



## **NORTHWEST STATES FINDING PLENTY OF BOATS CONTAMINATED WITH MUSSELS AT INSPECTION SITES**

Posted on Friday, February 22, 2013 (PST)

As the known presence of nonnative quagga and zebra spread west, most notably to the Southwest, and then started to creep north, officials in the Pacific Northwest got busy developing invasion prevention plans and actions, as well as strategies to attack the unwelcome little creatures if discovered in the region.

“This is the last major river system in the United States without them,” Allen Pleus, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said of the Columbia-Snake system.

The threat is real, as evidenced by the detection of invasive mussels found taking a ride from state to state aboard trailered water craft.

In 2012, fifty-one of 4,675 watercraft inspected at Oregon stations were found to be contaminated with aquatic invasive species; 32 had plant material (i.e. Eurasian watermilfoil) or other non-native organisms (e.g. snails, saltwater mussels). Eighteen were contaminated with either quagga or zebra mussels. All boats were decontaminated at the inspection sites.

“Boat inspections work,” said Rick Boatner, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Invasive Species, Wildlife Integrity coordinator. “But just as important is educating boat owners about how to inspect their own boats. Prevention is the only way to keep aquatic invasive species out of Oregon’s waters. Once invasive species are introduced and established there may be very little that can be done. It will affect how all Oregonians use our water resources.”

Quaggas, which first landed on U.S. soil in the 1980s in the Midwest-Great Lakes region, are native to eastern Europe. They have since found their way west, most notably to Arizona’s Lake Mead and other Southwest reservoirs and rivers. In the East, Midwest and Southwest, their rapid growth, and affectation for metal and concrete structures that make up water transmission infrastructure, has served to clog the works and cause millions of dollars of remedial action.

But the water sensitive Northwest has yet to be invaded. And state officials would like to keep it that way.

All four Northwest states have stepped up boat inspection efforts in recent years with what appears to be a growing threat of quagga/zebra invasion.

In 2012, Idaho’s Department of Agriculture directed a boat inspection program that resulted in the interception at 15 inspection stations of 35 trailered boats that were invasive mussel infested. Another 22 fouled boats were identified at other sites, including 18 at three ports of entry.

In all, 42,348 boat inspections were logged by Idaho officials during 2012.

A total of 40 mussel “interceptions” were made at Washington locations in 2012. Of that total 27 involved contamination of homeward-bound pontoons used by a Washington-based company during a construction project at Lake Mead.

Sgt. Carl Kline of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said that Northwest states works together to keep track of infested boats, and try to avoid overlap in enforcement. Idaho and Montana, as an example, pass contaminated boats through that are destined for Washington addresses. Meanwhile, other states’ officials are notified of such approaching threats so the watercraft can be stopped and treated before they are launched again.

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks crews inspected over 25,000 watercraft during the 2012 boating season, which is an almost threefold increase from 2011 due in large part to increased funding and staffing. The

majority of Montana stations in 2012 operated for a 16-week period between May 14 and Labor Day

About 20 percent of the boats inspected originated out-of-state and 3 percent of the boats had been in states with high-risk waters (where zebra or quagga mussels have been confirmed). Water users came from all over North America to recreate in Montana waters.

Inspection crews intercepted many boats fouled with vegetation (n=69) or standing water (n=37), as well as four boats with (dead) Dreissenid mussels (zebra or quagga), four boaters with illegal live bait, two cases of illegal live fish, and one boat contaminated with New Zealand mudsnails.

According to the MFW&P, 97 percent of boats in 2012 were clean upon their arrival at an inspection station, and 49 percent of interviewed boaters reported cleaning their watercraft after every use or between waterbodies.

The Montana boat inspection program continues to grow thanks to a significant boost in funding received during the 2011 Legislature and close coordination with partner agencies and organizations such as the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, which also chip in funding. MFWP has been operating watercraft inspection stations since 2004.

The aquatic invasive species boat inspection station at the southwest Oregon's Ashland Port of Entry opened Feb. 11 for the new boating season. Stations in on the southern Oregon coast at Gold Beach, just north of the California border at Klamath Falls and Lakeview and Ontario in eastern Oregon will open in the coming months.

All vehicles carrying motorized or non-motorized boats (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, sailboats, etc.) are required to stop, Oregon law says. Motorists are alerted to inspections stations by orange "Boat Inspection Ahead" signs followed by a white "Inspection Required for All Watercraft" sign. Failure to stop at an inspection station could result in a \$110 fine.

Oregon inspections usually take less than 10 minutes if boats are free of aquatic invasive species. If a boat is found to be contaminated with species such as quagga or zebra mussels, it will be decontaminated on site by the watercraft inspection team with a hot water pressure washer. There is no penalty or cost for the boat owner if their boat is found to be contaminated with invasive species.

Inspection stations are operated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at Port of Entries, highway rest stops and boat ramps across the state.

Locations of watercraft inspection stations in Oregon include:

Ashland I-5, Ashland Port of Entry: Open this year from Feb. 11-Oct. 1.

Gold Beach Highway 101: July 8-Oct. 1

Klamath Falls Highway 97 at Midland Rest Area: May 1-Sept. 15.

Lakeview Highway 395 south of Lakeview: May 1-Sept. 15.

Ontario Interstate 84 and Highway. 20 at Ontario Rest Area: May 1-Oct. 1.

The 2013 watercraft inspections have changed from last year. ODFW will relocate two of the watercraft inspection teams (Hines and La Grande to Lakeview and Ontario) to better protect Oregon's southern and eastern borders. Additionally, ODFW plans to add one watercraft inspection team to Gold Beach and add extra inspectors at the Ashland inspection station.

Watercraft from 37 different states and two provinces were inspected, including 58 percent from Oregon, 17 percent from California, 10 percent from Washington and 7 percent from Idaho. The remaining 8 percent were from 33 other states, British Columbia and Alberta, according to "Oregon's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program 2012 Program Report."

Additional information about the Oregon program is available in the 2012 Oregon Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program Annual Report:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy/invasive\\_species/docs/AISPP\\_2012\\_Annual\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy/invasive_species/docs/AISPP_2012_Annual_Report_Final.pdf)

Oregon's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program is self-supporting, based on the sales of required Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permits. The Oregon Legislature in 2009 created program and permit system.

ODFW and Oregon State Marine Board, which co-manage the program, participated in 19 public events such as sportsman's and boater's shows, fishing derby and the state fair to spread the word about the nonnative mussel threat and efforts to prevent an invasion. The two state agencies also sponsored 33 trainings or presentations for fishing groups, agency staff, concerned citizens and school groups.

Revenue generated from AIS Prevention Permit totaled \$731,474 in 2012, funding three full-time positions, nine seasonal or part-time positions and partial funding for one ODFW Invasive Species coordinator and one OSMB accounting technician. State, county and local law enforcement agents issued 877 warnings and 367 citations related to AIS violations.

