



REPORT SHOWS NORTHWEST WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS IN 2020 INTERCEPTED 107 MUSSEL-FOULED BOATS, UP FROM 2019

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A draft report by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission shows that funding for watercraft inspection stations in the four Northwest states in 2020 remained nearly the same as levels spent in 2019. However, interceptions of small watercraft infested with zebra or quagga mussels at the states' borders rose by 15 percent.

This is the fourth year that Northwest states and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have shared the costs of inspection stations at borders to stop the

spread of the invasive mussels into the Columbia River basin. PSMFC distributed some \$10 million for the Corps to the states.

“The four states did an exceptional job last year in executing their programs, especially considering COVID-19 and wildfire challenges,” said Stephen Phillips, senior program manager at PSMFC. “Watercraft inspections and interceptions of fouled watercraft have more than doubled since the program inception in 2017. We are still ‘dreissenid-free’ in the four-state Columbia River Basin Region. The USACE has been a very good partner.”

The draft “Annual Overview for the 2020 USACE “WRRDA” Cost-Share Watercraft Inspection Program in the States of Oregon, Washington Idaho and Montana,” is a report by the PSMFC that it has been released each year since 2017 when federal funding became available for border inspection stations to help stop the spread of the mussels. The report is largely made up of reports by the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana and compiled with an introduction and summary by Phillips.

As a non-federal sponsor, PSMFC was charged in 2017 with distributing the Corps’ allocation of the funds to the four states, while also ensuring a one to one cost-share with each of the states. The two chunks of money – the Corps’ allocation and a match from each of the states – funds the 4-state watercraft inspection station programs. PSMFC’s administrative cost is less than 1 percent of the total.

The PSMFC’s cooperative agreement with the Corps’ Walla Walla District was effective April 4, 2017. That agreement designated the PSMFC a “non-federal sponsor” to represent the four Columbia River Basin states, according to the report.

Invasive mussels are estimated to annually cause more than \$1 billion in economic impacts and management costs, the report says. Interior invested \$56 million in invasive species management in the Western states from Fiscal Year 2017 through Fiscal Year 2020, which was an increase of \$27 million compared to the previous four years.

In 2020, the PSMFC administered \$5,013,924 in watercraft inspection station funding, which was matched one to one with federal dollars for a project total of \$10,027,848. Of the \$10 million cost, the states paid:

- Idaho State Department of Agriculture: \$ 1,910,711.50 (\$1,543,164 in 2019)
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: \$ 600,000 (\$350,000 in 2019)
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: \$489,570 (\$609,054 in 2019)
- Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks: \$1,968,084 (\$1,999,979 in 2019)
- PSMFC (program management and administration): \$45,558 (\$43,640 in 2019)

Funding for the stations by the Corps began in fiscal year 2016 when the agency budgeted \$4 million, but it was in 2017 that the Corps and states began a cost-sharing arrangement with each paying half. The 2017 Corps budget again was \$4 million, but the agency added \$1 million for monitoring. The level of funding rose in 2018 and 2019 to \$5 million and \$1 million for monitoring, but in 2020 the Corps budgeted some \$15 million for inspections and \$3 million for monitoring.

While that has been the Corps' budgeted levels, the actual spending to support state watercraft inspections stations in 2020 totaled \$10,027,848 and just half of that was from Corps funding.

Funding in 2019 from both the Corps and the four states totaled \$9,191,674, with the PSMFC administering federal funding for watercraft inspection stations in the states in the amount of \$4,595,837.

In 2018 funding was \$8.2 million. The Corps contributed \$4.1 million and states matched that with another \$4.1 million.

In 2017, the total cost of the inspections was \$7.4 million of which \$3.7 million was contributed by the Corps.

Although interceptions of watercraft infested with mussels rose by 15 percent overall, two of the states actually recorded fewer interceptions in 2020 than in 2019.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, in its 2020 report, says the state completed 23,040 watercraft inspections. Watercraft inspected included boats from nearly every US state and four Canadian provinces, Mexico, Australia and Cayman Islands, it said. During the year, the state intercepted 12 watercraft with mussels, down from last year's total of 16.

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture in its report says that 2020 was the 12th season for 17 watercraft inspection stations and three boat launches in Idaho. Inspections during the year totaled 134,699 at 18 inspection stations. The state intercepted 35 mussel fouled watercraft in 2020, down from the 2019 intercepts of 45. The fouled watercraft intercepted were destined to various locations throughout the Pacific Northwest; 17-Idaho, 12-Washington, 2-Montana, 2-British Columbia, 1-Oregon and 1-Alberta. Idaho stations performed 55,772 hot washes and intercepted 487 watercraft with vegetation.

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks has operated watercraft inspection stations since 2005, but began expanding the number of inspection stations and inspections in 2016 after detecting invasive mussel larvae in Tiber Reservoir and a suspect detection in Canyon Ferry Reservoir, both east of the continental divide. With federal support, "FWP was able to initiate mandatory watercraft inspection operations for watercraft exiting Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs and implement mandatory inspection for watercraft entering the state and crossing into the Columbia River Basin," the Montana report says.

The number of inspections in Montana in 2006 was 1,749. That grew to 39,522 in 2016 and rose precipitously until in 2020 the number of inspections was 174,423, finding 35 zebra/quagga mussel fouled boats. That's far more than in 2019 when inspections totaled 113,168 and intercepts were 17 vessels.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, which operates inspection stations in the state, says that both inspections and detections are up. Some 32,735 inspections occurred in the state in 2020, slightly up from 32,502 inspections in 2019. In those inspections it found 25 watercraft fouled by mussels, an increase from last year's total of 16. Effort is rising in Washington, as well. Check station days, a measurement of check station availability, rose to 645 in 2020, which is up from 559 in 2019.

Over all four states in 2020, inspections totaled 365,915 with 107 intercepts. That's up from 2019's numbers when inspections totaled 289,734 with 91 intercepts.

Established in 1947 by consent of Congress, PSMFC is an interstate compact agency that helps resource agencies and the fishing industry sustainably manage Pacific Ocean resources in a five-state region. (<http://www.psmfc.org/>)

For background, see:

— CBB, November 20, 2020, “Interior Issues Report Detailing Actions ‘Safeguarding The West’ From Invasive Mussels With Focus On Columbia River Basin,” <https://www.cbbulletin.com/interior-issues-report-detailing-actions-safeguarding-the-west-from-invasive-mussels-with-focus-on-columbia-river-basin/>

— CBB, March 26, 2020, “Stopping Invasive Mussels: Watercraft Inspections Rise Across Four States; Quagga/Zebra Mussel Interceptions Drop Slightly,” <https://www.cbbulletin.com/stopping-invasive-mussels-watercraft-inspections-rise-across-four-states-quagga-zebra-mussel-interceptions-drop-slightly/>

— CBB, Oct. 10, 2019, AGENCIES, TRIBES TO HOLD FIRST ON-THE-GROUND PRACTICE EXERCISE FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO INFESTATION OF INVASIVE MUSSELS, <https://www.cbbulletin.com/agencies-tribes-to-hold-first-on-the-ground-practice-exercise-for-emergency-response-to-infestation-of-invasive-mussels/>

— CBB, March 26, 2019, “Draft Report: Watercraft Inspections For Invasive Mussels Increased By 23 Percent Last Year,” <https://www.cbbulletin.com/draft-report-watercraft-inspections-for-invasive-mussels-increased-by-23-percent-last-year/>

— CBB, January 26, 2018, “Corps/States Effort To Prohibit Invasive Mussels Saw 49 Percent Increase In Boat Interceptions,” <http://www.cbbulletin.com/440139.aspx>

— CBB, March 24, 2017, “Study: Basin Efforts To Detect Non-Native Mussels Must Increase, Improve To Prevent Costly Invasion” <http://www.cbbulletin.com/438583.aspx>

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