

## **Funding for AIS work remains uncertain as shutdown looms**

While Gov. Dayton signed the AIS policy bill into law, the funding for increased AIS work in Minnesota remains uncertain. All finance bills were vetoed as the legislature and the Governor were unable to reach an overall budget consensus during the regular session. Gov. Dayton vetoed and returned Chapter 46, House File HF 1010, the Environment, Energy and Natural resources Finance Bill. HF 1010 funded AIS work with Environmental Trust Fund, of LCCMR money.

Gov. Dayton wrote regarding his veto, "I have concerns about using environment and natural resources trust fund dollars to fund accelerated efforts to prevent future spread of aquatic invasive species; the state needs a long-term and dedicated funding source to build lasting programs. I urge you to include my Aquatic Invasive Species funding proposal to fund these important programs." Specifically, Gov. Dayton is asking the legislature to approve the \$5 a year increase on the AIS surcharge on boat registrations.

MSRPO members and others continue to advocate for a reliable and ongoing funding source to protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers from a variety of sources, including fee increase, one time LCCMR money, or funds from the Legacy Amendment dedicated sales tax passed by voters in 2008.

The Legacy Funding Bill, SF 1363, which appropriates \$450 million in legacy funds over the next biennium ran into a road block in the House in the final hours of session. House members from both parties had hesitations with provisions that weakened the open meeting requirements of the Lessard/Sams council. SF 1363 was referred back to conference on a vote of 119 yeas to 14 nays. However, the motion was reconsidered and debate continued. The House adjourned the regular session before a final vote on the bill. No money for AIS was included in the provision.

"The decisions about how to fund AIS work are being made right now," said Jeff Forester, Executive Director of MSRPO. Concerned citizens should be writing their legislators today."

Said Barb Halbakken, Hubbard County COLA, "The legislative process is a marathon, not a sprint—we have made remarkable progress towards protecting our lakes, but we must not let up."