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From: Montana FWP <montanafwp@announcements.mt.gov>
Sent: Saturday, June 12, 2021 2:14 PM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] AIS Newsletter - June 2021



Aquatic Invasive Species **NEWSLETTER**

27 Mussel Fouled Vessels Intercepted

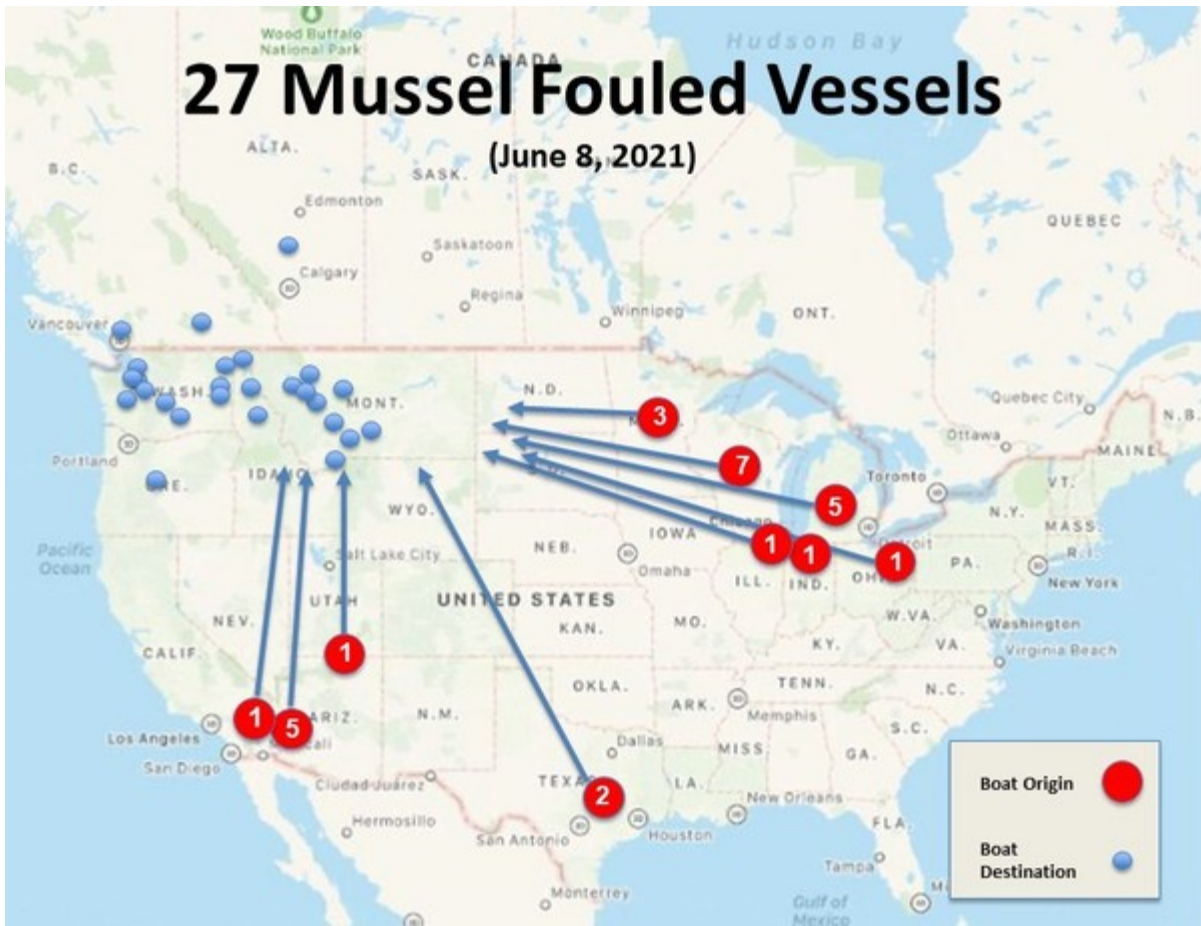
All watercraft inspection stations are open, and inspectors are seeing more boats than ever. More than 25,000 vessels have been inspected this year and 27 boats have been intercepted transporting zebra or quagga mussels.

Staffing at stations continues to be a challenge for both FWP and partners' stations, but to date operations have been maintained.

See what inspections stations are finding: [Watercraft Inspection Dashboard](#) (updated weekly).

Find watercraft inspection station locations and hours of operation at [CleanDrainDryMT.com](#).

27 Mussel Fouled Vessels (June 8, 2021)





Barges destined for Idaho were found with mussel byssal threads at the Anaconda inspection station. Idaho was notified for a follow-up inspection.



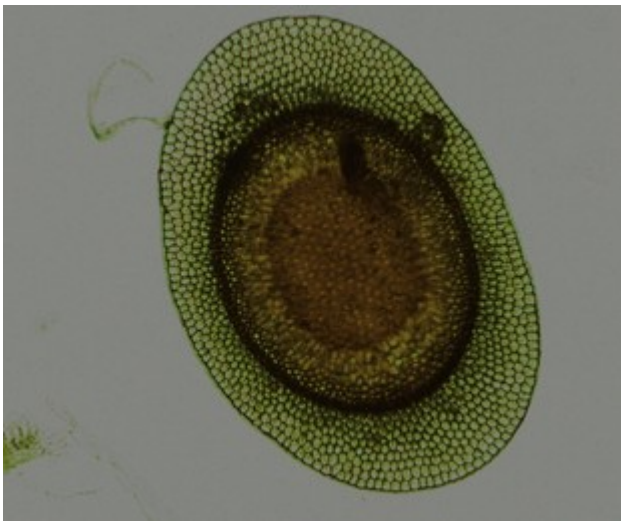
Watercraft Inspector Appreciation Week: August 2-8

Montana is hosting the first ever Watercraft Inspector Appreciation Week August 2-8. Planning is underway to show appreciation to the hard-working inspectors across the state. Businesses, conservation groups and others are invited to “adopt” a station during the event. **Contact us** if you can help with this effort.

Early Detection

Early detection crews are visiting waters state-wide looking for new populations of AIS. Tiber Reservoir will receive particular focus again this year due to the invasive

mussel detection in 2017. FWP will conduct intensive sampling again on Tiber this season with support from the Bureau of Reclamation and the Flathead Lake Biological Station. If no evidence of invasive mussels is detected this season, the AIS program will propose delisting Tiber as a mussel positive waterbody. This would lift mandatory exit inspection restrictions for Tiber.



AIS Lab

The AIS lab is back in action. AIS monitoring crews have started their sampling season, and water samples are flowing into the lab.

Prior to receiving samples, the lab team was able to observe and photograph pediveligers from the moss ball samples received from Montana pet stores. They also were tasked with finding Bryozoans to photograph for identification after the recent fish kill on the Madison River.

Image of Statoblast: the dormant asexual reproductive pod produced by bryozoans to withstand harsh conditions.

**Mussel Veliger Early Detection Microscopy Samples
Received by the Montana AIS Lab**

	TOTAL	PROCESSED	UNPROCESSED
MONTANA	285	260	25
OUT-OF-STATE	47	47	0
TOTALS	332	307	25

Report Turtle and Bullfrogs Sightings

FWP is asking for help from the public in reporting snapping turtle sightings in west-central Montana.

In Montana, snapping turtles are a native species east of the continental divide, but they are non-native west of the divide and can cause significant harm to native populations of pond-dwelling species like frogs, turtles, snakes, ducks, and fish. Snapping turtles likely end up in waterways in western Montana through illegal releases of animals kept as pets.

In 2018, FWP received a report of a snapping turtle in a backwater at Milltown State Park just east of Missoula. In 2019, FWP responded to a reported snapping turtle in the Rattlesnake Creek area just north of Missoula but was not able to locate it. In 2021, FWP is ramping up its efforts to find and remove snapping turtles, and reports of turtle sightings from the public are critical for this effort to be successful.

FWP would like to get a better sense of areas where snapping turtles may be living so biologists and managers can work to minimize the potential negative impacts. FWP is primarily concerned with snapping turtle sightings in the Clearwater, Bitterroot, and Blackfoot watersheds as well as the Clark Fork watershed upstream of the confluence with the Flathead River.

Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



An MCC crew will survey waterways in western Montana this summer for snapping turtles. They are also looking for invasive red-eared (pond slider) turtles and bullfrogs.

It is rare that FWP receives a report of a snapping turtle in these areas, but even a few reports can provide important information for planning and prevention. If you see a snapping turtle or hear reports of one in those watersheds listed above, please contact FWP's nongame wildlife biologist for west-central Montana, Torrey Ritter, at 406-381-2339 or email torrey.ritter@mt.gov as soon as possible.

Report Invasive Species

FWP staff received a report in May of a crayfish that had something that appeared to be zebra mussels on it in East Fork Reservoir outside of Lewistown. Survey staff deployed to the area to conduct mussel early detection sampling, crayfish trapping and snorkeling surveys. What was found was something that our staff had never before observed. Native crayfish had native pea clams attached to their feet. Apparently, the native clams are in such high densities in some areas that crayfish step on them. The clams clamp down on the crayfish's feet giving them clam clogs.



Native crayfish with native clams on feet at East Fork Reservoir

The AIS program encourages everyone to be on the lookout for AIS or any other suspicious aquatic organisms. If you find a suspected AIS please: 1) Take a photo, 2) Grab a specimen, 3) Note the location, AND 4) Report it by calling 406-444-2440 or

report it online here: [Report Suspected AIS](#). The more people are looking for AIS the better chance there is of detecting new populations early. Early detection increases the chances of reducing spread and improves the likelihood of successful eradication. Be on the lookout for AIS!

Asian Clams at Lake Elmo

Invasive **Asian clams** / *Corbicula fluminea* (aka Golden or Good Luck clams) were discovered in 2019 at Lake Elmo State Park in Billings. Lake Elmo is the only known presence of Asian clams in Montana. The clams have been in the lake for at least several years because both juveniles and adult clams are present.



Asian clams are undesirable because they clog irrigation and water system infrastructure, filter and remove important food sources needed by other species like fish and turtles, and promote the growth of harmful bacteria and algae. The shells of dead Asian clams are sharp and pose a safety hazard. If the clams are ignored, they will likely spread into the irrigation ditch, nearby creeks, and possibly the Yellowstone River.

Data show that drying and freezing are the best way to kill the clams. A partial drawdown (approximately 3 feet) of Lake Elmo was completed from October 2020-May 2021, which exposed many dead clams. A full-drawdown of Lake Elmo will begin in September. Learn more here: [Lake Elmo State Park Improvement Project](#)

Outreach & Education

- During National Invasive Species Awareness Week, Jennifer Riddle and Liz Lodman filmed the “Top 5 Things you should know about AIS.” [Watch and share.](#)
- Watercraft inspector Andrea Jacobson from the Sula Inspection Station is featured on Montana’s new Boat Regulation Book. Copies are available from any FWP office or view it [here.](#)
- The Northwest Montana Association of Relators found a clever way to distribute the “Clean Drain Dry” message to persons visiting the area. They made a magnet that was sent to all VRBO/short term rental clients, title companies, and new homebuyers. The magnet provides basic AIS tips and a QR code for more information. Thank you to [NMAR](#) Public Affairs Director Erica Wirtala for initiating this project.



CLEAN: Remove all plants and mud from boat, trailer and fishing gear. This includes kayaks, canoes and SUP.

DRAIN: Pull the drain plug. Eliminate all water from bilge, ballast and live wells.

DRY: Allow time for your boat and gear to dry completely before launching somewhere else.



Out of state watercraft must be inspected before launch and obtain Vessel AIS Prevention Pass.



CleanDrainDryMT.com

f Protect Our Waters Montana

☎ 406.444.2440



- **Flathead County Health Department** contacted the FWP Region 1 office to partner with them for Mental Health Awareness Month in May. They designed and printed a floating key chain with an important suicide prevention message. FWP hands them out at watercraft inspection stations in the Flathead area.



Outreach Events

It's great to be back out talking to folks and attending kids' events around the state.

- **Helena** - Classes from Helena (Capital High), Livingston (East Side), and Kalispell (Cayuse Prairie) had a lesson on AIS at the **Montana Wild** education Center.
- **Montana City** - Update to U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary members at their monthly meeting.
- **Billings** - Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) members taught students from Laurel and Joliet about aquatic invasive species at an event hosted by Yellowstone and Carbon County Weed Districts at Riverfront Park. **Watch story here.**



BSWC member Colin Threlkeld teaching students about AIS at Riverfront Park-Billings.

- **Billings** - Outreach to motorboat operators launching at Lake Elmo during the motorboat-testing period
- **Greenough** - Lindsey Bona / Clearwater Resource Council provided a lesson on AIS at the Blackfoot Challenge Swan Release.
- **Missoula** - Big Sky Watershed Corps members hosted an information booth the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Rendezvous.
- **Bigfork** - **Flathead Lakers**, **Flathead Lake Biological Station** and **CSKT** taught students from Bigfork about AIS at the Mussel Walk at Wayfarers State Park.



Students at Mussel Walk pick up trash at Wayfarers State Park while looking for native and invasive species.



Rocks with sharpie drawings of species were planted on the beach before the Mussel walk, then collected by the students.

Events / Webinars / Trainings

- June 28-30: National Invasive Species Taskforce meeting, virtual. **ANSTF Meeting**
- August 17: Pacific Northwest Economic Region, Invasive Species Working Group, Big Sky, MT. **PNWER**
- September 20-24: Western Regional Panel for Aquatic Invasive Species meeting, virtual and in person in Salt Lake City, UT. **WRP**
- September 27-30: North American Invasive Species Management Association conference, virtual and in person at Missoula, MT. **NAISMA**
- Nov 4: Flowering Rush: Phenology, Genetic Variability and Management **USACE**
- Nov 12: Invasive Watermilfoil Management **USACE**

In the News

Montana

- **21 Mussel Boats Intercepted**
- **Report Snapping Turtles in Western Montana**

- Tribes partnering with Great Lakes states to battle AIS
- Invasive Species Awareness Week - Wildlife Wednesday
- Montanans Urged Not to Spread AIS
- Help protect our waters in the Seeley area

Regional / National

- Yellowstone National Park preventing AIS
- Glacier National Park is open for the season, including watercraft inspections
- Invasive crayfish threaten Wyoming
- Invasive species can lead to the death of eagles and loons
- Aquarium releases spread invasive fish species
- Saskatchewan stepping up fight against AIS
- Saskatchewan fights illegal fish releases

Meet the AIS Staff

Jayden Duckworth is the AIS Environmental Scientist for Montana FWP. Jayden is base out of the Kalispell FWP office but works across the entire state. Here are Jayden's responses to our questions:

How long have you been doing this work: *I began working as a seasonal employee in 2010, so this will be my 11th year working for the department!*

What's the best thing about your job: *Oh wow, where to begin? There are so many positive aspects of my job that I could go on and on. And I usually do! Helping to protect the aquatic resources of Montana is one of the most challenging and satisfying things I've ever done. It's not everyone who looks forward to going to work every day, but I happen to be one of those people. I also have the privilege of working directly with some of the most dedicated and intelligent people I've ever met. Not only within the AIS bureau, but within Fish, Wildlife & Parks statewide.*

What do you wish boaters or the public would know: *I want the public to know that we are doing our very best to protect their wonderful resources here in Montana. Whether it's your favorite fishing hole, the beautiful forests you hike, or the wonderful state parks you enjoy with your family, there is a dedicated FWP employee who is working hard to help protect your public lands and special places. With that, the public also has a great responsibility to take part in this effort and to foster the spirit of conservation to future generations.*

What do you do in the off-season or for fun: *There is no off-season! Just kidding 😊. Fishing has always been my primary source of fun in all seasons. Luckily, Montana is*



*one of the best places to fish in the world. Is it a coincidence that I live in NW MT?
Absolutely not!*

What's your hidden talent: *Glad you asked! I happen to be obsessed with disc (Frisbee) golf. I'm pretty good, I guess. If you think it sounds goofy and a little strange, trust me, IT IS!*

Tell us a strange or unusual experience you've while doing your job: *Back when I was a watercraft inspector, I had a member of the public pull into the watercraft inspection station to have his kayaks inspected. He wasn't particularly happy about taking the time to go through the inspection process. He stated that he was in a big hurry to get to the river that day. I'll never forget the look on his face when I told him that there were no kayaks on the top of his vehicle to inspect. Turns out, he was in such a big hurry he forgot to strap them down and they had flown off the roof of his Subaru somewhere between Missoula and Ronan. I never saw him again.*

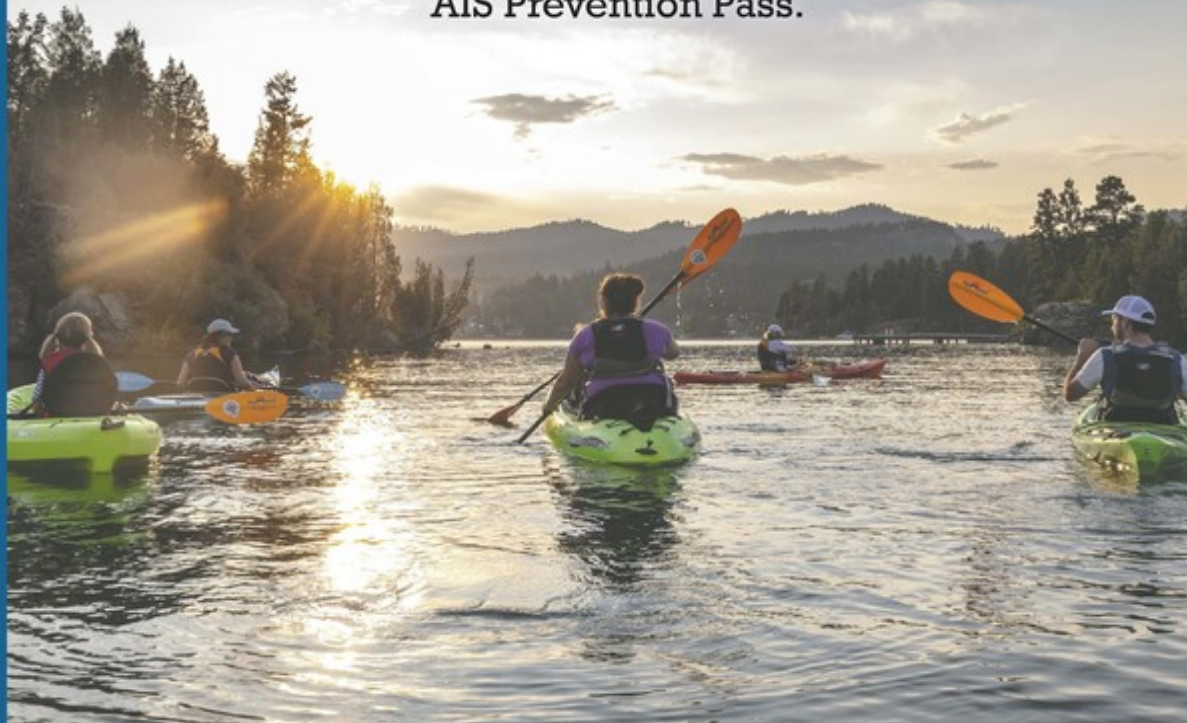
CLEAN BOATS STOP INVASIVE SPECIES

Arrive Clean – Leave Clean

Clean, Drain and Dry your boat and fishing gear.


Stop at all watercraft inspection stations.

Out of state boats must obtain inspection and
AIS Prevention Pass.



CleanDrainDryMT.com

406-444-2440

 Protect Our Waters Montana

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