

Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species

Check this out!



Photos 1. We would like to extend a warm welcome to baby Wehlage! Nothing says we appreciate you like an AIS baby onesie! 2. Non-motorized watercraft can introduce and spread aquatic invasive species too! They should also be clean, drained and dry after each use! And all non-motorized watercraft must stop at the mandatory inspection stations. It's important! 3. Mandatory watercraft inspection stations will be opening soon on the southern border, consider applying to be an inspector to help protect Alberta waters! Inspection stations on the eastern and western borders will open between April-May.

Events

 ***Alberta Flowering Rush Symposium***, March 22nd in Lacombe. SAVE THE DATE! Please RSVP to Don Hare at program@abinvasives.ca

 Fourth annual ***Alberta Invasive Species Council annual general meeting***, March 23rd in Lacombe. Speakers on responding to new AIS threats, flowering rush, invasive bees, biocontrol and more!

Hello friends! We even **CLEAN DRAIN DRY** babies now! That's right people, *everything*. We're also really pushing this messaging with the non-motorized boating community (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, belly boats, drift boats, fly fisherman), especially given the heightened risk of an invasive mussel introduction given the recent detection in Montana as well as the potential spread of whirling disease in Alberta. Please do your part and make sure that your watercraft and equipment is **CLEAN, DRAINED** and **DRY** every single time you leave the launch/lake/river. Residual standing water, mud and fish and known to be primary sources of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and fish disease introductions and spread. Protect our waters!

Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Program Updates: Inspections, response efforts, education and more! See more at our Alberta Environment & Parks website.

 **Watercraft Inspections:** Our Watercraft Inspection Program has been ramping up every year. Last season we inspected over 19,000 boats and intercepted 17 that were mussel – fouled. This is an extremely important element of the program and we are seeking qualified and passionate individuals who want to make a difference! Stations will be opening between March and May, depending on the locations. Apply online at: <https://www/jobs.alberta.ca/jobs-dynamic.html>. Search for 'Aquatic Invasive Species Watercraft Inspector' or Job ID 1040278.

 **Response efforts:** In response to the elevated risk of a mussel introduction given the positive detection in Montana's Tiber Reservoir and the 'suspect' samples in Canyon Ferry Reservoir and the Milk and Missouri Rivers, Alberta is exploring options for inspection station expansion, enhancing partnerships with the Canadian Border Services Agency, and increasing water monitoring efforts (particularly in southern Alberta). AIS program staff are also very involved in the whirling disease response. Over 200 sites in six major watersheds have been sampled; at this time the main stem of the Bow River and some of the tributaries has tested positive. All fisheries staff in regions with susceptible waters were exceptional in their response, as well as a whole host of government staff and stakeholders. This is an on-going situation that will require time to determine the extent of the problem, but currently we are working hard to finish the lab analysis of the wild samples, incorporate fish disease best management practices into the existing CLEAN DRAIN DRY campaign, work with stakeholders to help raise public awareness, and develop decontamination protocols for those that work in the water. The quarantine of positive, suspect or untested commercial aquaculture facilities has been extended. Please report any suspect fish disease to 1-855-336-BOAT (2628).

 **Monitoring:** Over 60 waterbodies were monitored this year for the presence of invasive Dreissenid mussels. We'll be working to promote a new reporting and mapping app/database the showcase all of these efforts and encourage more citizens to report AIS on the new Alberta Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapsS). You can even download an app to your phone and report suspect species in seconds! COMING SOON: Non-native fish such as Prussian carp and goldfish will be able to be reported on the EDDMapsS site as well.



Education & Outreach: AIS staff have been as busy as ever presenting and sharing information with stakeholders, collectively attending over 40 events this season alone. Find us at the Edmonton Pet Expo this weekend, for the first time. We'll be promoting our 'DON'T LET IT LOOSE' campaign and giving away fun educational materials such as DON'T LET IT LOOSE stickers and goldfish burial pods. Remember, it is not only illegal to dump non-native species into public waters, it is also cruel to your pet and dangerous for our native species. We have also been working on updating our website, and including Whirling Disease messaging in our Clean Drain Dry campaign to better address movement of water, fish and mud.



Policy & Legislation: Law enforcement has been quite engaged in ensuring that boaters are stopping at mandatory inspection stations – including motorized, non-motorized and commercially hauled. There have been enforcement actions this season than any previously. Now Fish and Wildlife Officers, Conservation Officers, Transport Officers, the RCMP and Traffic Sheriffs can enforce these laws under the Fisheries (Alberta) Act. In May 2015, it became illegal to transport a boat with the drain plug in – this rule was created to ensure that boaters are not inadvertently moving water from one waterbody to another, which can spread AIS, parasites and disease. You'll see messaging for the PULL THE PLUG incorporated into our Clean Drain Dry campaign (see Let's Go Outdoors coverage of new rule). Compliance at inspection stations over the season has increased from previous season – we need this trend to continue!