

‘Cabin close-up’ a time to inspect boats and water equipment for invasive species

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources asks every cabin and lakeshore owner to watch for aquatic invasive species (AIS) when removing docks, boat lifts, swim rafts and other equipment from the water.

“Since those items have been in the water for several months, now is the ideal time to spot invasive species that may be attached to them,” said Heidi Wolf, DNR invasive species unit supervisor. “Carefully inspect everything you remove from the water to see if there are invasive species attached. Your observations will provide invaluable information to the DNR in tracking the distribution of AIS – and give us a chance to rapidly respond if new infestations are found.”

People should look on the posts, wheels and underwater support bars of docks and lifts, as well as any parts of boats, pontoons and rafts that may have been submerged in water for an extended period. In newly infested waters, adult zebra mussels may not be abundant and there may only be a few mussels on a piece of equipment. On a smooth surface, juvenile mussels feel gritty, like sandpaper.

If a new infestation of zebra mussels, faucet snails or other aquatic invasive species is suspected, the exact location should be noted, a photo taken and a specimen should be kept for positive identification.

Call 888-646-6367 or contact a local DNR AIS specialist or a fisheries office. Responding quickly to new AIS infestations is critical to help curb the spread into other water bodies.

There are also specific legal requirements for cabin owners and boaters when removing and storing watercraft and equipment for the winter – or hiring someone to handle it:

Transporting and storing watercraft

- When hauling boats or other watercraft to a storage facility away from the shoreline property, make sure there are no invasive species attached. It is illegal to transport watercraft with invasive species attached.
- A list of permitted lake services providers is on the DNR website at www.mndnr.gov/lakeserviceproviders.
- The form should be downloaded, completed, signed and kept in possession during transport. Zebra mussels and other invasive plants and animals must be removed before transporting the watercraft back to a lake or other water body.

Transporting and storing docks, lifts and equipment

- It is legal to remove a dock, boat lift, dock, weed roller, swim raft, or irrigation equipment from infested waters and place it on the adjacent shoreline property – even if there are zebra mussels or other prohibited invasive species attached. A permit is not required to place equipment on the shoreline. Contact a DNR AIS specialist if an invasive plant or animal is found that has not been sighted on the lake before.

- However, if someone wants to transport equipment from infested waters to another location for storage, cleaning or repair, they must have an authorization form to transport equipment to legally move it to another location.
- If equipment is to be installed in another water body, all aquatic plants and animals such as zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil, must be removed – and equipment must be dried for 21 days before placing in other waters.

Hiring a business or individual to remove boats and equipment from any water body

- Any business or individual in Minnesota paid to decontaminate, install, or remove boats, docks or water-related equipment is legally required to complete AIS training and obtain a permit before working in state waters.
- Anyone hired to remove a boat or dock must have a current DNR permitted service provider sticker on their windshield. If they work for a lake service provider business, ask to see an employee certificate.
- A list of permitted lake services providers is on the DNR website at www.mndnr.gov/lakeserviceproviders.

Learn more about Minnesota's aquatic invasive species rules and regulations, and the DNR's lake service provider program at www.mndnr.gov/AIS.