

Emerging Issue: Migrating Species Affected by Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

Several LCCMR members have expressed interest in whether there are things that could be done in Minnesota to help mitigate the effects on migrating species of the Gulf oil spill – a threat that has emerged after the most recent LCCMR proposal due date passed. As occurred when Emerald Ash Borer was discovered in Minnesota after the LCCMR proposal due date in 2009, one possibility would be to set some money aside for the time being and have staff bring a panel before the Commission this Fall to educate about the issue and then, if the Commission is interested, possibly request some sort of targeted proposal addressing the issue for the Commission to consider before it sends its final recommendations to the 2011 Legislature.

Staff made some informal inquiries regarding what sorts of things might be done in Minnesota to help mitigate the effects of the Gulf oil spill on migrating species. These inquiries were very brief and preliminary, but the consensus was that there are some strategic efforts where investment would provide benefit. Just a few ideas/examples mentioned during those conversations are below, but a presentation to the Commission would be recommended in order to understand the full scope of possibilities.

- Focus should be on increasing/benefitting breeding success in Minnesota of affected migrating species. Larger populations will be more resilient to the effects of the spill.
- Loons
 - Currently work being done on loon tracking in Wisconsin. Additional funds could increase the sample size of birds being tracked (requires investment of approximately \$3,500/loon to be tracked).
 - Loon breeding platforms (cost about \$200 each to build)
 - Manage lake to benefit and protect loon populations
- Habitat
 - See what species are being most affected during 2010-2011 winter and make some strategic habitat investments specifically to benefit those species.