



Montana Joint Mussel Response Team

Phone: 406-444-2440 | Email: MusselResponse@mt.gov
MusselResponse.mt.gov | facebook.com/MTMusselResponse

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Invasive Mussel Basics

Q: Where were mussels detected?

A: In Tiber Reservoir, and “suspect” detections turned up in Canyon Ferry Reservoir, last October.

Q: How do you get rid of them?

A: Once invasive mussels are established they’re nearly impossible to eradicate. No adult mussels have been detected in Montana. Preventing spread is our best course of action.

Q: How can I tell if invasive mussel larvae are on my boat or equipment?

A: You can’t. Newly hatched mussels, or veligers, are microscopic, smaller than a speck of dust. You’d never know if they were on your boat, trailer or fishing gear.

Q: What can I do to make sure I’m not transporting invasive mussels?

A: Get into the do-it-yourself Clean. Drain. Dry. habit. That is the most effective way to help prevent the risk of spreading destructive mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Also, don’t transport water in boats, bait buckets or other containers.

Q: Clean. Drain. Dry. It really works?

A: Yes. It’s that simple. When you Clean. Drain. Dry. your boat and equipment after every outing on the water, you guarantee that you’re not transporting AIS.

Watercraft Inspection & Decontamination Basics

Q: Who must stop at watercraft inspection stations?

A: If you are hauling a watercraft of any kind, motorized or nonmotorized you must stop. It’s the law.

Q: Do I have to stop at every inspection station I encounter even if my boat was inspected that day?

A: Yes. Subsequent stops will be brief but you must stop.

Q: When will watercraft inspection stations open?

A: A few are in operation now. By mid-April most FWP stations will be fully operational.

Q: How many will be in operation?



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A: About 35 – twice as many as in previous years.

Q: Who must stop for inspection?

A: By law, all motorists hauling motorized or nonmotorized watercraft – including rafts, drift boats, canoes and kayaks – must stop.

Q: Is there a map of inspection station locations?

A: Yes. Maps will be posted online at fwp.mt.gov and at MusselResponse.mt.gov.

Q: What is a watercraft inspection?

A: Watercraft inspection will typically take on average less than 10 minutes, including a brief interview, boat inspection and, if necessary, boats will be decontaminated with hot water (140°F) that will remove and kill invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species.

Q: What is a watercraft decontamination?

A: A boat decontamination takes an average of up to 30 minutes. It can include spraying the exterior and flushing interior compartments with pressurized hot water (140°F). In the most extreme cases, the motor's cooling system will need to be flushed. Generally, decontamination only will require thoroughly cleaning, draining, and drying, which will take much less time. Decontamination can be as simple as Clean. Drain. Dry.

Q: Where can my boat be decontaminated?

A: All FWP roadside, roving, and Tiber and Canyon Ferry inspection stations can decontaminate most watercraft.

Q: Where do boaters go if they need to be decontaminated before launching on a waterbody – or if they are coming in from out-of-state?

A: The first step is getting inspected, this will determine the need for decontamination. To be inspected, boaters can stop at any roadside inspection station or visit any FWP regional or area office, where they'll be inspected and, if necessary, routed to a decontamination station.

Q: How much does an inspection or decontamination cost?

A: There is no cost. We only ask that you support this important effort with your patience as we together work to protect Montana's waters.

Q: How can I clean my boat and what can I do to speed up a watercraft inspection?

A: The do-it-yourself Clean. Drain. Dry. habit guarantees that you are not transporting invasive mussels or other AIS. Here are some tips:

- drain all water and remove mud and vegetation
- remove drain plugs and drain the boat
- open and towel dry all compartments and live well
- drain ballasts and bilge, and wipe bilge areas dry, if possible
- lower the engine/motor to allow coolant water to drain; and
- drain ballasts on wake boats and speed boats



New Rules & Laws

Q: Are there additional requirements for anglers and boaters this year?

A: Yes, new rules and laws will be in effect by April 15.

Q: How will the new rules and laws effect boaters and anglers?

A: Here's a rundown:

- Watercraft coming into Montana from out-of-state must be inspected prior to launching on any Montana waterbody.
 - Boats from out-of-state can stop at any roadside inspection station or visit any FWP regional or area office, where they'll be inspected and, if necessary, accommodations will be made to perform a decontamination.
 - This would be the out-of-state's boat's pre-launch inspection.
- Watercraft traveling across the Continental Divide into the Columbia River Basin within Montana must be inspected prior to launch.
 - Such boats can stop at any roadside inspection station or visit any FWP regional or area office, where they'll be inspected and, if necessary, accommodations will be made to perform a decontamination.
 - This would be the boat's pre-launch inspection.
- Required inspection and, when needed, decontamination at Canyon Ferry and Tiber reservoirs for boats coming off the water.
- Prohibited transport of lake and river water.
- Live bait and fish must be transported in clean domestic water where allowed in current fishing regulations.
- Bait and fish from Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs must be transported without water.

Q: Why is the Columbia River Basin important to protect?

A: All watercraft heading over the Continental Divide into the Columbia River Basin (CRB) must be inspected prior to launch.

- The CRB is the only invasive mussel-free water basin in the country.
- Montana recognizes the protection of this basin as a priority within the state and to protect other states and provinces in the CRB.

Local Boater Programs—Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs

Q: What are “Local Boaters” and how do they fit into this effort?

A: The local boater program allows watercraft owners to complete an educational course on aquatic invasive species and sign an agreement with FWP pledging to only use the boat at either Tiber or Canyon Ferry reservoir, or be decontaminated at FWP stations prior to launching elsewhere.

- Boaters who recreate primarily on Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs may be eligible to participate.



- While local boaters won't be required to decontaminate their vessels with hot water each time they leave Tiber or Canyon Ferry – they'll still be required to stop at an inspection station where they'll be expedited through after a brief interview.
- The program is designed to decrease volume at decontamination stations and allow a focus on boats traveling elsewhere.

Q: Are there other advantages to becoming a “Local Boater”?

A: Yes. All boat ramps will be open to local boater use at Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs. Several boat ramps will be closed to boaters not in the local boater program to ensure they depart from the water at points where inspection and decontamination stations are located.

Q: How do I become a “Local Boater”?

A: A free online local boaters' training program will be available beginning mid-April. You can also attend an open house, if one is being held near you, in April and get certified there.

Q: Can a “Local Boater” take his or her boat to other Montana waters?

A: Yes, but the boat must first undergo an FWP-approved inspection. As part of the local-boater agreement, the boat owner is required to get the watercraft inspected and, if necessary, decontaminated. With a little planning, this could take place with ease at the local boater's home water at one of the FWP inspection and decontamination stations at Tiber or Canyon Ferry reservoir.

Q: How will you know who is a local boater and who is not?

A: Each boat in the program will display a U.S. Coast Guard approved round local boater sticker on the stern of the watercraft. The stickers for Canyon Ferry are yellow. Tiber local boater stickers are purple.

Montana's AIS Battle

Q: Why is this necessary?

A: In the absence of their natural predators, invasive mussels can cause significant problems to river and lake environments and impact state and local economies.

- They can choke off agricultural irrigation systems, clog drinking water and hydropower facilities, devastate Montana's premiere fisheries, and damage boats and motors.
- Boats are a primary vector for the spread of mussels from infested waterbodies to non-infested waterbodies.
- Watercraft inspections are widely recognized as being effective in preventing spread of invasive mussels and other AIS.

Q: Are there other vectors for the spread of mussels?

A: Yes. Irrigation water - whether via canals, pumps, pipelines, center pivots or hauling water to livestock – is a known transport vector.

- Irrigation equipment is mobile. As pumps and pipes are moved from one location to another within the same irrigation season, AIS can move with them.



- Transporters include: construction and fire suppression vehicles that move equipment and supplies across Montana in support of irrigation projects, infrastructure projects like bridges, and stream bank alteration or wildfire suppression.

Q: Can my fishing gear transport mussels?

A: Yes. Anything that holds water can transport mussels, including waders, wading boots, bait buckets and fishing nets.

- Clean your gear with water.
- Drain all the water from your buckets, boots and waders.
- Dry you gear thoroughly; this will kill most invasive species. The longer you keep boots, waders, and other equipment in the hot sun between fishing trips, the better.

Q: Can I use felt-soled wading boots in Montana?

A: Yes, but with caution. They are very difficult to clean and dry. Felt soles have been linked to the transport of aquatic invasive species. If you must use felt-soled waders designate to them a single body of water.

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