

Justin Swart receives award for work on aquatic invasive species prevention

The award came from the Minnesota AIS Research Center.



Justin Swart, the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention coordinator for Douglas County, was recently presented with the 2023 Individual Research Partnership Award from the [Minnesota AIS Research Center](#).

Representatives from the center honored Swart at a Douglas County Board meeting in October. He was recognized for being a leader in the effort to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species, which includes such items as implementing the county watercraft inspection program, directing AIS monitoring projects and administering county AIS control grants.

Dave Rush, [Douglas County Land and Resource Management](#) director and Swart's immediate supervisor, said during the meeting that once the state started providing funding for local jurisdictions, that helped expand the AIS program. But once a program was in place, trying to find good people to work on it and lead the program could have been challenging.

However, Douglas County was fortunate to have found Swart.

"Justin has done an exemplary job working with staff, lake associations and recreational boating users, as well as other folks in our community," said Rush, adding that it is not something Douglas County can do on its own. "It is something we have to engage in partnerships and to cooperate with other jurisdictions, counties and the state.

[Megan Weber, an educator at the Minnesota AIS Research Center and her colleague, Maddie Hayden, a research outreach specialist](#) , presented Swart with his award. Weber said that each year, the center awards people who have provided great research partnerships and who are people who have gone above and beyond to help the center reach their mission.

"And this year, Justin is receiving the individual award for doing just that," she said. "I can't think of someone who I have been able to count on more as we do things in this area."

Weber said when they host training for volunteers, Swart is the first one to make sure there is space available for them to do that. She also said when they created and now host an event for people to do organized searches for AIS, Swart has participated every single year.

He has made sure for the last seven years that the event has taken place to make sure there is a group searching Douglas County lakes.

When the research center wanted to obtain lake data from around the state, Swart was the first one to submit his information about lakes in Douglas County, Weber added.