



Environmental Quality Council Aquatic Invasive Species Update 9/8/2022

Watercraft Inspection

- 17 FWP and contracted watercraft inspection stations in operation state-wide.
- Over 85,000 inspections so far this year. (Numbers behind observations from 2020 and 2021).
- 44 mussel fouled boats intercepted (8/22). (61 intercepted in 2021).
 - Over 300 found transporting aquatic weeds.
- Continued partnerships contracting with local entities for management of watercraft inspection stations including CSKT, the Blackfeet Nation, Missoula County and Conservation Districts.
 - New contracted partners to operate inspection stations in 2022 include the Beaverhead, Bighorn and Powder River Conservation Districts.
 - FWP provides training, protocols and QA/QC and partners manage day-to-day operation, staff management and station oversight.
 - Partners also bring local resources to support the effort including encouraging local enforcement support and local community events.
 - Currently working with additional conservation districts to take over management of more inspection stations for the 2023 season.
- FWP warden staff provided enforcement support at inspection stations to prevent drive-bys with over 170 traffic stops issuing over 70 citations.
- In the process of improving watercraft inspection stations including on-demand decontamination equipment, land-line electricity and water at selected inspection stations. (funded by appropriation and federal grants).

Early Detection

- Over 1,600 mussel early detection samples have been collected and processed at the FWP AIS Lab this year.
 - No invasive mussel detections anywhere in the state.
 - Surveys have identified new populations of AIS including NZ mudsnails and curlyleaf pondweed.
- Fisheries and AIS staff also conducted eradication treatments on Eurasian watermilfoil populations at several locations.
- Invasive clams appear to have been eradicated from Lake Elmo in Billings and no further evidence of clams has been found. FWP is currently working with Yellowstone conservation district to install an AIS cleaning station at Lake Elmo State Park.
- Also working with conservation districts, tribes and other partners to expand involvement with AIS early detection survey.

Outreach

- FWP continues a state-wide outreach campaign through newspapers, radio, social media and in-person events reinforcing the Clean Drain Dry message and the state's AIS requirements.

- Constructing an AIS education trailer (funded through a grant from Bureau of Reclamation) to help train inspectors how to decontaminate ballast boats. It will also be used at public events for AIS outreach.
- AIS staff continue to work closely with partners to engaging local businesses, attend local events and engage in local communities to expand awareness of AIS and clean drain dry.
- The program continued to work closely with tribes, conservation districts, counties NGO's and other partners to deliver the AIS message.
- Utilizing AmeriCorps and Big Sky Watershed Corps volunteers to help deliver the AIS information.

Regional

- Zebra mussels were recently detected in Pactola Reservoir in South Dakota. Population is a 200-mile jump west and puts zebra mussels 75 miles from Montana.
- The AIS program is working closely with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, Wyoming Game and Fish, US Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation to try to address this issue.
- The AIS program is evaluating adjusting station operations in 2023 to address mussel risk on watercraft coming from the Black Hills in South Dakota.
- An AIS meeting is scheduled for October 24th in Helena to discuss program progress and solicit input for planning the 2023 season.
 - The Montana Invasive Species Summit is the following two days hosted by the Montana Invasive species Council. (October 25th and 26th)
 - The Summit is followed by the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Winter Meeting on October 27th.
 - All will be held at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena. More details will be available in the coming weeks.