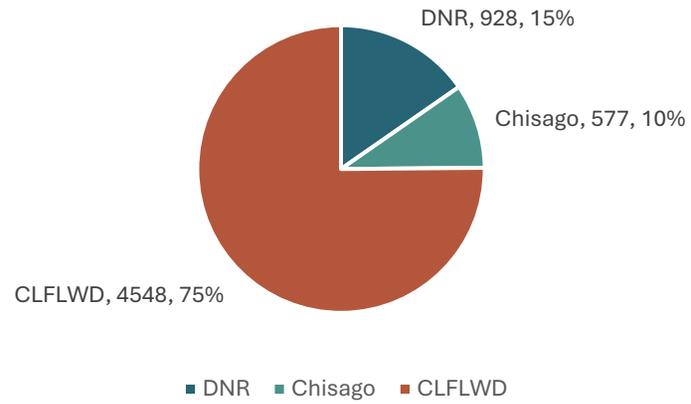


Figure 4. Total Inspections Completed in 2025

Total Hours Worked in 2025

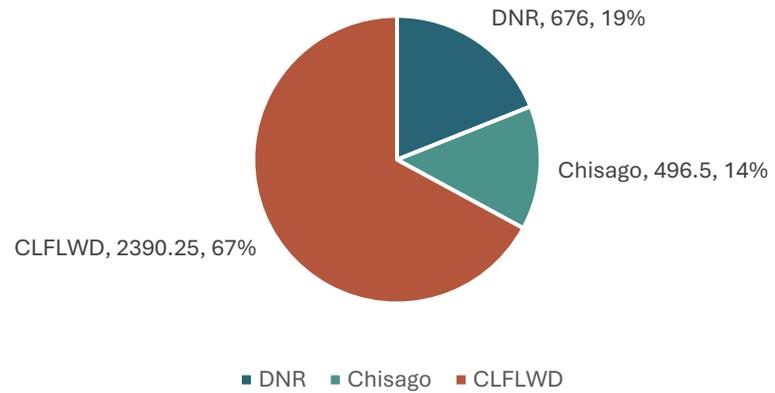
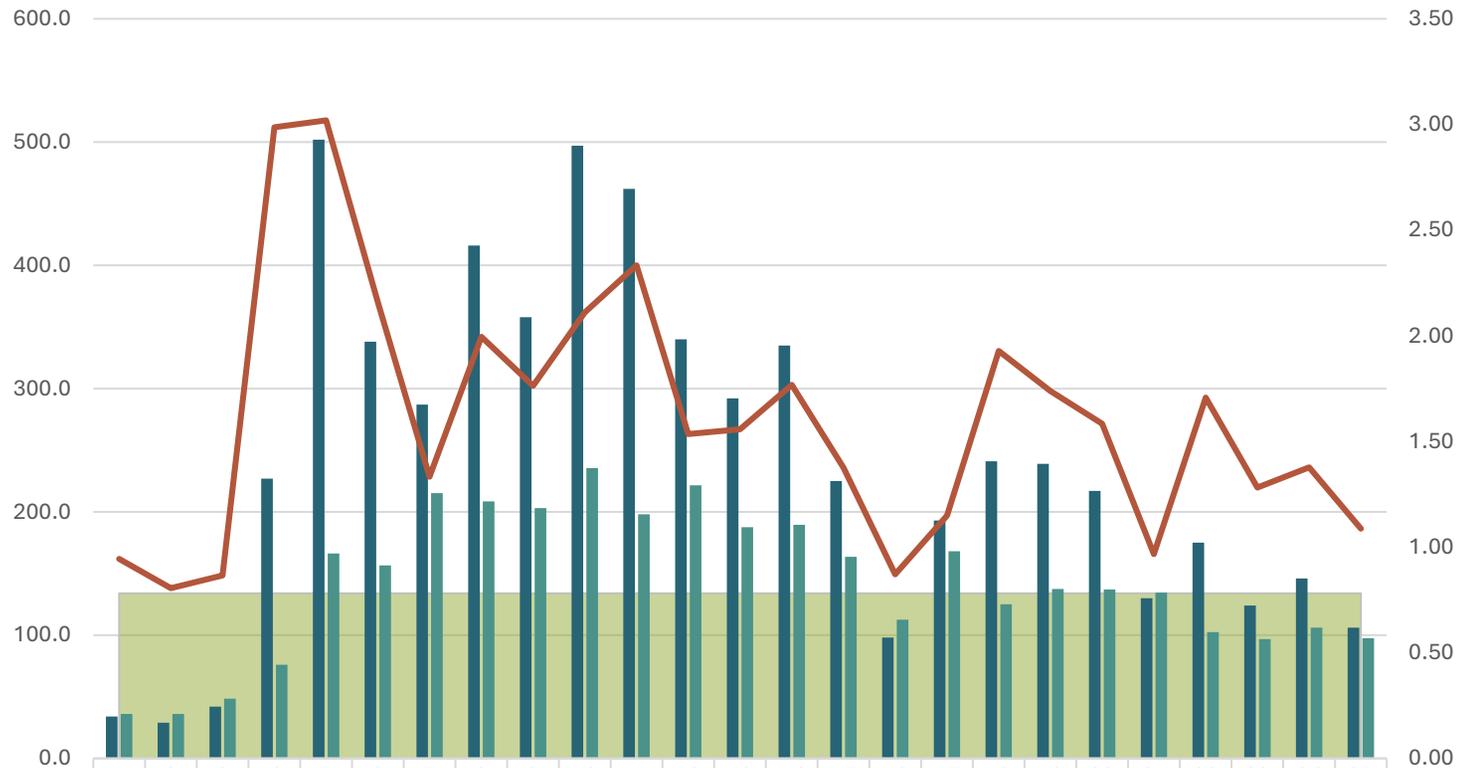


Figure 5. Total Hours Completed in 2025

2025 District-Wide Inspections, Hours, and Inspection Rate Per Week



133.9 Hour Goal 2025	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.	133.
Inspections	34	29	42	227	502	338	287	416	358	497	462	340	292	335	225	98	193	241	239	217	130	175	124	146	106	
Hours	36	36	48.5	76	166	157	215	209	203	236	198	222	188	190	164	113	168	125	138	137	135	103	96.8	106	97.5	
Inspections/Hour	0.94	0.81	0.87	2.99	3.02	2.16	1.33	2.00	1.76	2.11	2.33	1.53	1.56	1.77	1.38	0.87	1.15	1.93	1.74	1.58	0.97	1.71	1.28	1.38	1.09	

133.9 Hour Goal 2025
 Inspections
 Hours
 Inspections/Hour

Figure 6. District-wide inspections, hours, rates, and goals per week.

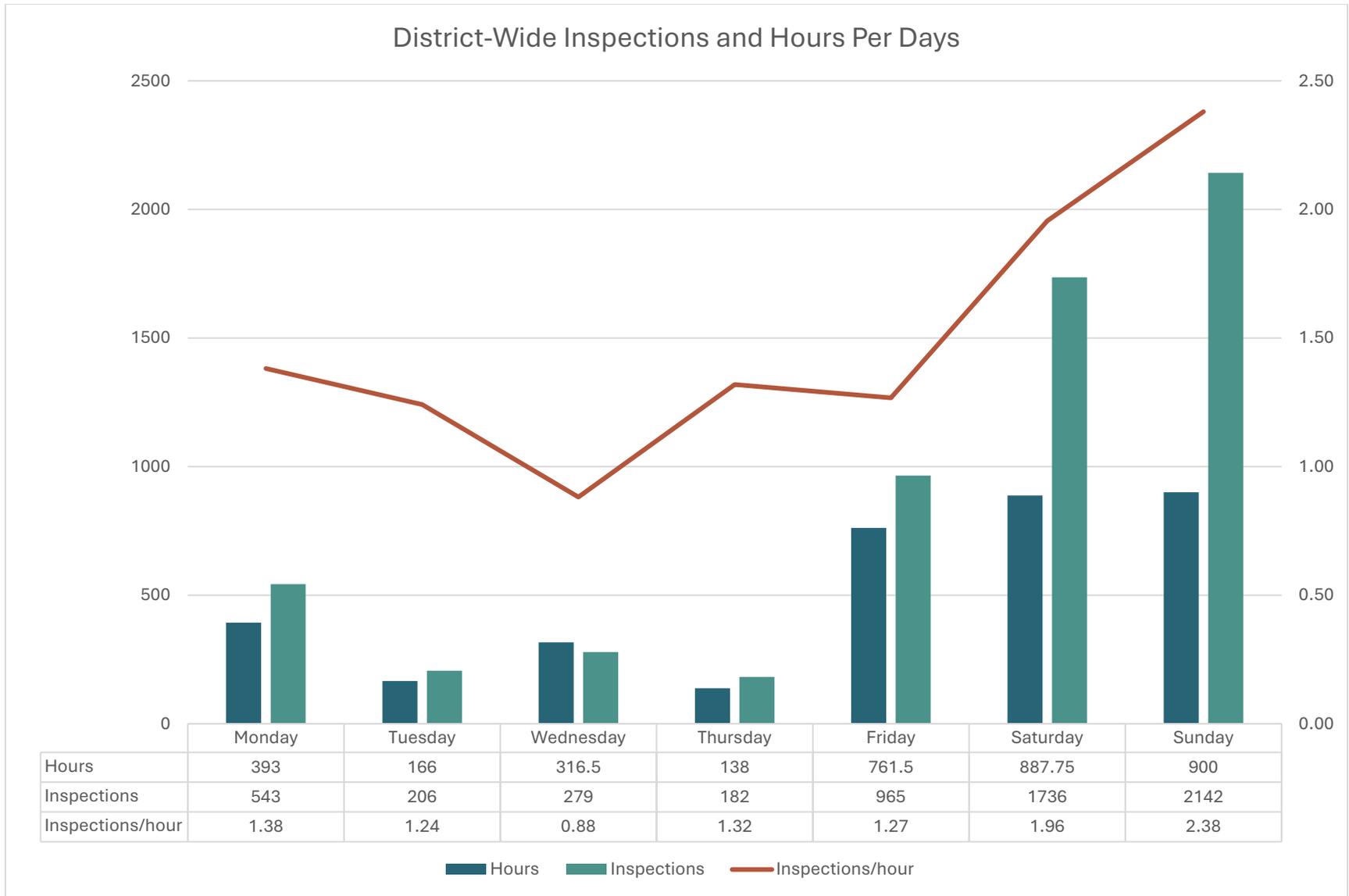


Figure 7. District-wide inspections and hours per day of the week for the 2025 season

Survey Results

While inspecting a boat thoroughly, Watercraft Inspectors complete an inspection survey for each boat that enters or exits a lake. Surveys are then uploaded to the DNR's state-wide inspection survey database. From the data collected through the surveys, valuable information such as number of boats entering and exiting a lake, incoming boat AIS violations, and new AIS infestation risk assessment can be calculated. A summary of contaminants entering and existing and drainplug violations can be found in Figure 8.

61 watercrafts arrived at District lakes with 63 contaminants such as plants, animals, mud, or water on their equipment, approximately 1.0% of all arriving watercraft. This number was 87 in 2024, 67 in 2023, 50 in 2022, 68 in 2021, 148 in 2020, 122 in 2019, 140 in 2018, 213 in 2017, 41 in 2016, and 39 in 2015. Transportation of any plants or animals, invasive or not, is prohibited on watercraft. These watercrafts were cleaned off and/or drained prior to launching. Watercraft that could not remove vegetation or mud by hand would be denied launch.

13 watercraft (0.4% of arriving watercraft) required removal of the bilge drainage plug upon arriving at District lakes. This number was 36 in 2024, 68 in 2023, 29 in 2022, 33 in 2021, 83 in 2020, 85 in 2019, 115 in 2018, 115 in 2017, 19 in 2016, and 67 in 2015. After educating the watercraft user on the potential of AIS in their bilge water, bilge plugs were removed from the watercraft and all water was drained prior to the watercraft launching in an area that would not flow into the lake.

639 watercraft exited District lakes with 688 contaminants such as plants, animals, mud, or water present on their equipment, approximately 10.5% of all exiting watercraft. This number was 1,026 in 2024, 1,277 in 2023, 852 in 2022, 786 in 2021, 1,423 in 2020, 867 in 2019, 931 in 2018, 804 in 2017, 187 in 2016 and 260 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited.

Included in the inspection survey are questions regarding the waterbody most likely to be visited next by the boater. Many of the lakes that boaters intend to visit after leaving a District lake do not have all the same AIS present in them. This information stresses the importance of not just preventing AIS from entering District lakes but also preventing AIS from leaving them. Results of this aspect of the survey can be found in Table 1.

District-Wide Watercraft Contaminants and Drain Plug Violations

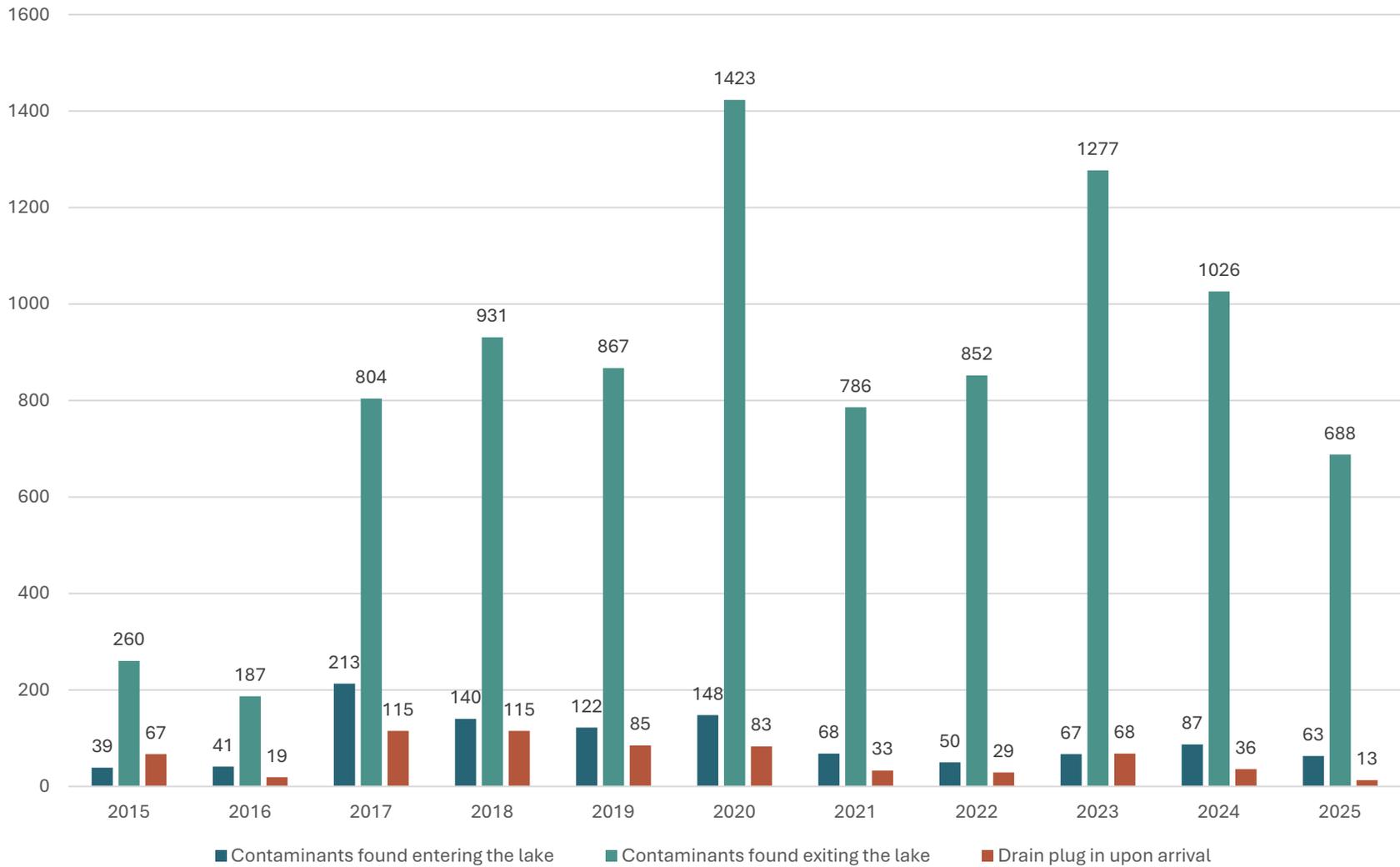


Figure 8. District-wide watercraft contaminants and drain plug violations as reported since 2015

Next Lake (2025)	Eurasian Watermilfoil	Zebra Mussels	Flowering Rush	Spiny Waterflea
Big Marine, Washington	X	X		
White Bear, Ramsey	X	X		
Chisago, Chisago	X			
Coon, Anoka	X			
Mille Lacs, Mille Lacs	X	X		X
Green, Chisago	X			
Minnetonka, Hennepin	X	X	X	
Bald Eagle, Ramsey	X	X	X	
Clear, Washington	X	X		
South Center, Chisago	X			

Table 1. Top ten lakes boaters intended to visit after leaving a District lake.

Risk of New Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species such as curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush, and zebra mussels have been documented within several lakes in the CLFLWD. The presence of these species represents a threat to the ecological, recreational, economic, and physical wellbeing of the lakes and the surrounding communities. While the District has taken action to monitor and manage the spread of AIS, prevention remains the most effective management strategy. One of the main goals of the CLFLWD watercraft inspection program is to prevent the introduction of new AIS that have not yet spread to District lakes.

Starry stonewort and the spiny water flea are two examples of aquatic invasive species found in Minnesota that are not yet found in District lakes. Starry stonewort is an invasive macroalgae that forms dense mats in lakes that can impede boating and prevent the establishment of beneficial native plants. Starry stonewort was discovered in Lake Koronis near Paynesville, MN in 2015 and has since been discovered in 38 additional lakes across the state. In 2025, several new populations have been confirmed by the Minnesota DNR. It was found in Garfield Lake near Laporte in Hubbard County; Gull Lake one mile west of Tenstrike in Beltrami County; Three Island Lake near Turtle River in Beltrami County; and Two Rivers Lake near Holdingford in Stearns County; Benedict Lake, Hubbard County; Buffalo Lake, Write County

The spiny water flea is an invasive species of zooplankton which is about the size of a grain of rice that competes with small fish for the same food resource (other zooplankton). The spiny water flea was first discovered in Lake Superior in the early-1980s and has since spread to more than 70 inland lakes Minnesota including, Mille Lacs Lake, Lake Vermilion, Lake of the Woods, and others. Both invasive species are thought to be transported primarily by recreational watercraft. Figure 9 contains photos of spiny water flea and starry stonewort.



Figure 9. Spiny water flea (left) and starry stonewort (right). Source: MNDNR

Part of the watercraft inspection survey involves asking the boaters which lake they visited last. The boaters' responses can be cross referenced with records that the DNR keeps of infested waters. This is a way to estimate the risk of these species spreading to District lakes. Note that transportation of water or any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive

species, is prohibited. District watercraft inspectors required that these watercrafts be cleaned off, decontaminated and/or drained prior to launching into the lake.

94 boats launching into District lakes came from lakes infested with starry stonewort. This number was 43 in 2024, 35 in 2023, 48 in 2022, 48 in 2021, 30 in 2020, 22 in 2019, 61 in 2018, 14 in 2017, and 83 in 2016.

19 boats launching into District lakes came from lakes infested with spiny water flea. This number was 72 in 2024, 151 in 2023, 95 in 2022, 96 in 2021, 158 in 2020, 111 in 2019, 104 in 2018, 171 in 2017, and 231 in 2016.

In 2025, 10 boats came from a waterbody infested with New Zealand mud snail, 49 from a faucet snail infested lake, and 9 from a lake with the VHS virus.

Table 2 shows the number of watercrafts entering District lakes that had reported last being in an AIS infested lake.

AIS	Bone	Comfort	Forest West	Forest Central	Forest East	Total
Bighead Carp	10	5	58	12	31	116
Brittle Naiad	0	0	1	0	0	1
Eurasian Watermilfoil	224	311	1236	311	599	2681
Faucet Snail	2	8	24	4	11	49
Flowering Rush	9	30	789	218	391	1437
Grass Carp	10	5	58	12	30	115
New Zealand Mudsnail	2	6	2	0	0	10
Round Goby	2	6	2	0	0	10
Ruffe	2	6	2	0	0	10
Silver Carp	10	5	58	12	31	116
Spiny Water Flea	3	7	6	0	3	19
Starry Stonewort	7	12	48	7	20	94
VHS virus	2	6	2	0	0	10
White Perch	2	6	2	0	0	10
Zebra Mussels	170	250	1077	274	524	2295
Potential Incoming AIS	455	663	3365	850	1640	6973

Table 1. The number of watercrafts entering District lakes that reported last being in an AIS infested lake.

Bone Lake

Inspection Hours and Scheduling

This season, watercraft inspectors performed 542 hours of inspections on Bone Lake which resulted in 535 inspections and associated surveys. Inspectors averaged 0.99 inspections per hour. Figure 10 below summarizes the total number of inspection hours and inspections conducted on Bone Lake since 2014.

Survey Results

A total of 535 surveys were performed on Bone Lake in 2025. Findings and a summary of the results from the compiled inspection survey data for Bone Lake can be found below, and in Figure 11.

2 watercraft arrived at Bone Lake with plants, animals, mud, or water on their watercraft. This number was 5 in 2024, 4 in 2023, 1 in 2022, 2 in 2021, 3 in 2020, 7 in 2019, 16 in 2018, 11 in 2017, 1 in 2016 and 4 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited. These watercrafts were cleaned off and/or drained prior to launching into Bone Lake.

0 watercraft required removal of the bilge drainage plug upon arriving at Bone Lake. This number was 5 in 2024, 8 in 2023, 1 in 2022, 1 in 2021, 12 in 2020, 12 in 2019, 8 in 2018, 1 in 2017, 2 in 2016 and 6 in 2015. After educating the watercraft user on the potential of AIS in their bilge water, bilge plugs were removed from the watercraft, and all water was drained in an area that would not flow into the lake prior to the watercraft launching.

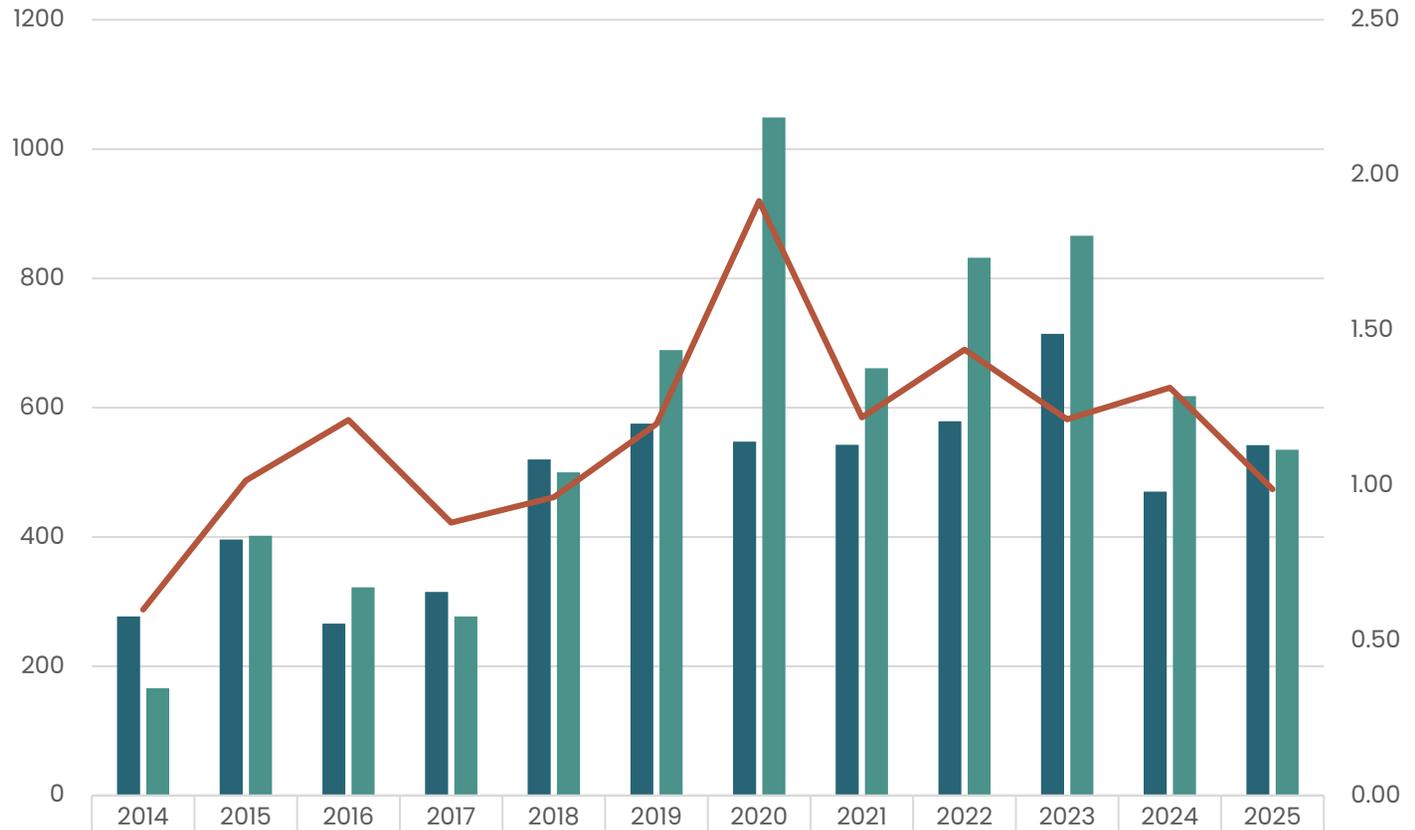
45 watercraft exited Bone Lake with plants, animals, mud, or water present. This number was 111 in 2024, 38 in 2023, 79 in 2022, 35 in 2021, 47 in 2020, 50 in 2019, 70 in 2018, 59 in 2017, 7 in 2016 and 24 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited. When possible, all contaminants are removed from the watercraft and trailer before leaving Bone Lake.

Risk of New Invasive Species

7 boats launching into Bone Lake came from lakes infested with starry stonewort. This number was 4 in 2024, 3 in 2023, 4 in 2022, 5 in 2021, 2 in 2020, 3 in 2019, 3 in 2018, 0 in 2017, and 2 in 2016.

3 boats launching into Bone Lake came from lakes infested with spiny water flea. For comparison, this number was 4 in 2024, 18 in 2023, 10 in 2022, 5 in 2021, 14 in 2020, 7 in 2019, 2 in 2018, 5 in 2017, and 25 in 2016.

Bone Lake Inspections and Hours Worked



Number of Hours	277	396	266	315	520	575.3	547.5	542.5	579	714.25	470.167	542
Number of Inspections	166	402	322	277	500	689	1049	661	832	866	618	535
Inspection Rate	0.60	1.02	1.21	0.88	0.96	1.20	1.92	1.22	1.44	1.21	1.31	0.99

Number of Hours Number of Inspections Inspection Rate

Figure 10. Summary of the total number of inspection hours, number of surveys, and inspection rates for Bone Lake since 2015

Bone Lake Watercraft Contaminants and Drain Plug Violations

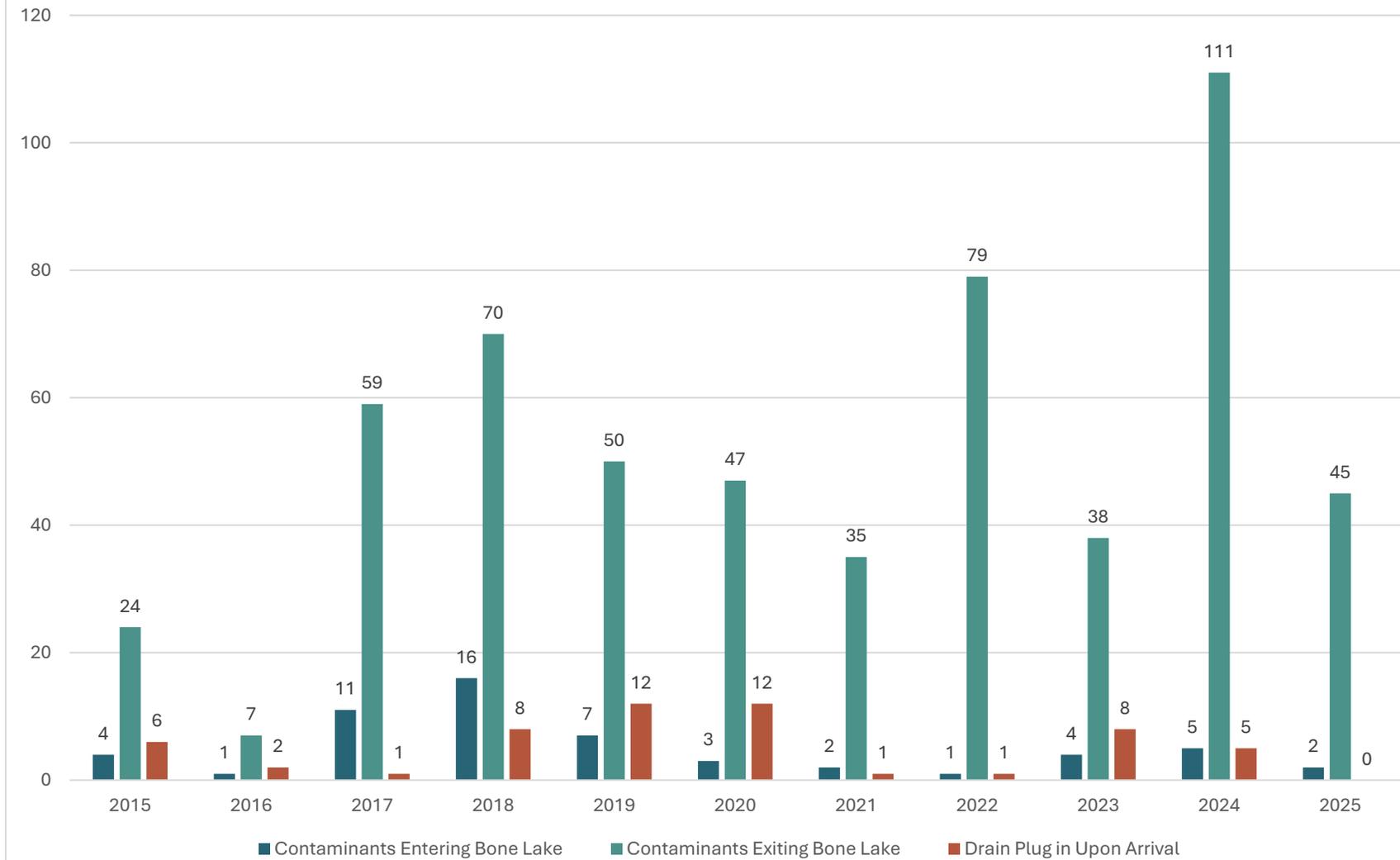


Figure 11. Bone Lake watercraft contaminants and drain plug violations reported over the last ten seasons

Comfort Lake

Inspection Hours and Scheduling

During the 2025 season, watercraft inspectors performed 562 hours of inspections on Comfort Lake with a total of 775 inspections. Inspectors averaged 1.38 inspections per hour. A summary is provided below in Figure 12.

Survey Results

A total of 775 surveys were conducted at Comfort Lake this season. Findings and a summary of the results from the compiled inspection survey data for Comfort Lake can be found below and in Figure 13.

1 watercraft arrived at Comfort Lake with plants, animals, mud, or water on their watercraft. This number was 1 in 2024, 4 in 2023, 5 in 2022, 5 in 2021, 13 in 2020, 28 in 2019, 7 in 2018, 25 in 2017, 8 in 2016, and 3 in 2015.

0 watercraft required removal of the bilge drainage plug upon arriving at Comfort Lake. This number was 1 in 2024, 5 in 2023, 8 in 2022, 10 in 2021, 9 in 2020, 8 in 2019, 15 in 2018, 4 in 2017, 2 in 2016 and 7 in 2015.

18 watercraft exited Comfort Lake with plants, animals, mud, or water present. This number was 8 in 2024, 30 in 2023, 16 in 2022, 24 in 2021, 82 in 2020, 55 in 2019, 44 in 2018, 75 in 2017, 22 in 2016 and 7 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited. When possible, all contaminants were removed from the watercraft and trailer before leaving Comfort Lake.

Risk of New Invasive Species

12 watercraft launching into Comfort Lake came from lakes infested with starry stonewort. This number was 2 in 2024, 3 in 2023, 6 in 2022, 1 in 2021, 1 in 2020, 1 in 2019, 5 in 2018, 2 in 2017 and 7 in 2016.

7 watercraft launching into Comfort Lake came from lakes infested with spiny water flea. For comparison, this number was 7 in 2024, 14 in 2023, 11 in 2022, 9 in 2021, 13 in 2020, 12 in 2019, 7 in 2018, 13 in 2017, and 24 in 2016.

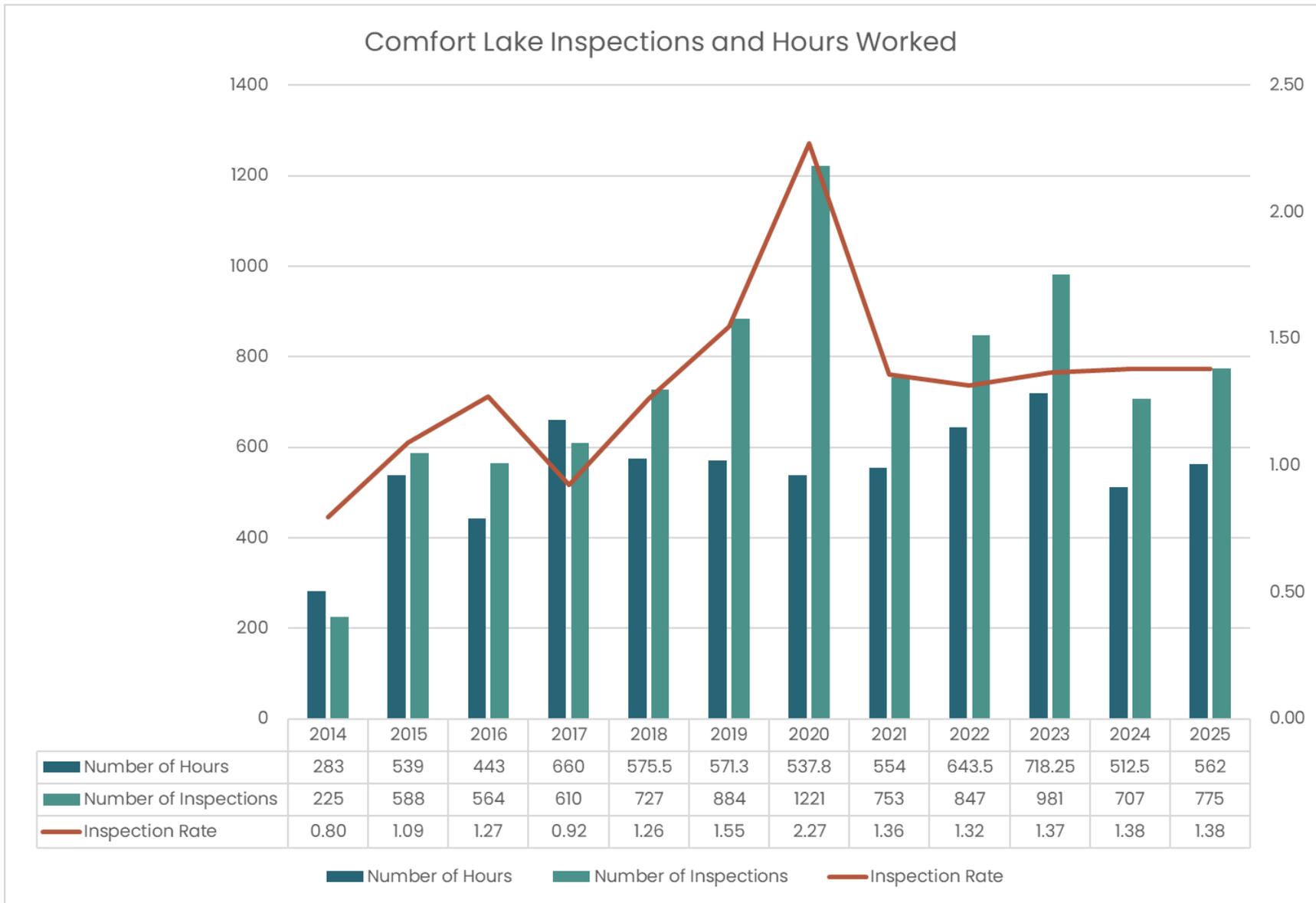


Figure 12. Summary of inspections hours, number of surveys, and inspection rates since 2014 at the Comfort Lake public boat launch

Comfort Lake Watercraft Contaminants and Drain Plug Violations

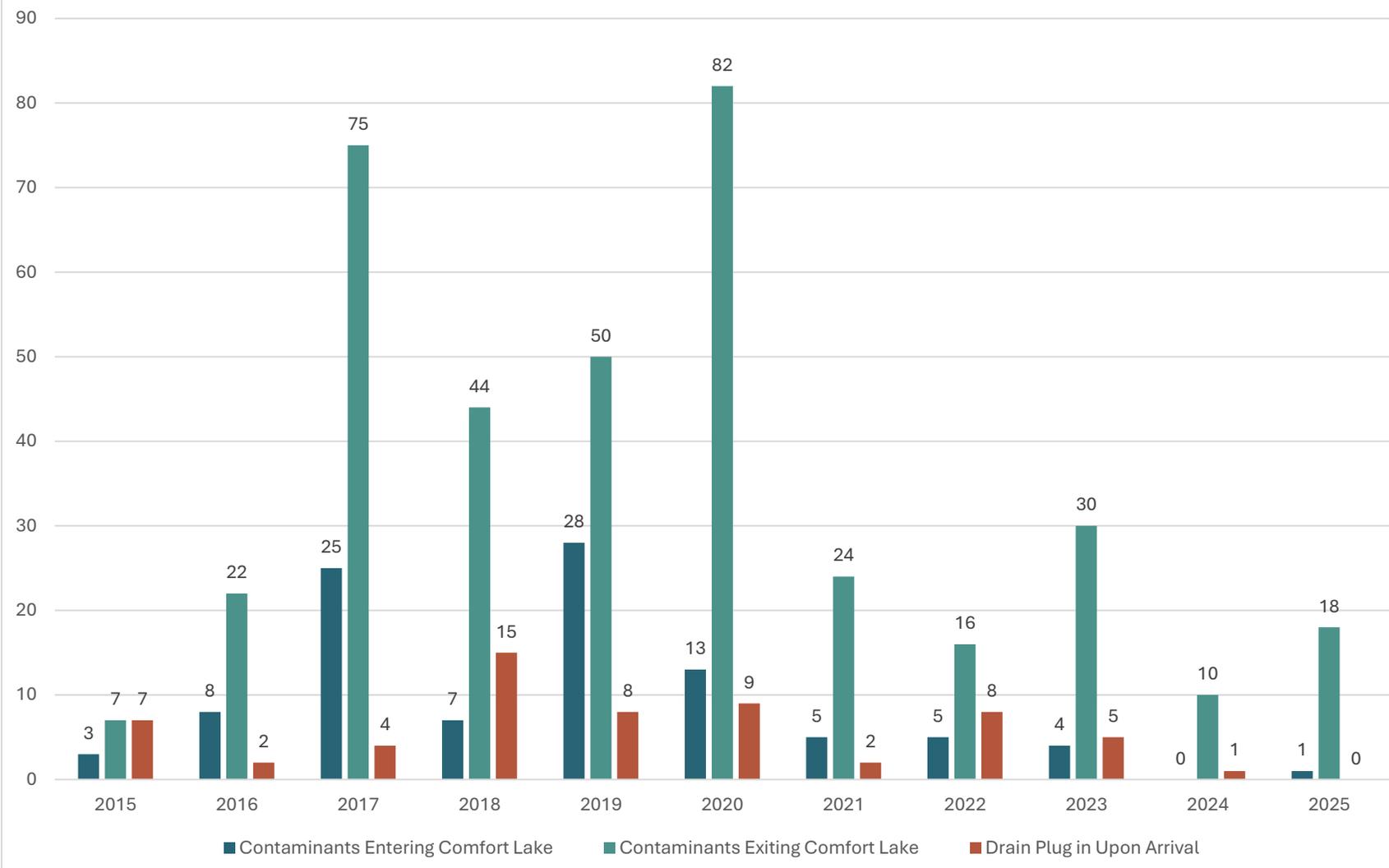


Figure 13. Comfort Lake watercraft contaminants and drain plug violations as reported at Comfort Lake since 2015

Forest Lake

Inspection Hours and Scheduling

In 2025, CLFLWD watercraft inspectors performed 1559.25 hours of inspections, the DNR inspectors performed 676 hours, and Chisago inspectors performed 223.5 hours, for a grand total of 2458.75 hours at the three Forest Lake public accesses. CLFLWD inspected 3,468 watercraft, DNR inspected 928 watercraft, and Chisago inspected 347, totaling 4,743 inspections. An inspection rate of 1.93 inspections per hour was achieved by CLFLWD, Chisago, and DNR. A summary of this information is presented in Figure 14 and Tables 3-5.

Survey Results

A total of 4743 inspections were performed on Forest Lake this season. Figure 15 shows the findings and a summary of the results from compiled inspection survey data for Forest Lake. Other findings are told below:

60 watercraft arrived at Forest Lake with plants, animals, mud or water on their watercraft. The number was 80 in 2024, 59 in 2023, 44 in 2022, 61 in 2021, 132 in 2020, 87 in 2019, 117 in 2018, 177 in 2017, 32 in 2016, and 32 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited. These watercraft were cleaned off and/or drained prior to launching into Forest Lake. It is against state law to launch a contaminated watercraft at a Minnesota lake, regardless of known current infestations of that lake.

13 watercraft required removal of the bilge drainage plug upon arriving at Forest Lake. This number was 31 in 2024, 55 in 2023, 20 in 2022, 30 in 2021, 62 in 2020, 70 in 2019, 92 in 2018, 110 in 2017, 15 in 2016, and 54 in 2015. After educating the watercraft user on the potential of AIS (e.g., microscopic zebra mussel larvae) in their bilge water, bilge plugs were removed from the watercraft and all water was drained in an area that would not flow into the lake prior to the watercraft launching.

625 watercraft exited Forest Lake with plants, animals, mud, or water present. This number was 905 in 2024, 1,209 in 2023, 757 in 2022, 727 in 2021, 1,294 in 2020, 762 in 2019, 817 in 2018, 670 in 2017, 158 in 2016, and 229 in 2015. Note that transportation of any plants or animals on watercraft, not just invasive species, is prohibited. All contaminants were removed from the watercraft and trailer before leaving Forest Lake.

Risk of New Invasive Species

75 boats launching into Forest Lake came from lakes infested with starry stonewort. This number was 37 in 2024, 29 in 2023, 38 in 2022, 42 in 2021, 27 in 2020, 18 in 2019, 53 in 2018, 12 in 2017 and 74 in 2016.

9 boats launching into Forest Lake came from lakes infested with spiny water flea. This number was 61 in 2024, 119 in 2023, 74 in 2022, 82 in 2021, 131 in 2020, 92 in 2019, 101 in 2018, 153 in 2017, and 183 in 2016.

Forest Lake Inspections and Hours Worked



Figure 14. Summary of inspections hours, number of surveys, and inspection rates since 2014 at all three Forest Lake public boat launches

Inspections	West	Central	East	Total
CLFLWD Inspection	1562	652	1254	3468
DNR Inspection	926	0	2	928
Chisago Inspection	268	17	62	347
Total Inspections	2756	669	1318	4743

Table 2. Forest Lake number of inspections

Inspection Hours	West	Central	East	Total
CLFLWD Inspection Hours	540.5	440.5	578.25	1559.25
DNR Inspection Hours	676	0	0	676
Chisago Inspection Hours	130	29	64.5	223.5
Total Inspection Hours	1346.5	469.5	642.75	2458.75

Table 3. Forest Lake inspection hours

Inspection Rate	West	Central	East	Total
CLFLWD Inspection Rate	2.89	1.48	2.17	2.18
DNR Inspection Rate	1.37	-	-	1.37
Chisago Inspection Rate	2.06	0.59	0.96	1.20
Average Inspection Rate	2.11	1.03	1.56	1.58

Table 4. Forest Lake inspection rate

Forest Lake Watercraft Contaminants and Drain Plug Violations

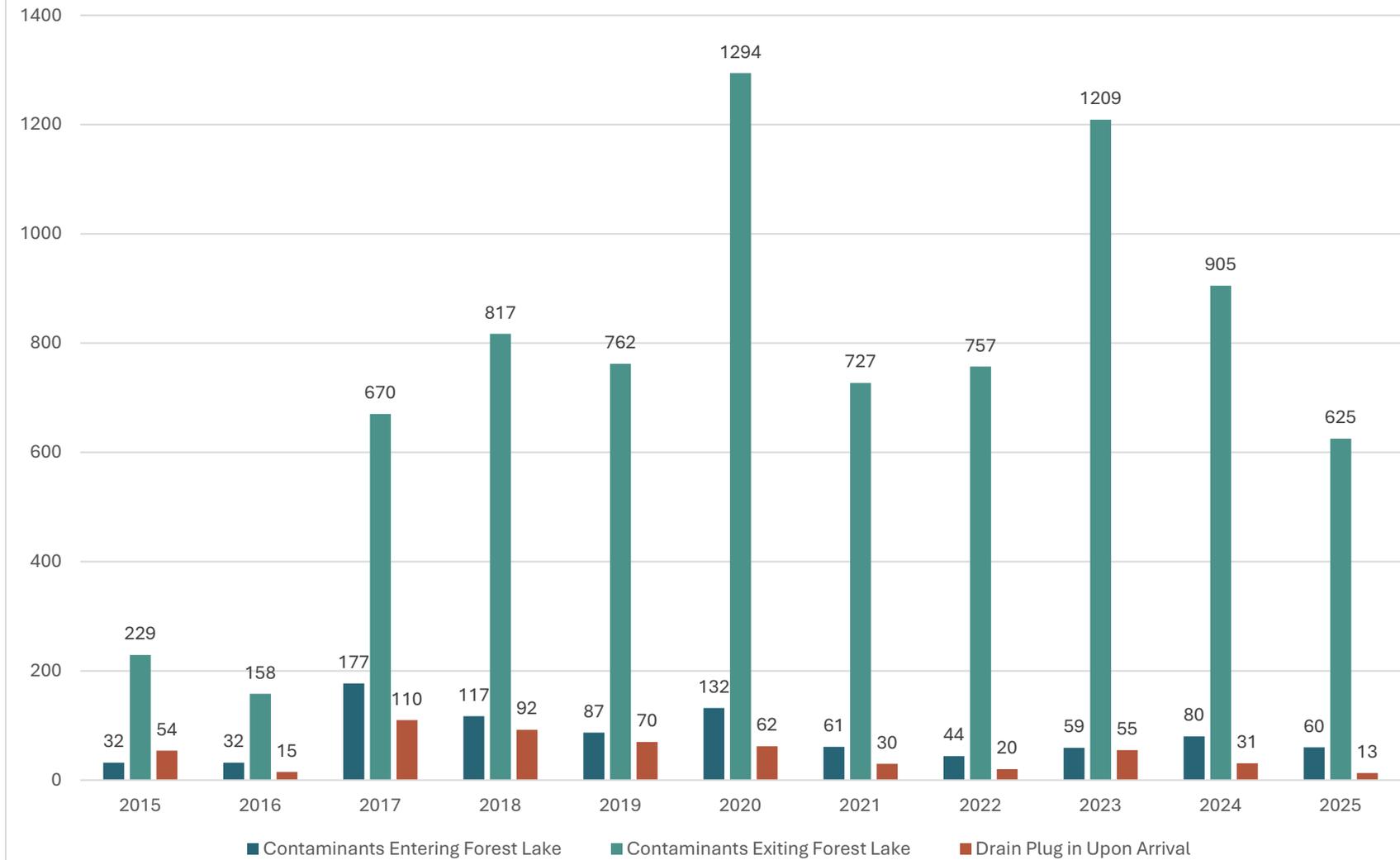


Figure 15. Forest Lake watercraft contaminants and drain plug violations as reported at Forest Lake accesses over the last ten seasons

Discussion and Conclusion

In 2025, CLFLWD, DNR, and Chisago County performed a total of 3562.75 hours of inspections across the District's five public accesses. This resulted in the completion of 102.3% of the 3,482.5-hour goal and 6,053 inspections surveys. It is worth noting that there were slightly fewer inspections completed this year when compared to the previous 8 seasons. Several factors could have influenced this such as the ongoing road construction limiting access along North Shore Trail for two of the Forest Lake public accesses, or potentially the no-wake restrictions for Bone Lake resulting from high water levels during the peak of the 2025 watercraft inspection season. Though as we historically observed there was a large spike in public boater activity during the 2020 season and this could just be public watercraft activity naturally correcting itself to a more regular level. Even with a reduction in total inspections, the goal of 1.35 inspections per hour was met for 16 weeks during the peak of seasonal boater activity (June – August). Additionally, watercraft inspectors found 1.75% of incoming boats carrying contaminants such as water, mud, plant debris, drain plug, etc. The inspectors were able to catch 26.15% of boats leaving the access with some form of contamination.

The District started the 2025 watercraft season with 4 CLFLWD Watercraft Inspectors; 3 of these inspectors were returning from previous seasons. The District greatly values its returning inspectors and has made efforts to retain them through yearly pay raises, among the other compensation offerings available to all, which include competitive starting wages, increased holiday hourly rates, and performance bonuses. Additional inspectors were hired as the season progressed and by mid-June, we were able to provide full weekend coverage at all five of the public launches located within the District's boundaries. District inspectors worked 2,390.25 hours (67% of all hours) and performed 4,548 inspections (75% of all inspections). Furthermore, 7 of the District's 8 watercraft inspectors worked the entire length of the season contributing to a successful 2025 program.

We would also like to recognize that Chisago County provided two additional watercraft inspectors through its joint powers agreement with CLFLWD. In total, Chisago County inspectors worked 496.5 hours (14% of all hours) and performed 577 inspection surveys (10% of all inspections). These two inspectors rotated through the District's five accesses and focused their hours Monday–Thursday, while the District primarily focused its hours Friday–Sunday. The DNR also provided coverage at Forest Lake West public access providing 676 hours (19% of all hours) and conducting 928 inspections (15% of all inspections). The partnership and collaboration with both parties helps provide great coverage across the District.

Beyond inspections, District inspectors continued to emphasize the importance of education and engagement. Included in the inspector's equipment kits were lake brochures and other educational AIS handouts. Inspectors were encouraged to offer these items to interested

visitors, especially those that were new to the area or were unfamiliar with aquatic invasive species. The District continues to strive toward making each interaction a positive one. Next season, District staff will consider other educational handouts and public access amenities to maintain a positive, helpful, and educational public image.

Ultimately, the successes of this season would not be possible without the District's partners, the community, and local lake associations. Their continuous financial support and feedback are greatly appreciated and tremendously help the program continue to thrive and grow. In 2026, the District will continue to seek out enthusiastic water stewards for the watercraft inspector positions, who will best represent and serve the community to preserve the ecological health and recreational quality of the area's waterbodies.



CLFLWD WATERSHED DISTRICT

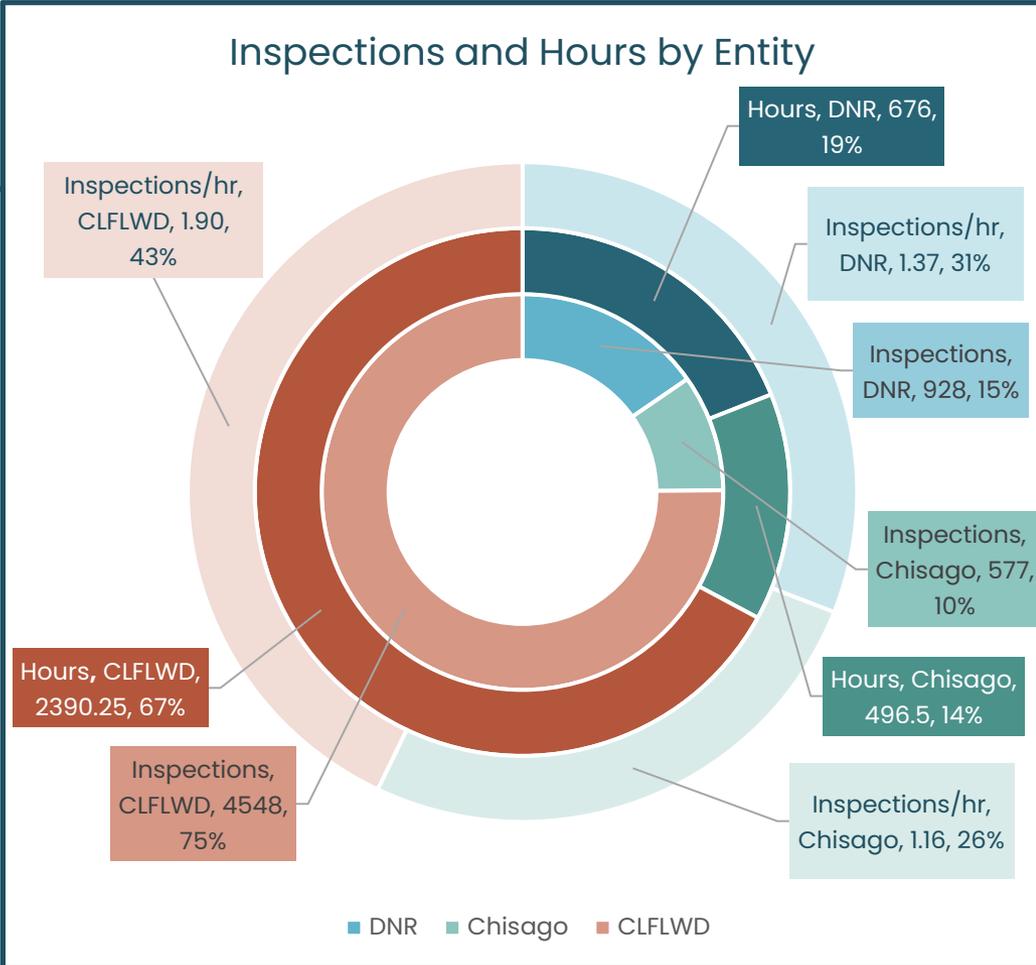
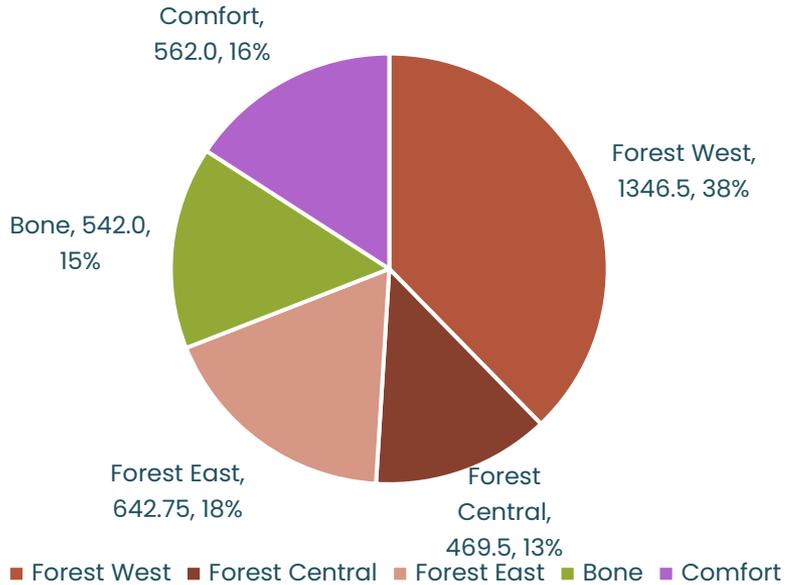
In Partnership with:



Comfort Lake—Forest Lake Watershed District 2025 Watercraft Inspections

Inspections and Hours by Entity

Inspection Hours at Each Access and Percent of Total Hours (DNR and Chisago Included)



In 2025, CLFLWD, Chisago County, and Minnesota DNR inspectors conducted **6,053 inspections** and spent a total of **3,562.75 hours** inspecting watercraft and educating boaters at the District's 5 public launches. The average inspection rate was **1.70 inspections per hour**.

2025 Watercraft Inspections

Inspectors **averaged 1.70 inspections per hour**. This is slightly below the average of 1.87 inspections per hour since 2014. See the graph below inspection, hours and rates dating back to 2014.



Spiny Water Flea
(*Bythotrephes longimanus*)
Photo from MN DNR

There were **91** arriving watercraft had previously been in 10 different lakes with **Starry Stonewort**.

Only **13** arriving watercraft had their **drain plugs in** upon arrival, 61.52% lower than 2024.

19 watercraft came from 8 different lakes infested with **Spiny Water Flea**; a 73.61% decrease from 2024.

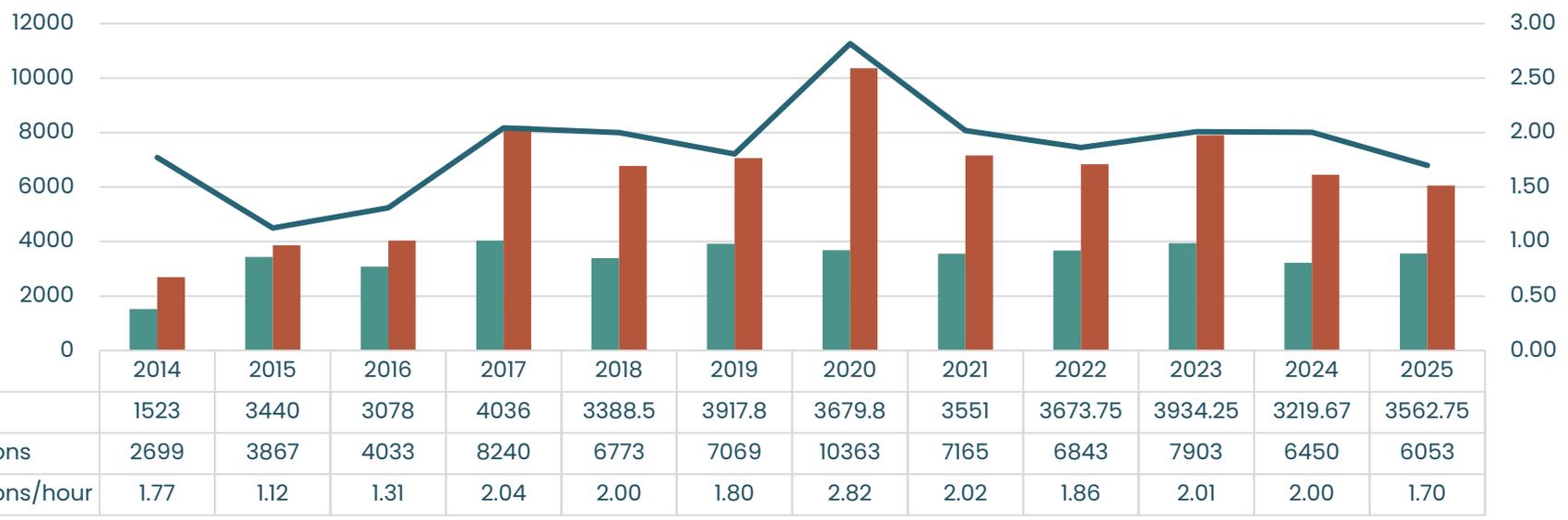


Starry Stonewort
(*Nitellopsis obtusa*)
Photo from MN DNR

Where are watercraft coming from?	
Lake Last Visited	Number of Watercraft
Coon, Anoka	89
White Bear, Ramsey	86
Big Marine, Washington	80
Green, Chisago	73
Chisago, Chisago	69
Bald Eagle, Ramsey	55
Clear, Washington	54
South Center, Chisago	49
Mille Lacs, Mille Lacs	46
Minnetonka, Hennepin	44

The total number of watercraft with **contaminants** (plants, animals, water, mud, etc.) **entering** the water was **63**; that's about 1% of the total inspections (down from 1.34% in 2024).

District Wide Inspection Hours and Number of Inspections per Season (Includes DNR and Chisago)



Hours Inspections Inspections/hour