



AIS Prevention & Mitigation Update: A Four State Perspective

On Tuesday, September 28, 2020, western legislators, legislative staff and others convened virtually for an update on the status of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the Columbia River Region. The first virtual gathering of the CSG West *Legislative Exchange Series*, the session allowed legislators and staff to connect with topic experts and one another on this issue.

Moderated by Idaho Senator Michelle Stennett, Chair of the Legislative Council on River Governance, a panel of AIS professionals from Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington came together to discuss the latest field work and findings from this year, as well as the impact of fires and COVID-19 on their respective operations.

The panelists included:

- Lloyd Knight, Plant Industries Administrator, Idaho Department of Agriculture
- Thomas Woolf, Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau Chief, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Rick Boatner, Invasive Species Coordinator, Oregon Department of Fish and Game
- Jesse Schultz, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Invasive Species Unit

Through the presentations and insights, legislators and staff were able to gain an early preview of data and feedback useful for their upcoming legislative sessions.



A few key takeaways were:

- Idaho and Montana saw an uptick in out of state boaters and boats from the east arriving with a high count of contamination.
- Out of state boat sales into Idaho and Montana from the east are a priority issue to ensure equipment is decontaminated and clean before use in state waters.
- COVID-19 executive orders and actions have impacted AIS prevention, detection, and eradication efforts. Impacts include AIS personnel initially not designated as essential, which halted operations for a time; a shortage of vehicles across state fleets due to state vehicle occupancy limited to one person and boat occupancy to two persons; Northern Pike gill netting operations suffered with occupancy issues as a three person crew is needed for this work.
- While attention in the Columbia River is often, and understandably, focused on Quagga & Zebra Mussels and Northern Pike, other aquatic invasive species pose a clear and present threat to the basin. These include non-native predatory toads and frogs, as well as noxious weeds impacting native habitats and fisheries in the basin.

Did you miss the AIS Update Exchange? An on-demand video of the session will be available on the [CSG West website](#). Interested in additional sessions? Be sure to visit the [Legislative Exchange Series page](#) for upcoming virtual gatherings.