

## **Threat of aquatic invasive species re-emerges with boating season**

With boating season moving in to high gear this Memorial Day weekend, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is reminding boaters and anglers to be extra vigilant to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS).

“Minnesota’s lakes and rivers are one of our most precious resources and we need every person to take responsibility to help prevent and curb the spread of AIS,” said Ann Pierce, DNR invasive species unit supervisor.

Boaters and anglers must know the AIS laws before they hit the water.

“The laws have not changed since last year,” Pierce said. “Before leaving a water access every boater must: clean off aquatic plants and animals, pull the drain plug and leave it out when transporting. They need to drain all water from bait buckets, livewells and boats and dispose of unwanted live bait in the trash. These simple steps protect our waters and may keep you from getting a citation.”

### **DNR’s stepped up efforts**

People can expect watercraft inspectors and conservation officers at public accesses this summer. Statewide plans include:

- Watercraft Inspections –The DNR will have up to 150 authorized inspectors stationed at high-use public waters that are infested with zebra mussels – and 23 hot water decontamination units available to clean infested equipment. Local units of government will also have inspectors at various accesses throughout the state.
- Enforcement – All DNR conservation officers will focus on enforcing AIS laws this season. They will write citations for AIS law violations. Roadside checks will be conducted.
- AIS canine unit –Three zebra-mussel detector dogs, which can find a mussel faster than a human inspector, will help conservation officers at check stations and water accesses this summer.

### **2012 AIS enforcement and inspection recap**

In 2012, watercraft inspectors and conservation officers spent about 81,000 hours inspecting more than 120,000 watercraft/trailers, resulting in 998 citations and 1,550 written warnings. There were 121 watercraft inspectors who worked most of the open water season inspecting boats and providing information to the public. An additional 30 inspectors were hired to assist with end-of-season coverage.

### **AIS citations and fines**

Boaters and others who fail to follow AIS laws can expect to receive citations and pay fines. The current fines are:

- Transporting aquatic plants - \$100 civil penalty or misdemeanor.
- Transporting water in boats or other water-related equipment - \$100 civil penalty or misdemeanor.
- Transporting zebra mussels and other prohibited species of animals - \$500 civil penalty or misdemeanor.

For more information about AIS laws, a list of designated infested waters in Minnesota and contact information for AIS specialists throughout the state is available at [www.mndnr.gov/ais](http://www.mndnr.gov/ais).