



# Aquatic Invasive Species Newsletter

1420 East Sixth Ave • Helena, MT 59601 • 406-444-2440 • [CleanDrainDryMT.com](http://CleanDrainDryMT.com)

## July 2020

Note from the AIS Bureau:

It's been hot! Inspection staff around the state have endured a long July with high temperatures, high boat traffic and added COVID-19 safety protocols. In spite of challenges, inspectors continue to address the public in a friendly, professional and safe manner while addressing the threat of AIS movement on watercraft.

Inspection station staff are often the only resource available to help the public when they run into trouble along remote stretches of highway. Inspectors inform the public about AIS and Clean Drain Dry, but also answer questions about the local community and where the fish are biting. Inspectors support fire prevention by looking for dragging trailer safety chains and hot failing wheel bearings. They are usually the first to call for help when they observe vehicle crashes or health emergencies. Watercraft inspectors have a difficult job that often involves more than just boats.

Thank you to all those around Montana who continue to work together to protect our waters from AIS.

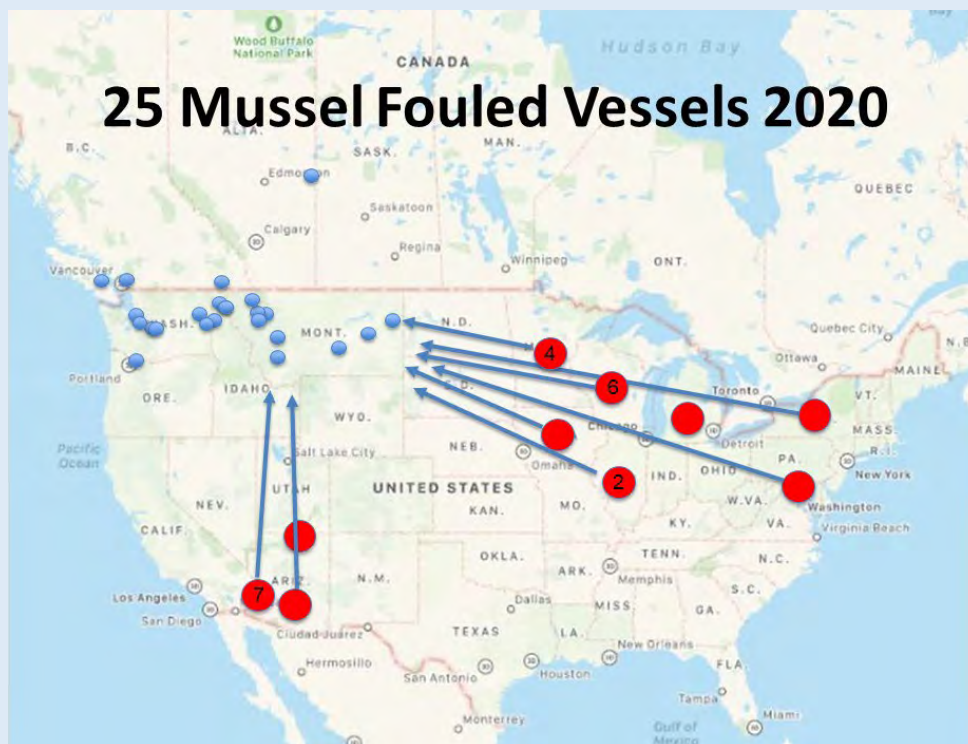
### Watercraft Inspections

All watercraft inspection stations are now open except for the Eureka station due to the ongoing border closure with Canada. Most stations are now operating during daylight hours seven days a week. Some stations will begin shutting down following the Labor Day holiday, while many will continue to operate through September and October. See watercraft inspection schedules at [www.CleanDrainDryMT.gov](http://www.CleanDrainDryMT.gov)

A record number of watercraft have been inspected this season with over 90,000 inspections and high levels of out of state boat traffic. Watercraft inspection data is available on the [AIS Dashboard](#).



**Mussel Fouled Vessels:** 25 mussel fouled vessels have been intercepted so far this season at the Anaconda, Dillon, Flowing Wells, Hardin, and Nashua watercraft inspection stations.



**Tiber Watercraft Inspection:** Watercraft inspection staff at Tiber Reservoir have a new camping area for the 2020 season. The Bureau of Reclamation provided funding to construct a camping area and an inspection station to help facilitate inspections and accommodate housing inspection staff.

Tiber is seeing record levels of boaters, with over 1,700 inspections so far this season.



*Inspection station and campground at Tiber Reservoir*

**Montana Trout Unlimited:** Continuing a program they started last year, TU recognizes AIS inspectors that have gone above and beyond to protect our waters. TU receives nominations for exceptional inspection staff and provides recognition and modest awards to encourage continued vigilance and dedication at watercraft inspection stations.

**Glacier National Park:** [Lake McDonald](#) is the only waterbody open to boating inside GNP and watercraft must be inspected at Apgar before launching. Over 300 non-motorized boats have been inspected so far this season. GNP requires a 30-day quarantine for motorboats before launching and GNP accepts inspections conducted by other Montana inspection stations.



*Parks staff hosing off a kayak at the AIS permit station in Apgar (NPS)*

**Yellowstone National Park:** [Yellowstone](#) is seeing high levels of boat traffic with park staff conducting over 1,300 inspections so far this season.

**FWP Enforcement:** Wardens have conducted over 300 traffic stops, issued over 170 citations and issued over 240 warnings so far this season. FWP wardens have increased enforcement efforts focusing on watercraft inspection stations that have a high drive-by rate.



### Early Detection Monitoring

Over 800 AIS early detection samples have been processed so far this season. No invasive mussels have been detected to date.

**Tiber Reservoir:** During the week of July 6th, FWP, Flathead Lake Biological Station and Bureau of Reclamation teamed up to sample Tiber for the presence of Dreissenid mussels. Samples for microscopy and environmental DNA (eDNA) were collected. All the microscopy samples have been processed with no mussels detected. Results from the eDNA are expected in August.



*Sampling on Tiber Reservoir July 6, 2020*

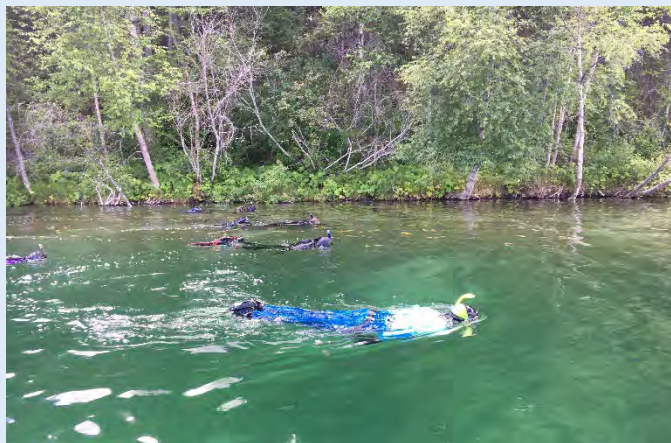
**Noxon Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM):** In early July, FWP in partnership with the Sanders County Invasive Plants Task Force, completed Eurasian watermilfoil surveys on Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs. These surveys support annual treatment of high-traffic



areas of the reservoirs where boaters are most at risk of transporting invasive plants to other waters. EWM treatment will be conducted by Sanders County in August.

**Beaver Lake:** Eradication efforts of Eurasian watermilfoil continue at Beaver Lake, near Whitefish. Crews from the FWP dive team worked on the lake in July, placing bottom barriers to prevent plant growth, removing EWM and conducting a lake-wide survey.

**Custer Gallatin National Forest:** Officials have begun work on Slip and Slide Lakes near Gardiner, including treatment of curlyleaf pondweed. The national forest has drained the upper lake and additional work will occur throughout the season.



*Beaver Lake survey for Eurasian Watermilfoil*

## Outreach and Education

**Invasive Species Action Network:** As the Education Director of [Invasive Species Action Network \(ISAN\)](#), Matt Wilhelm serves over 8,000 kids a year as a visiting educator in Montana schools focusing on angling/aquatic education programs and AIS education programs during a normal year.

Unexpectedly, Covid-19 ushered in a new normal for schools and the visiting educator. Teachers, students, and parents were thrust into a totally new way of teaching and learning.

Teachers communicated a strong need to continue these aquatic/angling/AIS lessons for kids through the “Hooked on Fishing” program made available by Montana FWP.



*ISAN Field Day: Aquatic Invasive Species*

To meet these needs, Matt and the ISAN staff developed a series of [distance learning lessons](#). Topics included riparian food webs, keystone species, AIS, zebra mussel overview, aquatic macroinvertebrates, hydrologic cycle, water distribution, and a [four-topic virtual field trip](#).

The lessons were met with great enthusiasm from teachers, students, and parents alike. Adding these fun and informative lessons with follow-up activities added to the plate of learning from home. It gave kids a chance to learn a science related topic that was slightly outside of the box compared to what is normally taught in class while still adhering to academic standards.

The videos received over 1,200 views and a lot of positive feedback. Matt plans to expand on lessons so all students across Montana will have access across the state.

**Montana Trout Unlimited:** Local chapters of [Montana TU](#) are promoting the state's AIS Campaign in a unique way. They are working with resource managers to stencil the "Clean-Drain-Dry" message on boat ramps and other structures around the state through a project funded by the DNRC AIS Grant Program.

The new Clean-Drain-Dry stencils have been painted at the Clearwater Junction inspection station and the Shannon boat ramp at Canyon Ferry.

The stencils are a reminder of the easy step boaters and anglers can take to keep AIS out of Montana. "Our stencil project will help raise awareness for this important program," Brooks said. "The more people recognize the Clean-Drain-Dry slogan, the better we will be able to protect our waterways. By cleaning, draining, and drying out your boat and gear, you can do your part to keep AIS out of Montana."



*Preparing the stencil at Clearwater Junction Station*



*The stencil at Shannon Boat Ramp*

**FWP Enforcement:** Montana wardens have done outstanding work this season supporting compliance at watercraft inspections stations and helping ensure boaters follow AIS requirements. A great FWP Outdoor Report highlights enforcement efforts at the Anaconda inspection station: [AIS Enforcement video](#).



*FWP Warden Joe Kambic supporting the Anaconda Inspection Station*



**Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance:** Partners working with the [Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance](#) are running a campaign to educate boaters and anglers in their area. The campaign includes print ads in local publications, social media posts, and billboards.



## Events

- Montana Invasive Species Council: Sept. 3 virtual meeting. [MISC](#)
- Western Regional Panel for aquatic invasive species: Sept 16-18 virtual meeting. [WRP 2020](#)
- North American Invasive Species Management Association: Oct. 6-8 virtual meeting. [NAISMA](#)
- Upper Columbia Conservation Commission: Nov. 4 virtual meeting. [UC3](#)

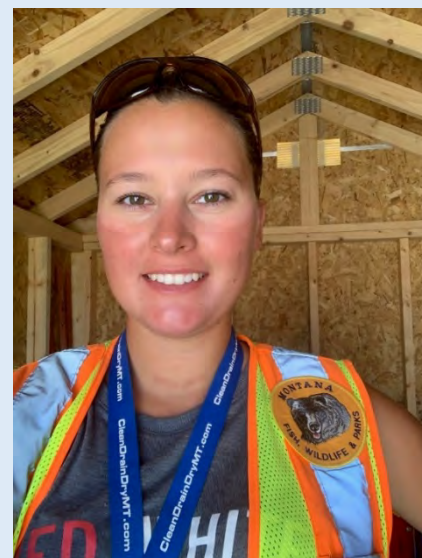
**Meet the AIS Staff:** When the St. Xavier watercraft inspection station was established in 2019, Ashley Blake was one of the first inspectors hired at the new station located near the Bighorn River in southeastern Montana.

The St. Xavier station can inspect up to 40 boats on weekdays and 100 boats on weekends. Many of the boaters are “regulars who know the drill,” says Ashley. “When they pull up to the station, they know to remove the cover, drop the motor and open the live well.” If a grumpy boater comes into the station, Ashley likes to “just stay chipper” and provide a friendly and thorough inspection.

Masks have made working at the inspection station a little more difficult, but she’s looking forward to an air conditioner being installed in the shed.

Ashley has lived in St. Xavier all her life and understands the importance of the AIS program since she grew up fly fishing on the Bighorn River. Her family owns the Garrison Stoker Resort and Ashley owns a drift boat rental company. Ashley’s favorite hobby is fly fishing and she looks forward to checking out new areas to fish someday.

The St. Xavier station is managed by the Big Horn Conservation District.



Ashley Blake

## In the News

- Record number of boats with mussels intercepted in Montana: [Boats with Mussels](#)
- Great partners doing good things at CSKT: [Watercraft Inspection](#)
- New mussel population found in North Dakota: [Lake LaMoure](#)
- New mussel population found in South Dakota: [Pickerel Lake](#)
- New mussel population found in South Dakota: [Lake Cochrane](#)
- New mussel population found in Manitoba: [Sipiwesk Lake](#)
- Used boat sales increase along with movement of mussels: [Used Boats](#)
- Austin, TX prepares for increased costs due to mussels: [Highland Lakes](#)
- Check out what is going on at watercraft inspection stations (updated weekly): [AIS Dashboard](#):

## BRINGING A BOAT TO MONTANA?

*Help protect Montana waters from aquatic invasive species.*

**All out-of-state watercraft must be inspected before launching.**  
Find watercraft inspection stations at [CleanDrainDryMT.com](https://www.CleanDrainDryMT.com)

Non-resident watercraft using Montana waters  
**MUST purchase a Vessel AIS Prevention Pass.**

Non-motorized vessel fee: \$10  
Motorized vessel fee: \$30



Purchase online at [fwp.mt.gov](https://fwp.mt.gov)



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