

From: Montana FWP <montanafwp@announcements.mt.gov>
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To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Watercraft Inspection Stations Opening



Aquatic Invasive Species **NEWSLETTER**

Watercraft Inspection Stations Open in Montana

Montana's first watercraft inspection stations are opening for the 2021 season. Inspection stations near Dillon and Ravalli opened earlier this month. The Anaconda station opened Saturday, March 20, and intercepted the first mussel fouled boat of the year. A used motorboat that had been recently purchased in Wisconsin was found with zebra mussels attached to the anchor. The Anaconda inspectors reported the mussels were dry and dead. The motorboat was en route to Sandpoint, Idaho.

In addition to roadside watercraft inspection stations the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Region 1 office in Kalispell offers inspections from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Starting April 5, the Kalispell office will expand its availability with inspections offered on weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Watercraft inspection stations are Montana's first line of defense to prevent the movement of aquatic invasive species (AIS) which can have devastating impacts on Montana waterways.

Boat owners should ensure their watercraft, trailers and gear are clean, drained and dry before transporting and need to be aware of Montana's inspection rules:

- All watercraft coming into Montana from out of state must be inspected prior to launching.
- All watercraft traveling west across the Continental Divide into the Columbia River Basin must be inspected prior to launching.
- All watercraft launching anywhere within the Flathead Basin that were last launched on waters outside of the Flathead Basin must be inspected.
- Anyone transporting watercraft must stop at all open watercraft inspection stations they encounter.

Snowbirds returning to Montana with a watercraft must seek out an inspection. Watercraft that have been used in mussel-infested waters in other states are of major concern. Boat owners coming to Montana must have their vessel inspected at a Montana watercraft inspection station prior to launch.

To accommodate these rules, inspection stations are set up across Montana during the boating season. Additional inspection stations will open in April and May as the weather warms and boat traffic increases. Montana will accept inspections conducted in Idaho and Wyoming, too.

Watercraft can also be inspected at some FWP offices. For a map and list of inspection stations, visit CleanDrainDryMT.com or call the FWP Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau at 406-444-2440.



Anaconda watercraft inspection station intercepted this mussel boat en route to Idaho

Visitors Bringing Boats to Montana are Reminded of AIS Rules

Nonresidents planning to visit Montana should be aware of boating laws that protect the state's waterways and ensure quality fishing and boating opportunities.

Visitors bringing a boat to Montana must do two things before launching their watercraft:



1) The watercraft must be inspected before launching to ensure it is free of aquatic invasive species (AIS). This includes all motorized and non-motorized boats, stand-up paddle boards and personal pontoon boats used by anglers.

2) Nonresidents must purchase a Vessel AIS Prevention Pass for each watercraft they plan to use in Montana. The pass is valid for the entire year and expires Dec 31. It is not transferable between vessels.

- The fee for motorboats is \$30 and applies to all motorized watercraft that is registered in another state or country.
- The fee for non-motorized watercraft is \$10 and applies to all non-motorized watercraft that nonresidents bring into Montana.
- The Vessel AIS Prevention Pass can be purchased **online** or at any FWP office. Proof of purchase is an electronic or paper receipt.

Nonresidents passing through Montana and **not** launching a watercraft are not required to purchase the pass. But anyone transporting watercraft in Montana must stop at ALL open watercraft inspection stations they encounter. Failure to stop could result in a fine of up to \$500.

“Montana welcomes boaters and anglers to our state but we want to ensure visitors aren’t transporting invasive plants or animals that can severely damage our lakes and rivers” said Tom Woolf, AIS Bureau Chief. “Boats that are free of mud, water, plants and animals will have a quick and easy inspection.”

Learn more at [CleanDrainDryMT.com](https://www.CleanDrainDryMT.com).

Tiber Reservoir Certified Boater Testing Available

Certified Boater training for Tiber Reservoir is available from FWP online at [CleanDrainDryMT.com](https://www.CleanDrainDryMT.com). Watercraft owners who primarily recreate on Tiber Reservoir can receive the Certified Boater designation.

The online training course provides participants with information about the invasive mussel threat; how to appropriately clean, drain and dry watercraft; and why it’s important for everyone to take responsibility in protecting Montana’s waterbodies.

The Certified Boater program is open to Montana residents who live east of the Continental Divide and who boat primarily on Tiber Reservoir. As proof of Certified Boater designation, the watercraft owner will receive decals to place on their watercraft and trailer and a key to unlock gates at the boat ramps.

Certified Boaters can access all public boat ramps on Tiber Reservoir and are expected to do a self-inspection every time they exit the waterbody to make sure their boat is



clean, drained and dry. The program is designed to decrease volume at decontamination stations and allow a focus on boats traveling elsewhere.

Certified Boater participants sign an agreement pledging to go through decontamination before leaving his or her designated waterbody to launch in another waterbody.

If no invasive mussels are detected on Tiber Reservoir this year, FWP may ask to remove the launch restrictions on Tiber Reservoir in 2022.

Persons unable to complete the online Certified Boater training can visit the FWP Region 4 office in Great Falls at 4600 Giant Springs Road.

For more information on invasive mussels, locations of inspection stations and the Certified Boater training, visit CleanDrainDryMT.com or call the FWP Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau at 406-444-2440.



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