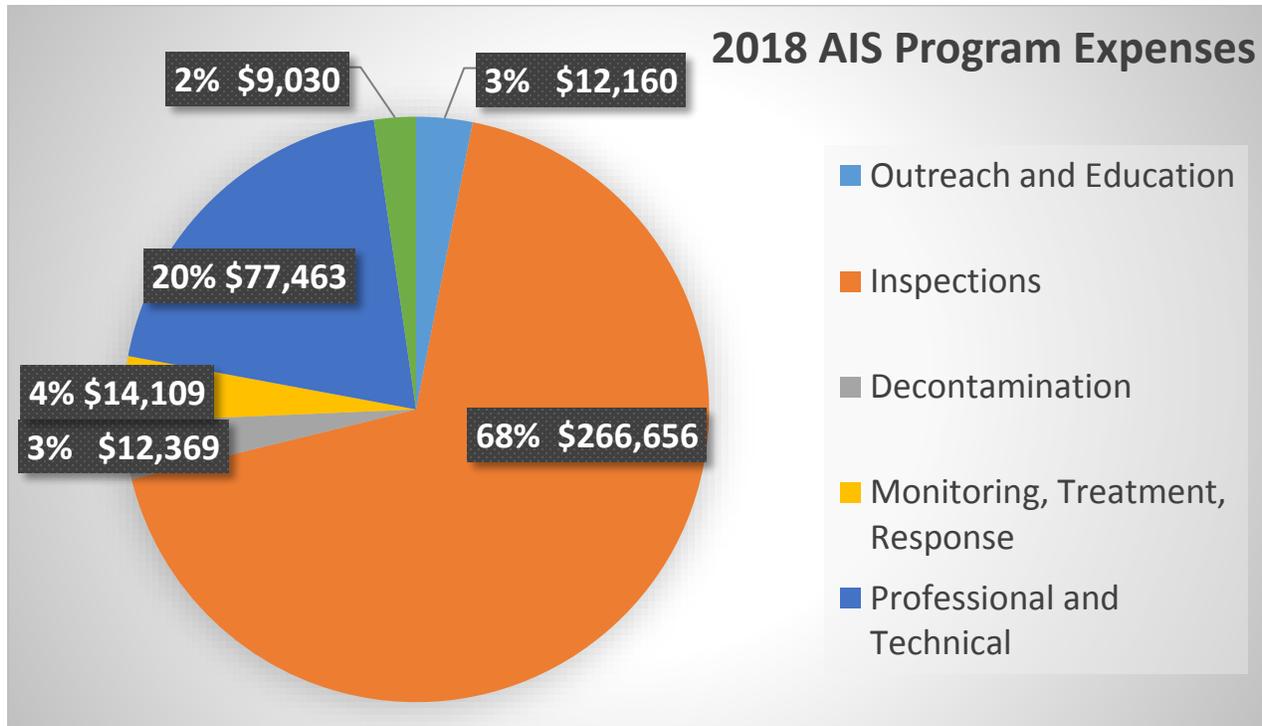


Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention

Becker Soil and Water Conservation District works with state and local partners to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species in local lakes and rivers. This work is made possible by a 2014 tax bill that provides counties with funding to administer AIS prevention programs. Becker County receives approximately \$345,000.00 annually under this legislation. These funds are used for; watercraft inspection and decontamination, outreach and education, monitoring, control grants and program administration.



Watercraft inspections are a way to prevent AIS infestations and promote awareness of this issue. Becker County watercraft inspectors completed over 25,000 inspections in 2018, with inspections taking place at 27 public access points in Becker and Mahnommen counties.

Watercraft inspectors conduct a brief survey during the inspection process. Results from this survey indicate that at least 2,000 watercraft inspected prior to launch had last been used on designated infested waters. While this represents a significant threat, fewer than 2.5% of entering watercraft were found to be transporting water, mud, or aquatic plants. A large majority of the watercraft inspected in Becker County are in compliance with state law.

Mobile watercraft decontamination is also used to reduce the risk of AIS transmission via trailered watercraft. Becker SWCD operates 4 mobile decontamination units from May through October. In 2018, 311 watercraft were decontaminated by Becker SWCD Level 2 inspectors. Decontamination services were offered at Detroit, Melissa, Sallie and Big Cormorant lakes. This service is also offered at the Becker SWCD shop location on an on-call basis.

Education and outreach are also important elements of this program. AIS prevention practices were promoted via; printed handouts, a website, a tax insert, radio and television advertising, indoor ads, and public presentations to a variety of organizations and classrooms.

AIS monitoring activities are conducted annually, and include fall zebra mussel equipment inspections, a volunteer monitoring event for starry stonewort, and monitoring of vegetation at public access sites by SWCD staff and contracted aquatic plant specialists.