

OPINION

OUR VIEW

County plan is right move

With concern about the spread of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota, the Koochiching County Board and county staff are on track with the development of a protection plan for Borderland waters.

Preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species in a county like Koochiching is a big task and it appears the county’s plan should be able to meet the challenge.

Implementation of the plan will be assisted by \$48,963 now and another \$108,805 in 2015. The money is a result of action by the state Legislature this year and is based on the number of boat launches in each county.

The money must be used specifically to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of invasive species at all water accesses in the county. Koochiching County contains 29 public water accesses, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Borderland lakes and rivers are clearly not immune to these threats to our native species.

Already the spiny water-flea has colonized on Rainy Lake. This most recent invader seems to affect the aquatic food chain, Kevin Peterson, DNR area fisheries supervisor told The Journal. Smelt, a nonnative species,

has been found in Rainy Lake since the early 1990s, he said. This species experienced the typical boom and bust a new species often does in a new habitat, but appears to now be maintaining at a lower level, he said.

To the east, Peterson said rusty crayfish have been found in Sand Point Lake and are abundant in Lake Vermilion, consuming aquatic plants that provide habitat for native fish and wildlife. To the west, zebra mussels have been found in the very upper reaches of the Bigfork River, with the potential to eventually make their way to the Rainy River and onto Lake of the Woods.

Monitoring where these nonnative species are now and making plans to keep them from spreading to nearby waters is important for a variety of reasons. We who live here value native fish, wildlife, and plant populations and many of us work hard to maintain and even improve them for our recreational enjoyment as well as the economic boost it brings by drawing visitors to Borderland.

County commissioners and staff involved in developing and now implementing the plan deserve kudos, as do Minnesota lawmakers who saw the wisdom in providing money to counties for local efforts.

How to contact your lawmakers

FEDERAL OFFICES

President Barack Obama
 Democrat
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
 Washington, D.C., 20500
 202-456-1111
 Website:
 www.whitehouse.gov
 E-mail:
 president@whitehouse.gov

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan
 2447 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington DC 20515
 202-225-6211
 Website: www.nolan.house.gov
 Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
 Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Duluth Office of Congressman Rick Nolan
 11 East Superior Street
 Suite 125
 Duluth, MN 55802
 Phone: 218-464-5095
 Fax: 218-464-5098

Brainerd Office of Congressman Rick Nolan
 Brainerd City Hall
 501 Laurel Street
 Brainerd, MN 56401
 218-454-4078

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar
 Democrat
 302 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510
 202-224-3244

Minnesota Office:
 1200 Washington Avenue

South, Suite 250
 Minneapolis, MN 55415
 612-727-5220
 Website:
 www.klobuchar.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Al Franken
 Democrat
 Senate Hart Building 320
 Washington DC 20510
 202-224-5641
 Website:
 www.alfranken.com
 E-Mail:
 info@franken.senate.gov

STATE OFFICES

Gov. Mark Dayton
 130 State Capitol
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN, 55155
 800-657-3717
 E-mail:
 Mark.Dayton@state.mn.us

Rep. David Dill
 571 State Office Building
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 651-296-2190
 800-339-0466
 rep.david.dill@house.mn
 Assistant: Joan Harrison

Sen. Tom Bakk
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 Capitol, Room 226
 St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
 Capitol Office phone:
 (651) 296-8881
 Email:
 www.senate.mn/
 senatorbakkemail

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GUEST COLUMN

People of St. Thomas and St. Columban respond to a pressing papal call to evangelize

BY MARGE VEEDER

In a local, focused and powerful response to Pope Francis’ call to evangelize, parishioners at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and St. Columban Parish ushered in the Advent season with a Parish Mission conducted on Dec. 3, 4, and 5 within the Rainy River rock walls of the International Falls church.

Approximately 350 people attended the three-day event which culminated in a Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul Sirba of the Diocese of Duluth on Friday night. The mission, the first of its kind to be conducted at St. Thomas in more than a decade, was organized and led by the parish pastor, Father Ben Hadrich.

David Walsh, director of Evangelization and Formation for St. Anthony Parish in Ely, was the speaker for the Wednesday night session. In a talk directed primarily to the junior and senior high students from the parishes’ Faith Formation program and their parents, Walsh related the spiritual journey which led him from his Australian home to both the U.S. and to several leadership roles in the Duluth diocese.

“The reason that we’re here is because of the people through the centuries who said, “Yes,” to God’s call,” Walsh noted, in remarks which served as an apt lead-in to a commemoration of the pivotal affirmation of Jesus’ mother, Mary, in the Feast of the Immaculate Conception which would follow five days later.

Walsh emphasized for

those present the importance of asking questions of God in an attempt to get to know Him better. He invited the young people to consider the 73 books of the Bible as 73 extensive and well-written Facebook pages which not only profile God in the Holy Trinity, but also underscore how it is that He wants us to act as His followers.

Featured speaker for the second evening was Father Brandon Moravitz of Holy Spirit Parish in Virginia. The native Minnesotan summoned the image of the hunter and characterized people in the larger society as continually and unsuccessfully searching for satisfaction and sustenance. That need, Father Brandon said, is to be met only in Jesus Christ.

Moravitz also spoke about the difference between “fun” and “happiness” – a distinction which he said is largely missing in the world at large. Though it is easy to seek out and experience fun activities, only those which

lead to a deeper connection with God and His people will lead to happiness, he remarked.

Kevin Pilon of St. John the Evangelist Parish of Duluth led praise and worship in the form of music for the Thursday night session.

“On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.... nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation.”

Pope Francis
 “Evangelii Gaudium”

Francis Parish in Brainerd, led a brief discussion about how best to prepare for the Sacrament and what to expect in the Confessional.

Assisting Father Hadrich as visiting confessors for Wednesday and Thursday were Father Steve Daigle, of Holy Rosary, Aurora; Father Drew Braun, St. Mary’s Parish, Cook; Father Victor de Gagne, St.

Mary’s, Fort Frances; and Father Rozier and Father Moravitz.

Father Hadrich and Deacon Fran Zaren joined Bishop Sirba at the altar in the Mass on Friday night. In his homily, Bishop Sirba underscored the significance of the Eucharist as central to the life of a parish – and to the life of a Christian. In addition, he offered the full resources of the diocese to the parish, and especially to the young people, as they seek to learn about and to share the Gospel of Our Lord.

This past summer, Father Ben Hadrich was named as the pastor of St. Thomas and St. Columban Parishes in International Falls and Littlefork, respectively. Father Hadrich is a native of McGregor, MN, who most recently served as assistant pastor at St. John’s in Duluth.

Father Ben noted that the attendance and the enthusiasm expressed and generated during this first mission vastly exceeded his expectations. “I am both thrilled and humbled to see the work which is moving forward in the parish and in northern Minnesota,” he added. In thanking those who assisted in working for the success of the mission, and in recognizing their wonderful work, he said he was most conscious of their shared limitations in accomplishing their objectives. “This is Jesus,” he stated.

Veeder is a Faith Formation teacher at St. Thomas Aquinas, a member of the parish’s Worship Commission and a former Journal staff writer.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

City charter clear on how to move forward

To the editor,

This North Koochiching Area Sanitary Sewer Board conflict is the exact reason why the people elected Bob Anderson as mayor to put a stop to this political favoritism that’s been going on for way too many years in International Falls.

The majority of taxpayers and voters have had enough. Reappointing of Tom Worth, that’s fine; Brian McBride, that’s conflict of interest with his brother, Tim McBride, as executive director, which is highly

debatable how he got that job in the first place.

And for Pete Kalar, city councilor, to make the statement that he would vote no to any other persons for that position without knowing who else is seeking to fill those openings — he is guilty of political gamesmanship. And if that’s how he makes his decisions as a city councilor, then maybe he should think why he’s there.

You see, there’s certain individuals who know they’re losing their reign

of tyranny in International Falls and they don’t like it.

Read International Falls Charter Section 17, then judge for yourself who is right and who is wrong on many things that have taken place in International Falls.

No. 1, how certain individuals got the jobs that they hold now. (Charter Section 17 City Contracts). No officer of said city shall, during his term of office, be or become in any manner interested in any contract in behalf of the city or any

department thereof, with himself or with any firm of which he is a member, or with any association or corporation of which he may be an officer, and any such contract shall be absolutely void, and such officer shall forfeit such office so held by him and thereafter disqualified from holding any office in said city.

This is what they don’t want you to know. How’s that saying go? One person can make a difference.

Darren Wallen International Falls, MN