



Aquatic Invasive Species Newsletter

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August / September 2020

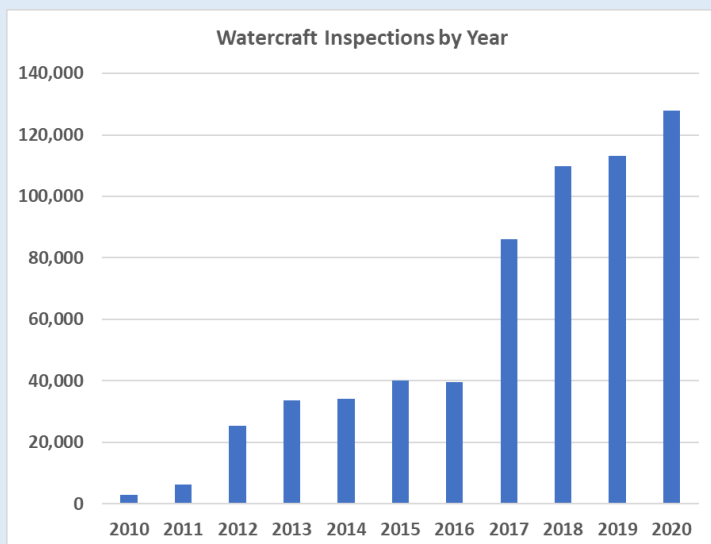
Note from the AIS Bureau:

This season was crazy in many ways. COVID-19 protocols, record boat traffic, heat, collisions, lightning strikes, smoke, ticks, and snake infested boats. Despite all these issues, AIS staff and partners had the most successful season ever. Around the state, more people are more effectively working on AIS prevention, early detection, and outreach than ever before. Thank you for all you do to help protect our waters.

Watercraft Inspection

Many watercraft inspection stations are now closed, but some continue to operate in areas that see late-season high-risk boat traffic. See watercraft inspection schedules at www.CleanDrainDryMT.com

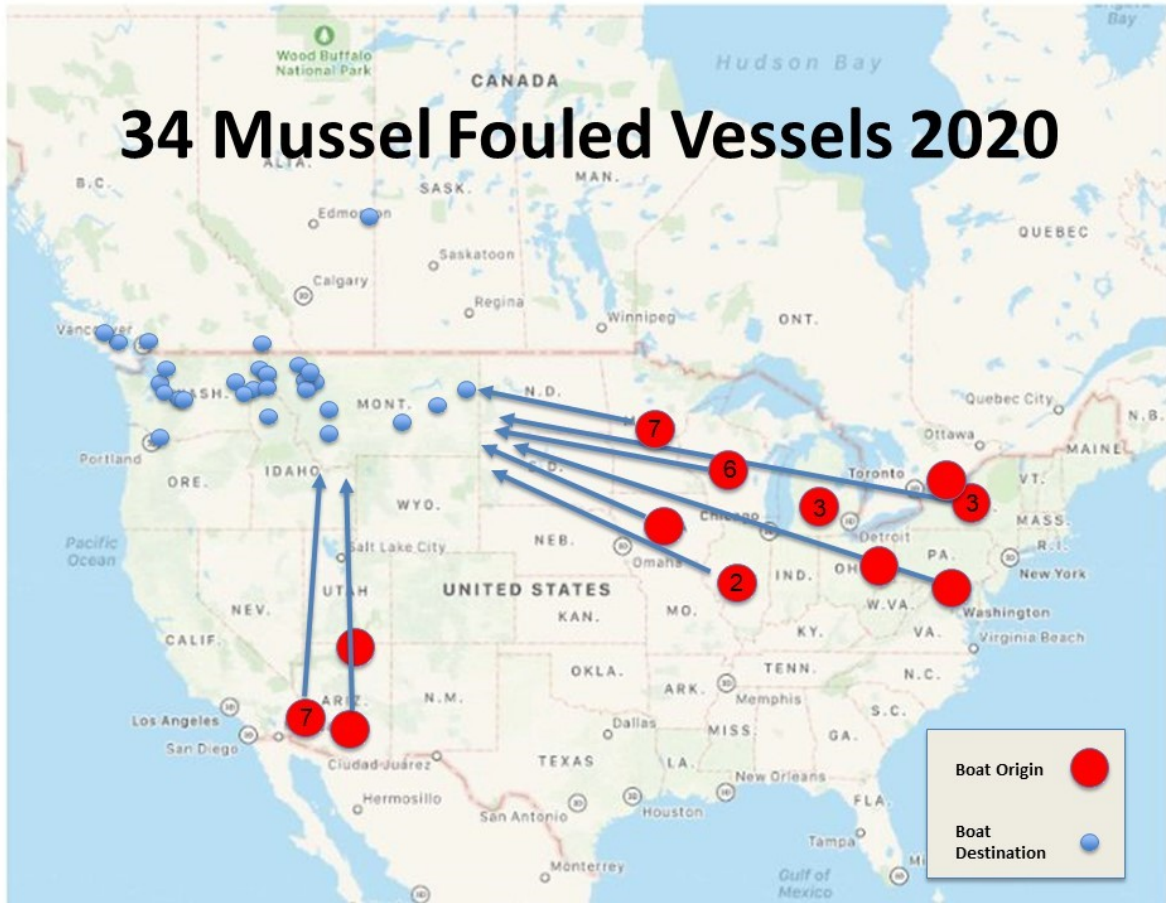
A record number of watercraft have been inspect this season with over 132,000 inspections and high levels of out of state boat traffic. Watercraft inspection data is available on the [AIS Inspection Dashboard](#).



Mussel fouled PWC at the Flowing Wells station

Mussel Fouled Vessels: A total of 34 mussel fouled vessels have been intercepted at the Anaconda, Dillon, Flowing Wells, Hardin, Wibaux, and Nashua watercraft inspection stations this season. The latest vessel was a large sailboat traveling from Lake Erie to Coeur d’Alene Lake that stopped at the Hardin station. Inspectors decontaminated the exterior when live mussels were found on the hull and rudder. Montana notified AIS officials in Idaho for a follow up inspection. Idaho did a thorough check of the interior compartments and found more mussels. The vessel is currently undergoing a 30-day out of water dry time.

34 Mussel Fouled Vessels 2020



Mussel fouled vessel #34 from Lake Erie intercepted at the Hardin inspection station

City of Whitefish and the Whitefish Lake Institute:

By Mike Koopal, Executive Director, Whitefish Lake Institute and John Muhlfeld, Mayor, City of Whitefish

We thank our state agency partners for their support in leveraging local efforts to enhance our collective fight against AIS.

In 2020, the Whitefish Lake Institute (WLI) was awarded a Montana DNRC AIS grant for infrastructure improvements for a watercraft decontamination station on City of Whitefish property near Whitefish Lake. Montana FWP then provided a mobile building to house the decontamination unit and associated equipment. Now, there's an additional decontamination station to service the Montana boating public.

Montana FWP, WLI and the City of Whitefish have also teamed to manage the Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) infestation at Beaver Lake. As part of that effort, divers use a suction dredge to remove clusters of plants. In 2020, WLI donated the suction dredge unit to Montana FWP so that the equipment could support management options in other Montana waterbodies.



FWP Enforcement: Enforcement has focused AIS efforts at high priority areas during the 2020 season. More than 270 citation and 300 written warning have been issued and drive by rates have significantly improved because of Enforcement presence.

Early Detection Monitoring

- FWP AIS Monitoring Technicians are still sampling for all AIS species across the state. As we enter October, temperatures will continue to drop and sampling will come to an end. If the current weather trend holds crews may be able to sample through most of October.
- The FWP AIS lab has currently processed 1,428 of 2,426 (59%) plankton samples from Montana to be tested for invasive mussel veligers. No veligers have been detected in Montana water samples to date this year.
- Tiber Reservoir Updates - Good news so far for Tiber Reservoir this year! No efforts have turned up new finds of invasive mussels.
 - Sept. 28-29 FWP monitoring crews conducted surveys with the use of a benthic sled. A benthic sled contains a fine-mesh net that allows fine silts to exit the net while collecting any object larger than 1/8 inch. No invasive mussels were found during this effort though many native pea clams were collected.
 - Sept. 30 detection dogs Ismay and Rosebud from Montana Black Dog Services LLC. spent the day searching for adult invasive mussels on the exposed shore of the drawdown area of the reservoir. Seven recreation sites were searched with no mussels found.
 - Over 100 plankton samples have been collected and none have shown evidence of invasive mussel veligers.

- During the week of Sept. 8, Flathead Lake Biological Station, Bureau of Reclamation, and FWP collected a second round of eDNA samples on the reservoir. Those results are still being processed.
- FWP and USFWS dive teams will be at Tiber Reservoir Oct 12-14 to continue their search for adult dreissenid mussels in the reservoir. The USFWS dive team has completed these dives since 2016 with the first detection of invasive mussel veligers in the fall.
- Monitoring staff spent Sept. 14-15 surveying Asian clam distributions on Lake Elmo in Billings. With the use of a benthic sled, staff dredged over 20 transects of about 500 feet in length. Results found about 10 live adult clams. While fewer were found than expected, the population is clearly surviving and indicates clams of reproductive age. An environmental assessment examining a potential drawdown is currently being developed with the potential complete lake drawdown occurring during the fall of 2021.
- Monitoring staff completed all AIS sampling for all federal, state, and commercial hatcheries. All hatcheries passed their inspections with the exception of Bluewater Fish Hatchery operated by FWP.
 - New Zealand Mudsnails were found at the FWP Bluewater Fish Hatchery near Bridger. These invasive snails were found during the annual AIS inspections that occur at each hatchery in the state. In mid-September FWP Hatchery and AIS staff spent several days decontaminating the hatchery following the complete draining of the facility. Decontamination included the removal of all sediment and vegetation, heating all water holding surfaces with at least 140-degree water, and steam jet cleaning of all pipes. The hatchery is currently under a 30-day dry time.
 - Bitterroot Fish Hatchery, a commercial hatchery in the Bitterroot valley, passed its 9-month inspection after it was decontaminated for New Zealand Mudsnails in November 2019. It appears the decontamination and subsequent dry time successfully eradicated the snails from the hatchery.



FWP AIS staff decontaminating the Bluewater Fish Hatchery

Outreach & Education

SAVE THE DATES!

The 2020 Montana AIS Summit will be held November 18. Prior to the Summit partners will receive information related to the 2020 AIS season and plans for the 2021 season. Watch for more information and how to register.

FWP is teaming up with the [Invasive Species Action Network \(ISAN\)](#) and Matt Wilhelm to provide a virtual AIS activity training on October 28. Since meeting in-person isn't possible the training will take place live via zoom. Natural resource educators, Conservation Districts, NGO's and other who want to learn how to share AIS lessons with youth (or adults) are welcome to join the training. Watch for more details coming soon.



Meet the AIS Staff

Watercraft inspection stations have seen the busiest year ever which means Tayler Templin has been putting on a lot of road miles. Tayler is FWP's new Western Montana Roving Site Lead and travels between watercraft inspection station at Anaconda, Clearwater Junction, Dillon, Ravalli, St. Regis, Sula, and Thompson Falls. Tayler says the best part of her job is seeing a boat owner come into an inspection station unsure about the program or what exactly it is we do and giving them an experience where they leave confident in our work and what the program is doing to help protect Montana's water.

Tayler shared an interesting experience she had with a boat owner. *"The boat owner was removing the cover on their boat so I could inspect the live well. As they were removing the cover, they were telling me about how excited they were to get out and finally enjoy a week at the lake. Little did the boat owner know that their house cat decided to hitch a ride in the boat and was going camping for the week!"*



Tayler Templin

When Tayler isn't working for FWP you can find her behind her camera taking wildlife and landscape photos or working at the Missoula International Airport.

Events

- Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Meeting: Nov. 4^t virtual meeting. [UC3](#)
- Columbia Basin Team AIS Meeting: Dec 2-3^d virtual meeting. [CRB Meeting](#)
- Annual North American Lake Management Society Meeting: Nov. 16-20 virtual meeting. [NALMS](#)
- Montana AIS Summit: Nov. 18 virtual meeting. More info TBA.

In the News

- 30 mussel fouled vessels intercepted in Montana this season: [30 mussel boats](#)
- Montana hunters: Help prevent the spread of AIS: [Clean Drain Dry](#)
- Kayak found with mussel at Nashua inspection station: [Mussel found on Kayak](#)
- New Zealand mudsnails identified at Bluewater state fish hatchery: [Mudsnails](#)
- New mussel populations identified in South Dakota: [New Mussel Waters](#)
- An additional South Dakota lake identified in August: [Lake Kampeska](#)
- Used boats transport mussels in Arizona: [Quagga mussel boats](#)
- Progress in Minnesota on invasive species: [AIS treatment and prevention](#)
- Check docks and boat lifts for AIS: [MN asks for help detecting mussels](#)
- Idaho Fish and Game removes invasive goldfish: [Pond treated](#)
- AIS grants now available: [Montana AIS Grant Program](#)
- FWP AIS Dive team was in the news [Dive Team Created to Fight AIS](#)



Montana's AIS Dive Team doing control work at Beaver Lake