

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program



Watercraft Inspection Report 2020

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Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

2020 ANNUAL WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION REPORT

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Accomplishments during the 2020 watercraft inspection season include:

- Adapted to Covid-19 and associated challenges to overall operations.
- Over 174,000 watercraft inspections conducted by FWP and partners in Montana. A record number of inspections for the state.
- Record number of zebra and quagga mussel fouled vessels (35) intercepted and over 1,100 vessels intercepted transporting aquatic weeds.
- Continued strong partnerships to operate watercraft inspection stations state-wide including contracting with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Ravalli and Thompson Falls), the Blackfeet Nation (Browning), Missoula County (Clearwater Junction), Garfield Conservation District (Wibaux and Flowing Wells), McCone Conservation District (Nashua), Bighorn Conservation District (St. Xavier), and Powder River Conservation District (Broadus).
- Coordination with partners on other non-FWP funded stations including Glacier and Yellowstone National Park and the City of Whitefish.
- Improved the WID mobile data application to improve data collection.
- Revamped watercraft inspection training including: An updated curriculum, a new training manual, a new student workbook, and smaller classes.
- An extended season at most stations (almost 9 months).
- Targeted law enforcement.
- Established a quality control program and communication plan.
- Improved drive by data collection.

INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is the lead agency in the state addressing aquatic invasive species (AIS) issues. FWP, Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) collectively are responsible for the implementation of the Montana AIS Management Plan. Roles and responsibilities for implementation of the plan are outlined through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between agencies. The goal of the Plan is to minimize the harmful impacts of AIS by limiting or preventing the spread of AIS. This goal is achieved through coordination and collaboration between our partner agencies and stakeholder groups; prevention of new AIS introductions; early detection and monitoring of invasive aquatic plants, animals and pathogens; control and

eradication of new and established AIS populations; and outreach and education efforts. This report focuses on the prevention of new AIS introductions in the state, containment efforts at Tiber Reservoir and other AIS prevention efforts. Prevention is primarily accomplished through watercraft inspection stations.

Montana FWP has been operating watercraft inspection stations since 2004. Watercraft and water-based equipment are the most common vector for the transport of AIS and are the focus for prevention efforts. Inspection stations inspect boats and equipment for aquatic organisms, standing water, and illegal bait and fish. Stations also educate the public about the importance of following Clean, Drain and Dry protocols and encourage boaters to do their part to protect the waters they enjoy from AIS.

Following the detection of dreissenid mussels in Tiber Reservoir in 2016, the program rapidly expanded. Additional stations were established, and program staffing levels were increased. The watercraft inspection season was extended as well as hours of operation. FWP also began contracting with partners to operate watercraft inspection stations, allowing for local management and oversight. In 2020, nine inspection stations were contracted through partners around the state. In addition, Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park operate watercraft inspection stations within Park boundaries. The City of Whitefish, CSKT, the Blackfeet Nation and the Swan Lakers also independently fund stations for inspecting boats.

NEW IN 2020

In 2020, several programmatic changes were made to improve the effectiveness of the AIS prevention program.

- 1.) Coordinated with enforcement to improve boater compliance state-wide along with focusing enforcement on areas with compliance issues. This included expanding enforcement at the Anaconda inspection station to 4 days a week from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- 2.) Installed new signage to expand compliance at:
 - a. Anaconda
 - b. St. Regis
 - c. Wibaux
- 3.) Moved inspection stations:
 - a. Anaconda back to its original location after a road construction project.
 - b. Plains station moved back to Thompson Falls.
- 4.) Hired an equipment manager to repair the large amount of equipment.
- 5.) Vessel prevention pass for out of state boaters went into effect. The cost is \$30 for motorized vessels and \$10 for non-motorized vessels.
- 6.) Conducted watercraft inspections at Hebgen Lake in partnership with US Forest Service, Yellowstone National Park, City of West Yellowstone, local fire department, and FWP region 3 biologists and enforcement.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR 5 FWP PREVENTION PROGRAM SUPERVISORS

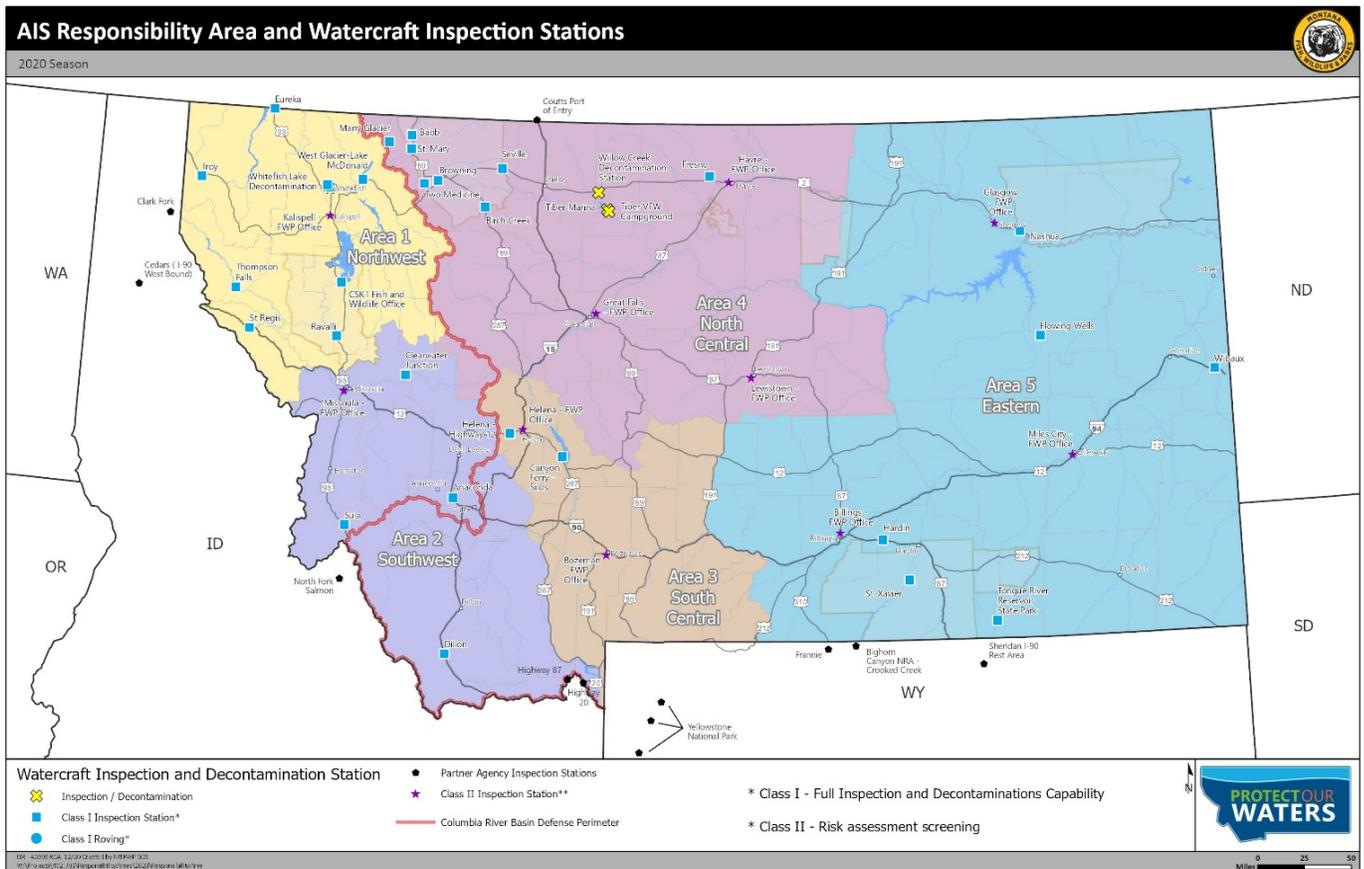


Figure 1. Geographic areas of responsibility for each of the five FWP watercraft inspection and decontamination station supervisors, 2020.

The AIS supervisors by their areas of responsibility are:

- Russ Hartzell – area 1 northwest
- John O’Bannon – area 2 southwest
- Kathi Montgomery – area 3 south central
- Austin Jaynes – area 4 north central and Tiber Reservoir
- Sean Flynn – area 5 eastern

AIS Supervisors are managed by the prevention specialist Jessi Gudgel, and they make up the team that carries out the majority of the operation on the ground. Some of their duties include hiring, training, managing staff, logistics, partnerships, quality control, compliance, education and outreach, maintenance, and much more. An equipment manager (Larry Lytle) supports the overall AIS program through maintaining equipment, trouble shooting problems, and training staff in the field to keep equipment operating properly.

WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION LOCATIONS

Watercraft inspection stations are established in locations to address watercraft that present the highest risk of transporting AIS. Stations are located on high traffic corridors entering the state, crossing west over the Continental Divide, and at other strategic locations to intercept high risk boat traffic. Stations are also established at strategic locations on Tiber Reservoir to inspect / decontaminate watercraft exiting that waterbody to ensure all vessels are clean, drain, dry.

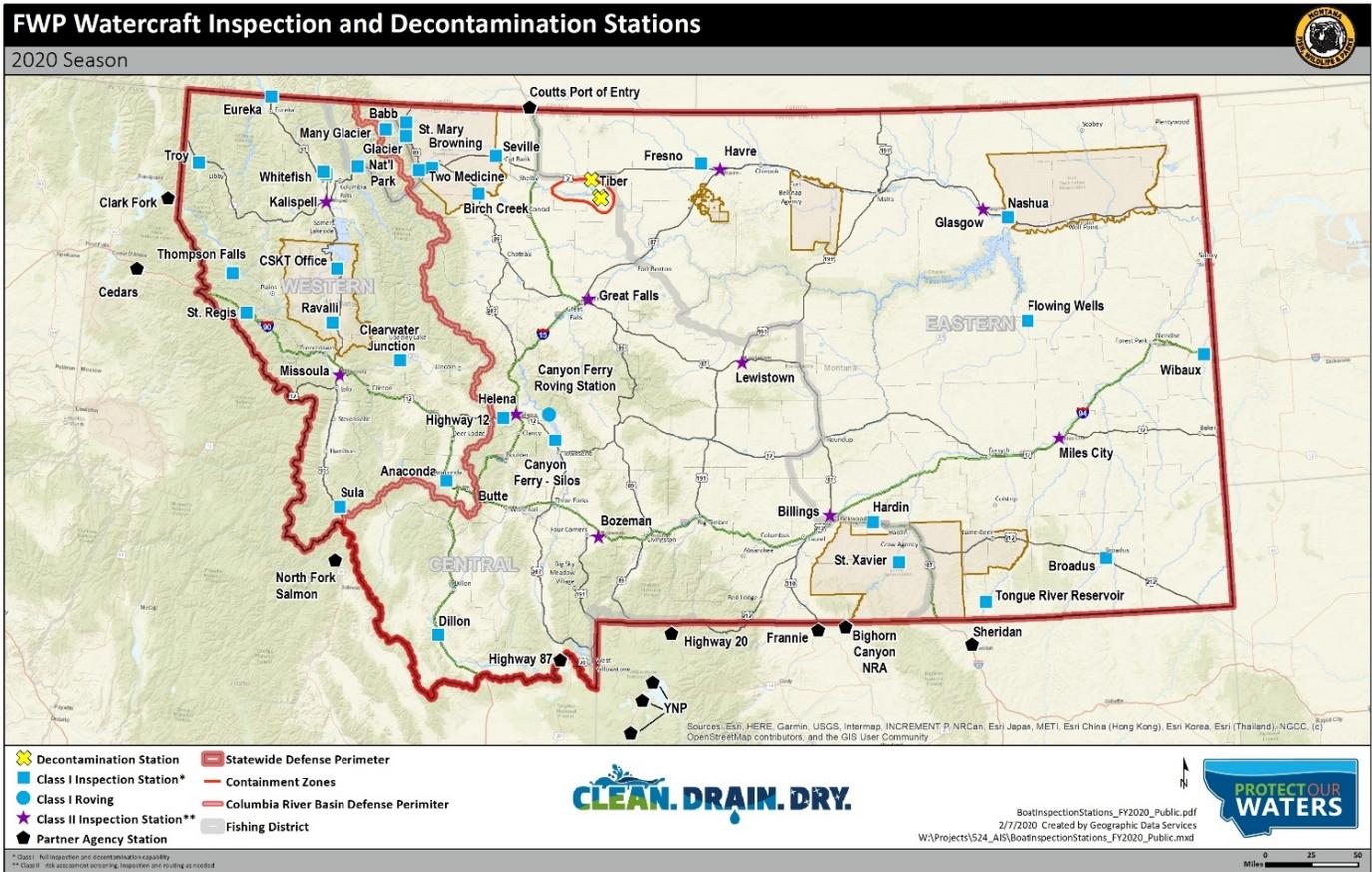


Figure 2. 2020 FWP Seasonally permanent watercraft inspection stations.

*The Eureka station was prepared to open and placed on standby for most of the season, but due to Covid-19 closures to the US/Canada border it did not open or conduct any watercraft inspections.

WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION TOTALS

FWP and partners performed 174,423 watercraft inspections this season (Figure 3). Of that total, FWP inspected 67,053 and contracted partner stations inspected 95,245 watercraft. Other partners conducted the balance of those inspections including 10,366 from Glacier National Park and 1,759 from the City of Whitefish (Figure 4). Stations operated from late February to mid-November in 2020 with most stations operating between April and October (Table 1). The July 4th holiday was again the busiest period for boater movement (Figure 5).

The 2020 season had the highest number of inspections since the inception of the watercraft inspection station program. Totals include inspections at FWP stations, contracted stations and other partners conducting inspections in the state.

The large increase in total inspections for 2020 is the result of increased in-state boating due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel, increased compliance, and improvements to the inspection data collection application that allows inspectors to record multiple boats during the interview process.

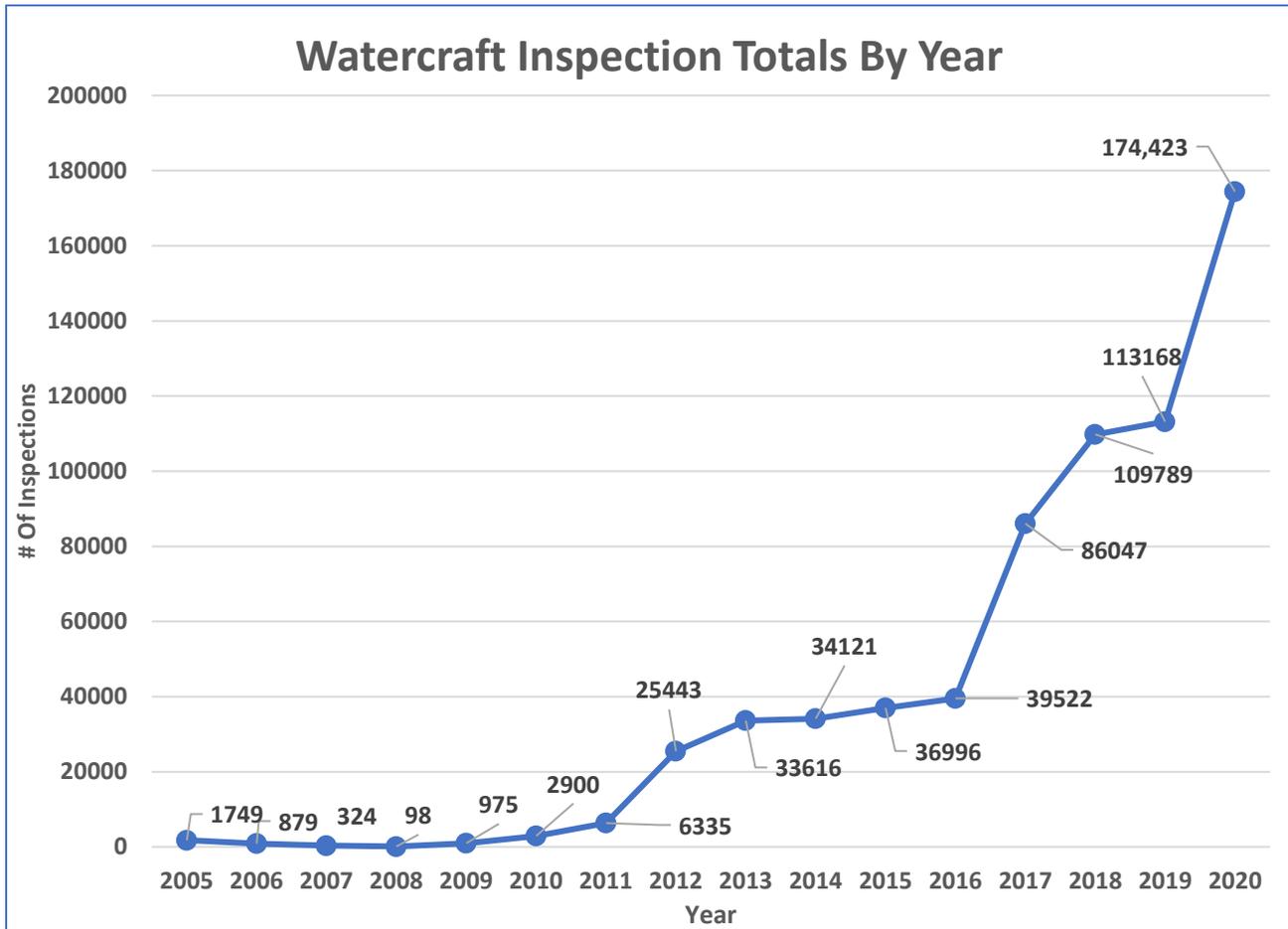


Figure 3. Number of Watercraft Inspections by Year.

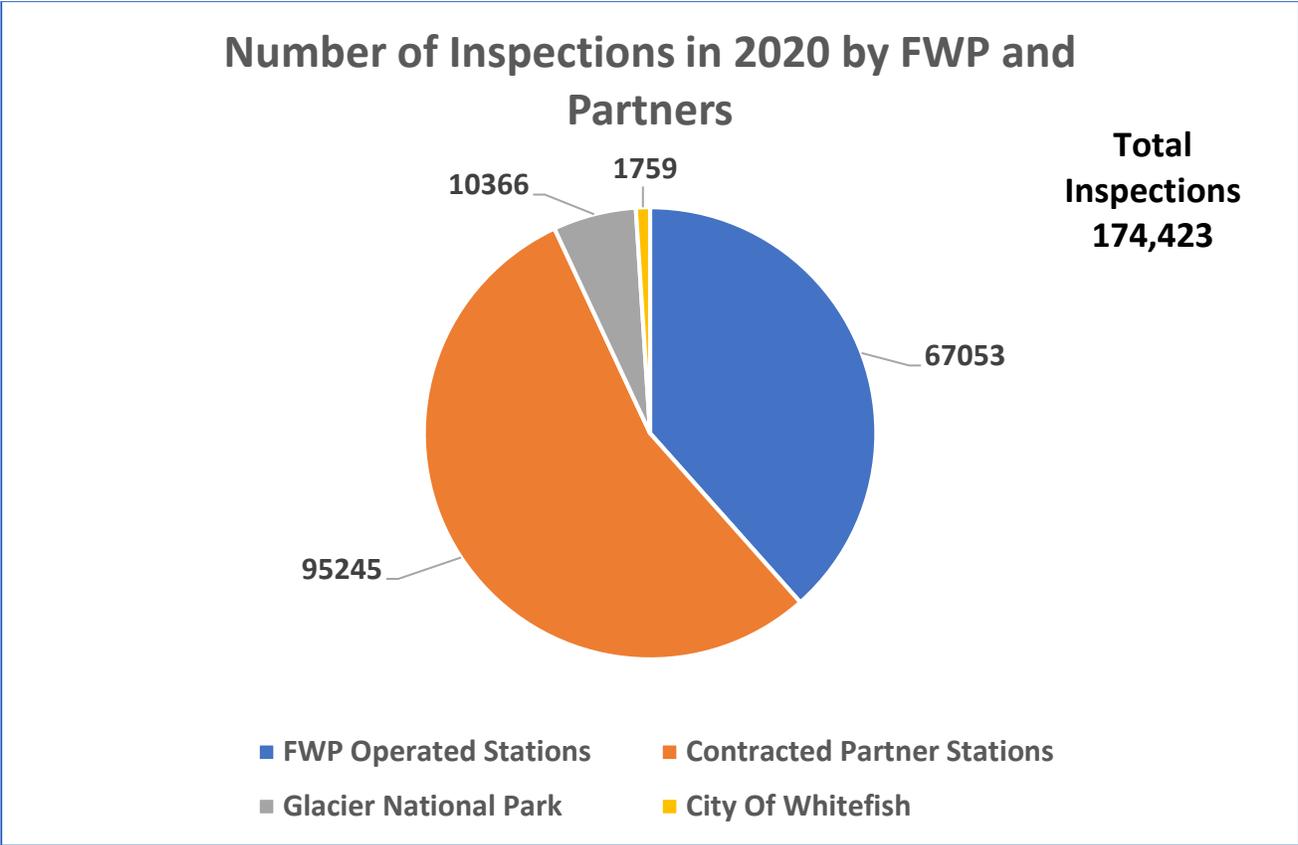


Figure 4: Partner involvement with watercraft inspections in 2020.

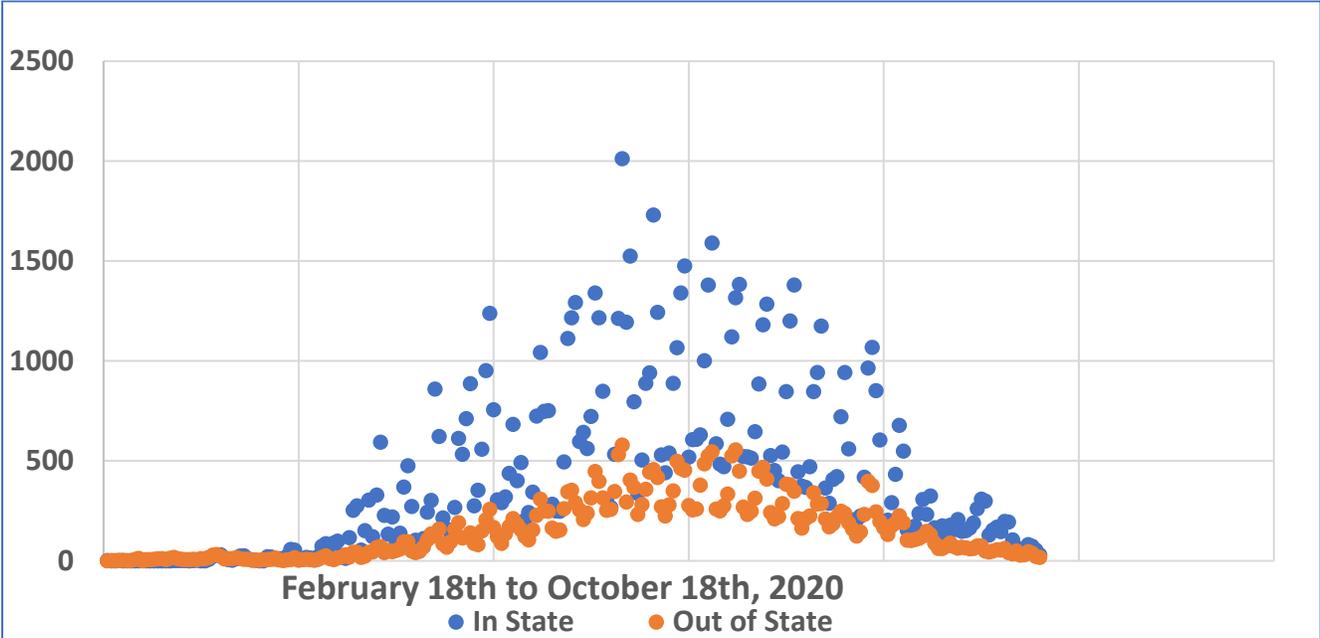


Figure 5. Number of Watercraft Inspections by Day for 2020.

Table 1. Summary of FWP 2020 Watercraft Inspection Stations.

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Hours of operation	Start date	End date	Total Inspections
Border Stations							
Nashua	US 2	West	7	Daylight	25-Apr	25-Oct	2,797
St. Regis	I-90	East	7	Daylight	01-May	20-Sept	8,627
Dillon	I-15	North	7	Daylight	14-Mar	18-Oct	4,135
Hebgen Lake	HWY 20	East	4	10	Varied	Varied	441
Eureka* Covid-19 closure	US 93	South	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Hardin	I-90	West	7	Daylight	22-Apr	15-Nov	8,121
Broadus (PRCD)	MT 212	West	3	12	21-May	14-Sept	469
Troy	US 2/ MT 56	East/North	7	Daylight	25-Apr	20-Sept	9,412
Wibaux	I-94	West	7	Daylight	18-Apr	30-Oct	2,476
Continental Divide Stations							
Anaconda	I-90	West	7	Daylight	04-Apr	18-Oct	13,867
Browning (Blackfeet Nation)	HWY 2	West	7	Daylight	11-Apr	15-Oct	3,347
Clearwater Junction (MSLA)	MT 200	East/West	7	Daylight	11-Apr	18-Oct	47,720
Hwy 12 Helena	HWY 12	West	7	Daylight	02-May	18-Oct	7,970
Sula	HWY 93	North	7	12	16-May	07-Sept	2,412
Interior Stations							
Swan Lakers	N/A	N/A	Varied	Varied	25-May	07-Sep	654
Seville (Blackfeet Nation)	Hwy 2	West	7	8	06-July	26-Sept	527
St. Xavier (BCCD)	MT 313	South	7	12	20-May	24-Oct	4,424
Flowing Wells (GCCD)	MT 200	East/West	7	Daylight	29-Apr	25-Oct	5,279
Fresno Reservoir	Fresno	N/A	4	9	16-May	07-Sept	1,374
Ravalli (CSKT)	US 93	North	7	24	20-Feb	18-Oct	21,982
Thompson Falls (CSKT)	MT 200	East	7	12	21-May	20-Sept	5,570

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Hours of operation	Start date	End date	Total Inspections
Whitefish Lake City Beach (City of Whitefish)	Boat Ramp	N/A	7	12	1-May	30-Sept	686
Whitefish Lake Decon Station (City of Whitefish)	Edgewood Place	North	7	8	1-May	30-Sept	69
Parks							
Tongue River Reservoir State Park	State Park	N/A	4	10	16-May	07-Sept	1906
Whitefish Lake State Park (City of Whitefish)	Boat Ramp	N/A	7	12	1-May	30-Sept	1,004
Glacier National Park (NPS)	Apgar	N/A	7	8	May	October	10,366
Yellowstone National Park (NPS)*	3 Locations	N/A	7	8	25-May	1-Nov	3,939
Regional and Area Offices							
FWP Region 1 Office	Kalispell	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	727
FWP Region 2 Office	Missoula	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	13
FWP Region 3 Office	Bozeman	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	15
FWP Region 4 Office	Great Falls	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	6
FWP Region 5 Office	Billings	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	4
FWP Region 6 Office	Glasgow	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	1
FWP Region 7 Office	Miles City	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	17
Lewistown Area Resource Office	Lewistown	N/A	5	4	02-Jan	31-Dec	0
Havre Area Resource Office	Havre	N/A	5	4	02-Jan	31-Dec	0
Helena Area Resource Office	Helena	N/A	5	9	02-Jan	31-Dec	4
Canyon Ferry Reservoir							
Goose Bay Marina	Canyon Ferry	N/A	Varied	10	17-May	22-May	68

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Hours of operation	Start date	End date	Total Inspections
White Earth	Canyon Ferry	N/A	Varied	10	19-May	13-Sept	54
Silos Area	Canyon Ferry	N/A	4	10	16-May	13-Sept	5,257
Tiber Reservoir							
Tiber Boat Ramp – Marina	Tiber	N/A	7	Daylight	02-May	04-Oct	1,047
Tiber Boat Ramp – Willow Creek	Tiber	N/A	7	12	15-May	15-Aug	178
Tiber Boat Ramp – VFW	Tiber	N/A	7	Daylight	02-May	08-Oct	1,397
TOTALS							174,423

*Yellowstone National Park numbers are reported to highlight partner watercraft inspection effort but are not include in the total because inspections were not conducted in Montana.



PHOTO 1. BROWNING WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION

HIGH RISK BOATS

High-risk boats are categorized as vessels that:

- Originated outside of the northwest (AB, BC, WY, ID, OR, WA, or MT)
- Launched in a waterbody in a zebra or quagga mussel-positive state
- Are from a mussel-positive State
- Originated at Tiber Reservoir
- Or has standing water, plants, animals, dirty or ballast tanks.

These boats are more likely to be carrying adult or veliger (larval) mussels, aquatic weeds or other AIS; therefore, extra time and care is taken during inspection of these boats. In 2020, there were 14,186 high-risk boats that passed through FWP and partner inspection stations, which amounts to 13% of all inspections. The border stations with the highest number of high-risk watercraft were Wibaux, followed by Hardin, Dillon, Nashua, Broadus, St. Regis, Sula, and Troy (Figure 7).

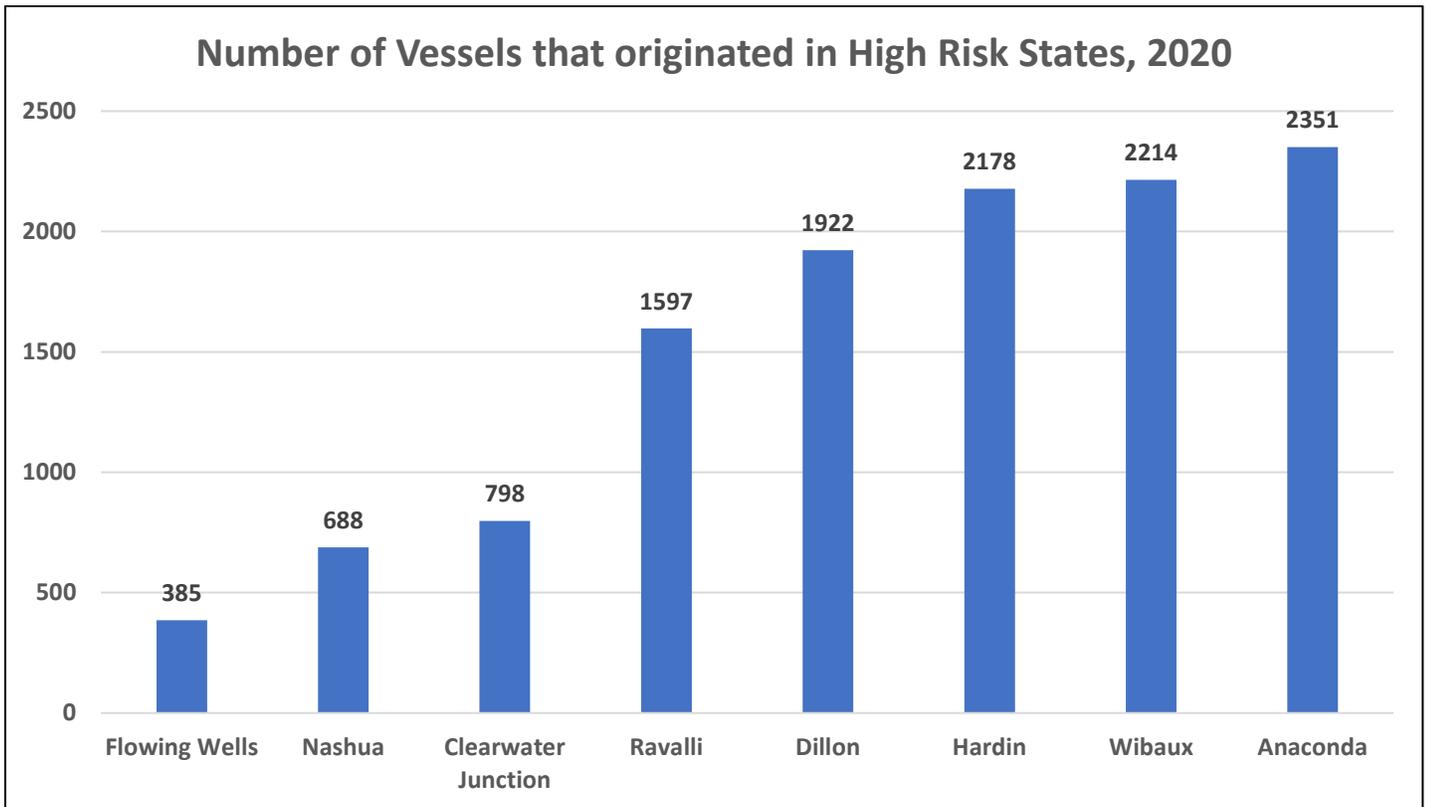


Figure 7. Number of high-risk boats by station based on origin: Mussel positive state or water, 2020.

TIBER RESERVOIR

Following the detection of invasive mussel larvae at Tiber and a suspect detection on Canyon Ferry in late 2016, mandatory exit inspections were put in place to ensure boats are clean, drained and dry upon exit to prevent the spread of invasive mussels to other waters. In 2020, three mandatory inspection stations operated at Tiber Reservoir: Marina, VFW, and Willow Creek. These stations conducted 2472 inspections, a 60% increase from 2019 (1536 inspections), to ensure vessels were clean, drained and dry. If issues were identified on the boat or if standing water could not be drained, station staff decontaminated the vessel.

Three Certified Boater ramps were operated at Tiber in 2020; although, the Willow Creek station was open to all public for three months (June, July, and August). These certified boater ramps were gated ramps that allow access to boaters that primarily use Tiber. To access these ramps boaters were required to take a test and sign an affidavit they will follow the rules for Certified Boater ramps. Certified Boaters are permitted to use these ramps and can exit without an inspection if they are cleaned, drained and dry. If they wish to launch on another waterbody, they must receive an inspection / decontamination. There were 459 Certified Boaters for Tiber in 2020.

IN-STATE AND OUT-OF STATE BOATS

Border stations see higher percentages of out-of-state boats than internal stations and roving crews, but internal stations also see out-of-state-boats and are extremely important to the overall prevention strategy. Many Montana boaters regularly recreate in AIS-positive waters and could potentially spread AIS to other clean waterbodies in the state. It is also common for Montana residents to purchase used boats from out-of state, particularly from midwestern states. In 2020, half of the boats intercepted transporting zebra or quagga mussels were recently purchased.

Internal stations provide another level of protection for these in-state boats that might miss an inspection at the border. Internal stations also help prevent movement of AIS between Montana waters. In-state boats can still transport AIS including species such as Eurasian watermilfoil, New Zealand mudsnails, Asian clams, faucet snails, illegal bait/live fish, and pathogens between waterbodies. Internal inspection stations help contain AIS and minimize the potential spread among Montana waters.

AIS INTERCEPTED

Out of the 174,423 inspections during the 2020 field season, 5,885 (<5%) boats had some type of issue identified (Table 2). Standing water (water in bilges, live wells, etc.) was the most common factor identified followed by vegetation. Standing water is a concern because it can carry mussel larvae, disease-causing pathogens, and plant fragments. Zebra or quagga mussels were found on 35 boats over the course of the season (Figures 8 and 9).

These vessels are decontaminated on site and require a follow up inspection / decontamination before they are permitted to launch. Additional dry time may be required to ensure no live mussels remain on the vessel.

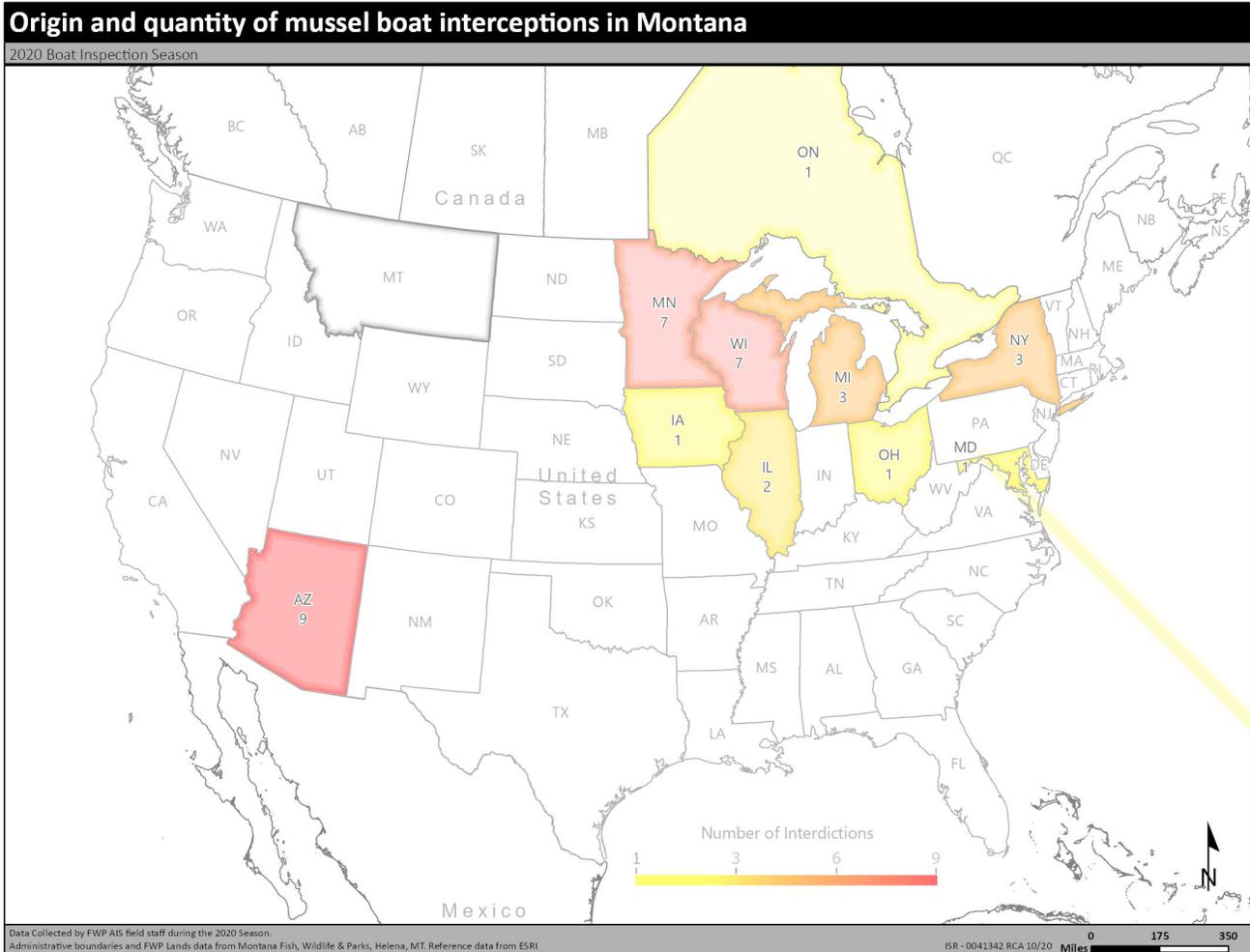


Figure 8. Origin of mussel fouled vessels intercepted at Montana watercraft inspection stations.



PHOTO 2. MUSSELS ON WATERCRAFT INTERCEPTED AT ANACONDA INSPECTION STATION

FWP Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Stations

2020 Season

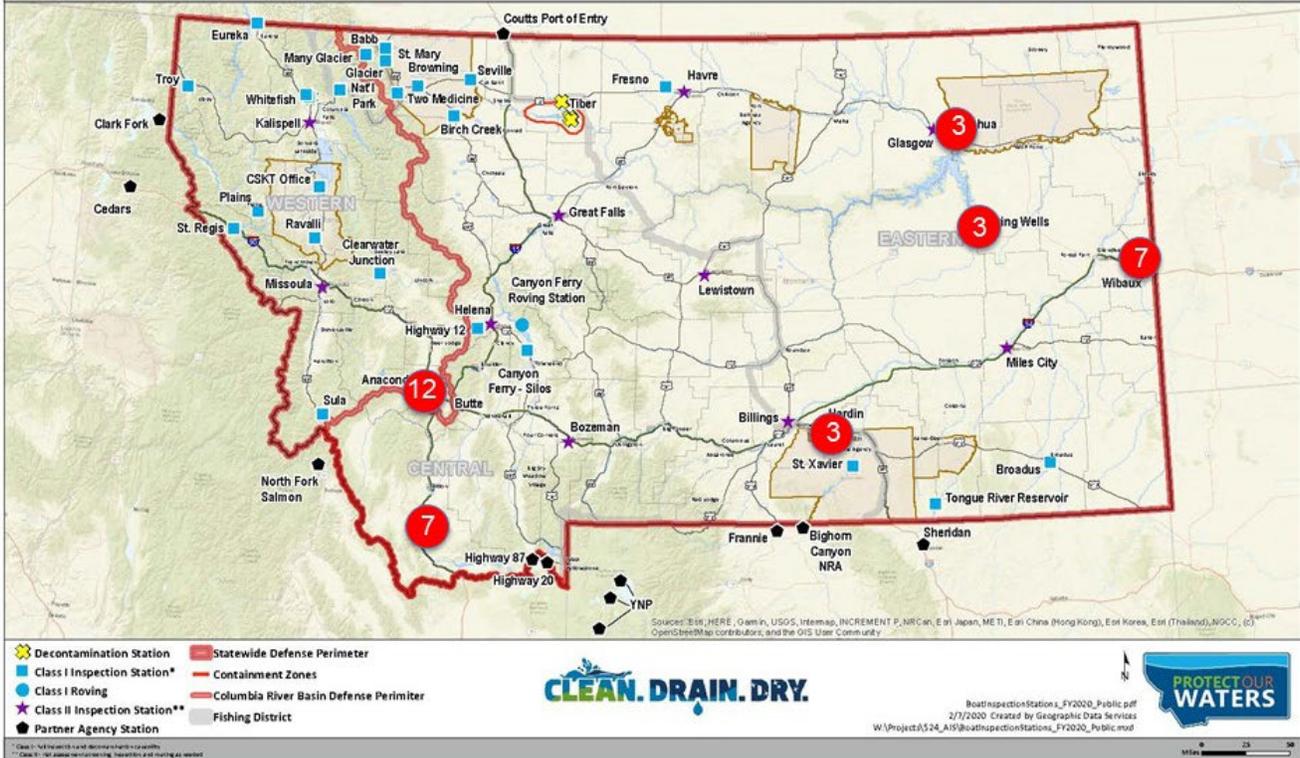


Figure 9. Locations and quantity of mussel boat interceptions by station, 2020.

When a Dreissenid mussel-infested boat or piece of equipment is found, protocol mandates that staff from the FWP AIS management team are contacted and oversee decontamination. If the boat is complex (air conditioning unit, seas strainers, multiple internal compartments, complex plumbing, or ballast tanks), marine mechanics may be brought in to aid in the decontamination process. Boats must pass a second inspection before they can launch in Montana waters. Thirty-five mussel fouled vessel were intercepted in Montana in 2020 and 88 over the last 3 years (Figure 10). If a boat or piece of equipment is carrying vegetation or any other AIS besides mussels, the inspectors remove the AIS, decontaminate the boat on site, and then release it.

2017 - 2020 Boat Inspection Season

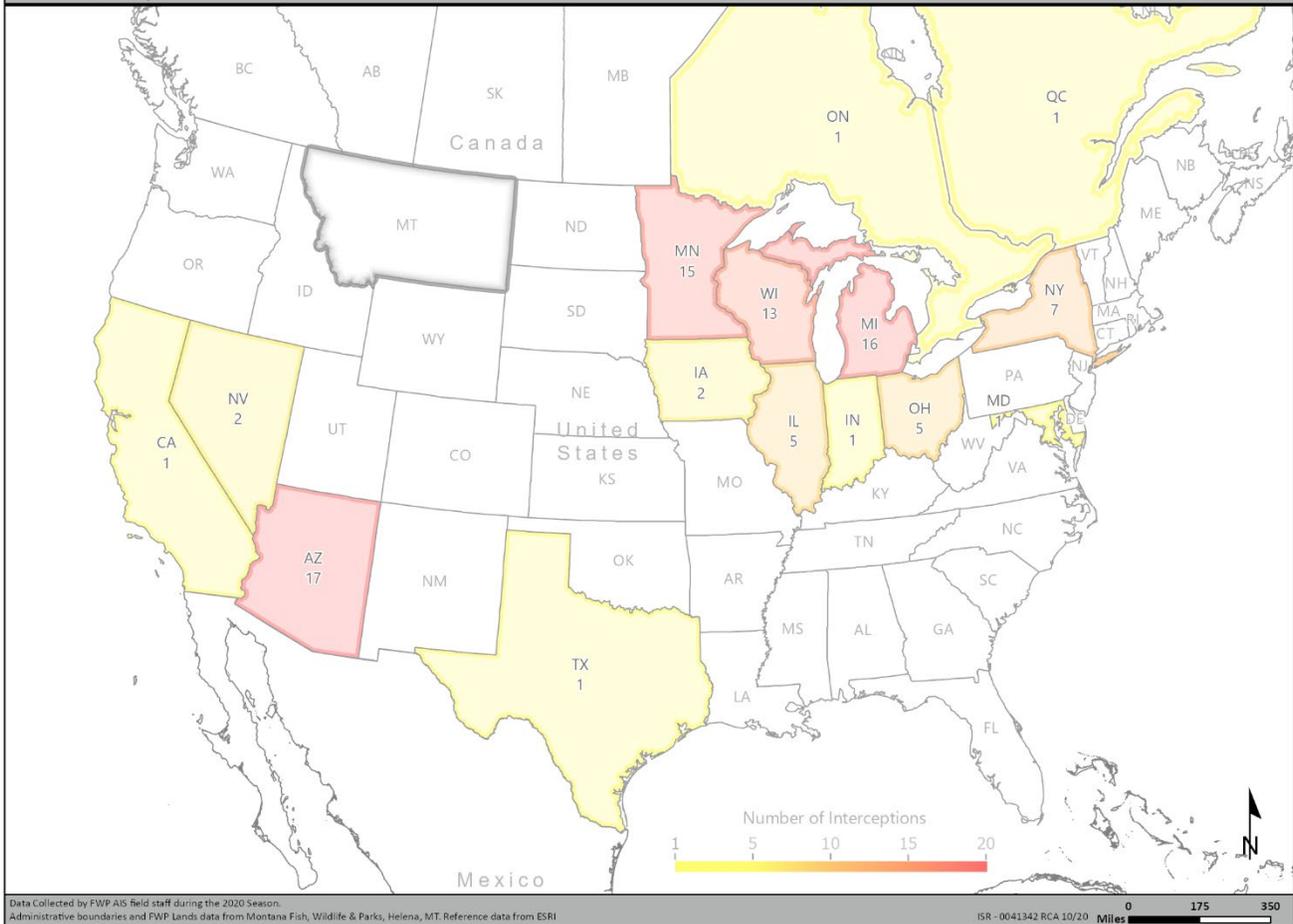


Figure 10. Quantity and location of mussel boats intercepted in Montana from 2017-2020.



PHOTO 3. MUSSELS ON WATERCRAFT INTERCEPTED AT WIBAUX INSPECTION STATION

Table 2. Observations of mussels, plants, water, ballasts, or illegal bait per station.

Station	Out-of-State	In-State	Total	Zebra / Quagga Mussels	Animals Found	Vegetation	Standing Water	Dirty, Crusty, Slimy	Illegal Bait	Illegal Fish	Ballast Boats	Total
<i>Border Stations</i>												
Nashua	662	2135	2797	3	0	2	31	3	1	0	11	51
St. Regis	6,798	1829	8627	0	8	85	118	13	0	0	276	500
Dillon	3341	794	4135	7	0	4	45	7	0	0	232	295
Eureka - Closed due to Covid-19*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hardin	2794	5,327	8121	3	3	5	190	6	1	0	428	636
Troy	3800	5,612	9412	0	2	58	71	6	0	1	77	215
Broadus (PRCD)	386	83	469	0	0	1	21	7	0	0	2	31
Hebgen Lake	357	84	441	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	7	10
Wibaux	1694	782	2476	7	3	6	142	0	2	0	1	161
<i>Continental Divide Stations</i>												
Anaconda	5501	8366	13867	12	2	21	218	20	0	1	552	826
Browning (Blackfoot Nation)	970	2377	3347	0	0	2	28	19	2	0	172	223
Clearwater Junction (MSLA County)	6102	41,618	47720	0	4	225	202	15	0	0	785	1231
Highway 12 Helena	978	6992	7970	0	0	6	55	4	0	0	141	206
Sula	1233	1179	2412	0	0	5	26	5	0	0	15	51
<i>Interior Stations</i>												
St. Xavier (BCCD)	1029	3395	4424	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	90	100
Flowing Wells (GCCD)	1499	3780	5279	3	1	9	566	18	1	0	0	598
Seville (Blackfoot Nation)	171	356	527	0	1	2	4	8	0	0	19	34

Station	Out-of-State	In-State	Total	Zebra / Quagga Mussels	Animals Found	Vegetation	Standing Water	Dirty, Crusty, Slimy	Illegal Bait	Illegal Fish	Ballast Boats	Total
Fresno Reservoir	47	1327	1374	0	0	8	224	8	0	0	52	292
Ravalli (CSKT)	5744	16238	21982	0	2	23	72	41	0	0	572	710
Thompson Falls (CSKT)	1147	4423	5570	0	0	30	19	10	2	0	54	115
Swan Lakers	N/A	N/A	654	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Canyon Ferry Reservoir	291	5088	5379	0	1	4	7	1	0	0	426	439
Whitefish Lake (City of Whitefish)	190	1569	1759	0	0	5	29	2	0	0	177	213
Parks												
Tongue River State Park	787	1119	1906	0	1	0	22	0	0	0	134	157
Yellowstone National Park* see text	N/A	N/A	3939	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Glacier National Park	N/A	N/A	10366	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Tiber Reservoir												
Marina	20	1,027	1047	0	0	18	958	0	1	1	9	987
VFW	70	1,327	1397	0	1	628	1210	19	0	0	3	1861
Willow Creek	9	169	178	0	0	5	147	3	0	0	0	155
Regional Offices												
Regional Offices	174	613	787	0	1	5	16	1	0	0	21	44
Totals	45,794	117,609	174,423	35	30	1,163	4,423	221	10	3	4,256	10,141

LIVE FISH

It is illegal to transport live fish, including bait fish, into Montana without authorization from FWP, and it is unlawful to possess or transport live fish away from the body of water in which the fish were taken anywhere in the western and central fishing district. Live non-game fish may be used as bait in certain waters in the central and eastern fishing districts. These regulations exist to prevent the introduction of non-native fish into Montana's waters. Fish and the water they are transported in can also carry pathogens, weeds, snails, mussels, or other AIS. In 2020, inspectors found 3 cases of illegal live fish over the course of the season. Standard protocol for inspection staff is to confiscate any illegal live fish and call an FWP game warden.

LIVE BAIT OTHER THAN FISH

Live animals such as mealworms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects may be used as bait on all waters, but some live bait animals may not be imported into the state without authority from FWP. For example, anglers who use leeches in Montana must have purchased them within Montana or have a bill-of-sale from an FWP-approved out-of-state dealer. Leeches have the potential to transport pathogens and mussel larvae in the water that they are transported in. Watercraft station inspectors confiscate leeches if the angler cannot prove out of state leeches were legally obtained. FWP inspectors found 10 cases of illegal leeches in 2020.

COMMERCIALY HAULED AND OVERSIZE VESSEL TRACKING AND INSPECTION

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) helps support the AIS Program in several ways, including the tracking and inspection of commercially hauled and oversize vessels (Figure 11). Licensing and permitting personnel with MDT question commercial boat haulers about the origin and destination of vessels during the permitting process and include a restriction on permits requiring boat haulers to contact FWP upon entry into Montana. AIS Program staff receive notifications for all permitted vessels entering the state and follow up with all boats destined for Montana. For vessels passing through the state, notifications are forwarded to the destination state or province.



PHOTO 4. ST. REGIS WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION

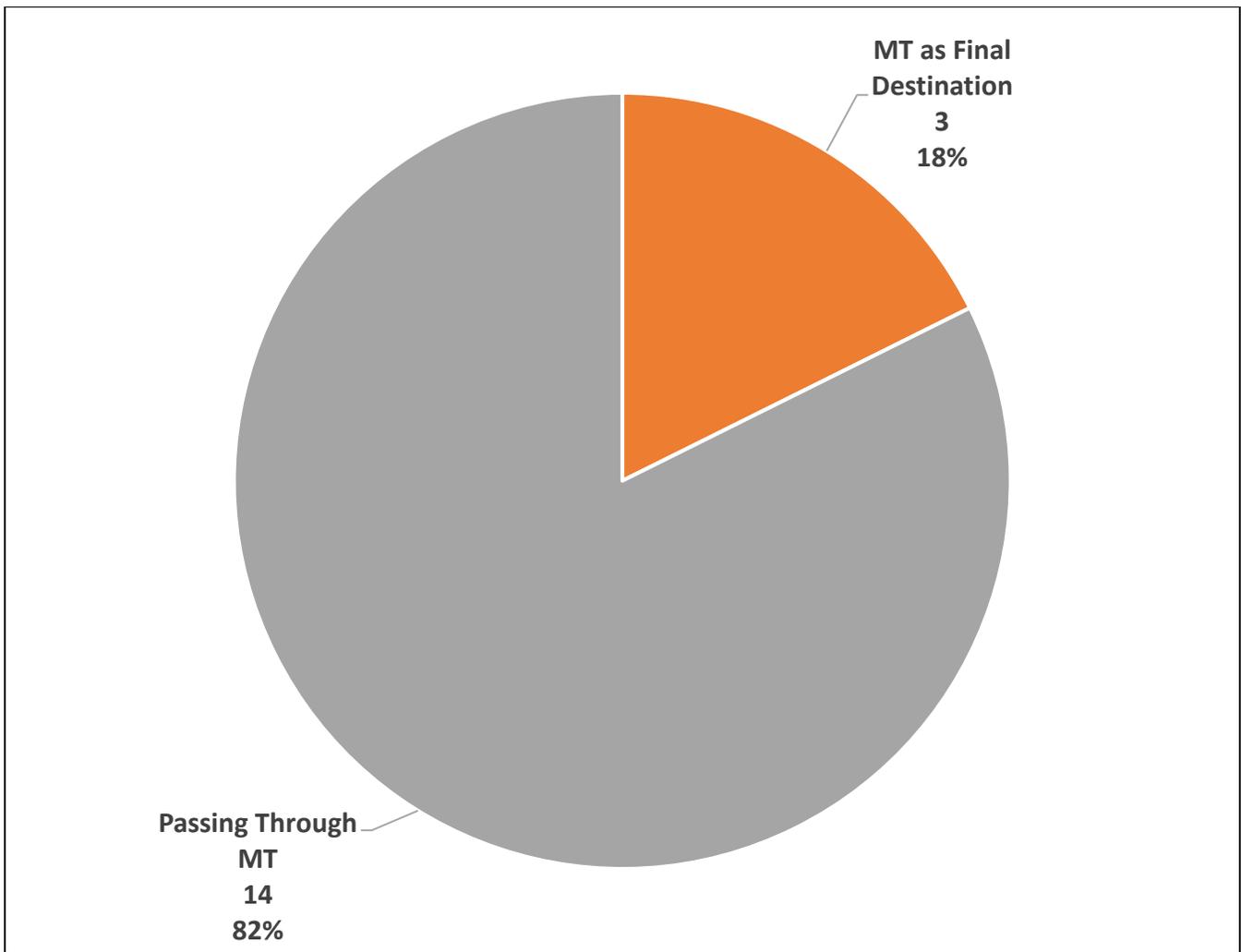


Figure 11. Percentage of commercially hauled boats staying or going through Montana, 2020.

ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

Compliance at watercraft inspection stations is an ongoing challenge. To address this, FWP installs signage, flagging and lighted message boards to clearly indicate the inspection station and the mandatory need to stop. Despite this fact, boaters sometimes fail to stop at the station. FWP Wardens dedicate time to work at stations throughout the season to enforce compliance. When wardens aren't present, station staff are trained to call 1-800-TipMONT if a boat fails to stop at the station. Enforcement officers from FWP, state police or local enforcement then attempt to follow up with that watercraft. FWP wardens issued 279 AIS related citations and 308 warnings in 2020, most of these were for failure to stop at inspection stations.

FWP wardens also stop boats on the water to ensure boaters have the proper safety equipment, check fishing licenses, vessel prevention pass, and verify boats have met mandatory inspection requirements for entering the state or crossing west over the Continental Divide.

Additionally, the AIS prevention program worked closely with the law enforcement division to help direct where the greatest needs were concerning compliance. The enforcement division did a great job across the state, but also provided the program with coverage at the Anaconda station Thursday through Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day. From 2017-2020 compliance has continued to improve and data from the enforcement division demonstrates this over this period. Since 2017 there have been 504 citations and 903 warnings issued to boaters who drive by stations. Out of all of these encounters, only 9 times did they pull over a boater that had drove by a station a second time. This is 99.5% of all stops have been first time offenders.

OTHER PREVENTION EFFORTS

Wading anglers: FWP promoted a targeted outreach campaign to wading anglers encouraging cleaning boots and gear. Outreach was distributed to partners and user groups as well as through an Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC3) effort directed at local fly shops. Signs were also installed at wading angler sites promoting the clean drain dry message.

Seaplanes: FWP was approached by the Seaplane Pilots Association (SPA) to help them ensure pilots do not transport AIS. The State of Washington, in coordination with SPA, developed a training and certification to ensure seaplanes are free of invasive species. <https://www.seaplanepilotsassociation.org/invasive-species/> Montana, Idaho and Oregon endorsed this training and coordinate with seaplane pilots to address the AIS issue.

QUALITY ASSURANCE QUALITY CONTROL (QA/QC)

It is an ongoing challenge to ensure that inspectors follow protocols every time to ensure boats are clean, drained and dry. To help address this issue, FWP has sought out local entities that are interested in operating watercraft inspection stations. Contracting with local entities such as tribes, counties or conservation districts allows for local management and expand local support and participation in AIS prevention efforts. Contracted stations also are required to hire a station supervisor who reinforces protocols and provides oversight and management at the station. The prevention program implemented a QAQC plan in 2020 to improve consistency across the board.

QA/QC for the 2020 season include:

1. Updated training to include more hands on and interactive content
2. Refresher trainings to be delivered throughout the season
3. An online inspection evaluation that will be distributed to boaters to report on their inspection
4. Incentives for inspectors to keep them engaged and motivated throughout the season supported by Montana Trout Unlimited
5. Lanyards with name tags with the back of the name tag stating what needs to be done on every inspection
6. Interviews with boat owners on previously sealed vessels that stop at another station down the road
7. Data review throughout the season
8. Job performance assessments
9. Annual performance reviews
10. Roving site lead in western Montana and eastern Montana

SUMMARY

The 2020 watercraft inspection season was highly successful. Even with all of the challenges we face, Covid-19 being a big one for 2020, we did more inspections, had greater compliance, intercepted more mussel boats, kept our staff safe, and made many improvements. Overall, FWP recruited many outstanding people to serve in inspector positions across the state. Their professionalism and dedication to this issue were instrumental in stations running smoothly and in getting people checked and on their way as quickly as possible. Many improvements have been put into place in 2020 and the program will continue to adjust and improve to make the program more effective and efficient.

Knowledge and awareness of the issues surrounding AIS continues to increase because of the outreach and education efforts across Montana. Many thanks to all our partners around the state. A special thanks to Missoula County Weed District, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, The Blackfeet Nation, Garfield County Conservation District, Glacier National Park, Whitefish Lake Institute and the City of Whitefish, McCone County Conservation District, Bighorn County Conservation District, and Powder River Conservation District.

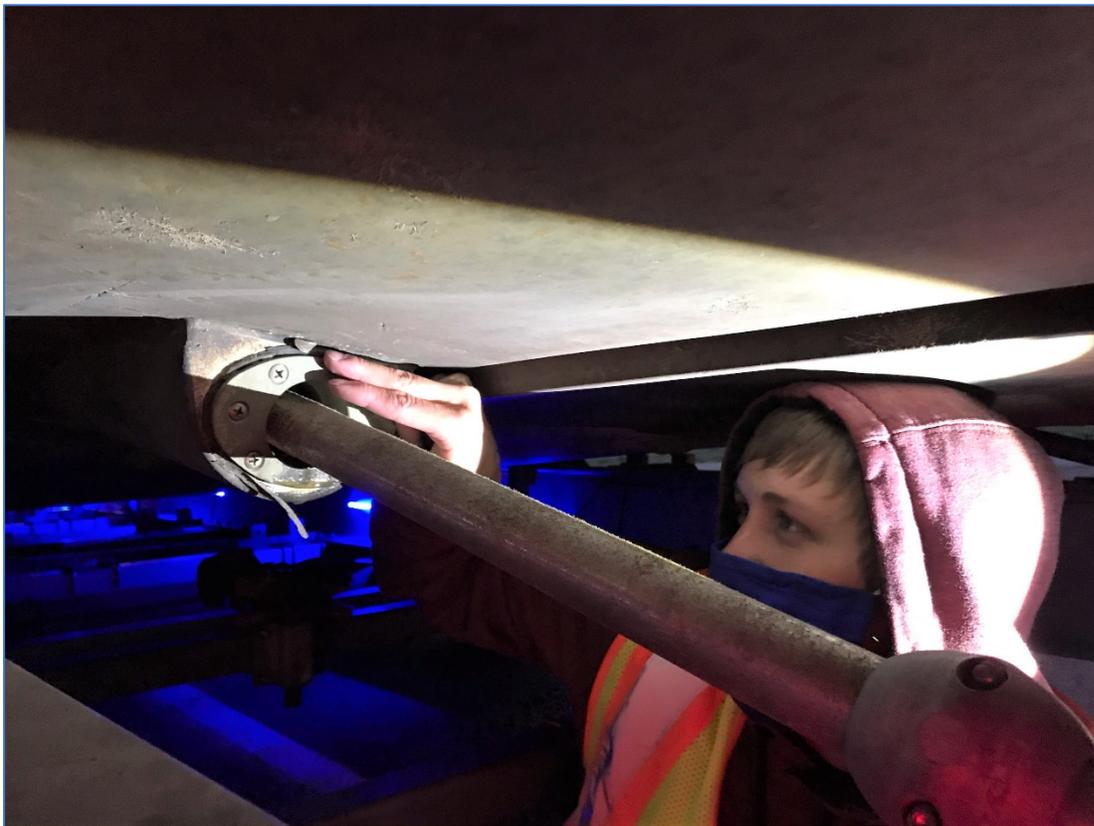


PHOTO 5. INSPECTOR FINDS A MUSSEL ON PROP SHAFT AT ANACONDA WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION

COVER PHOTO: TIBER VFW WATERCRAFT DECONTAMINATION STATION DURING WALLEYE TOURNAMENT