

Aquatic Invasive Species-Check your equipment before storage

With open water season winding down, recreational water equipment is being removed from the water for the year. It is crucial everyone continues to take the proper steps to make sure all equipment is cleaned properly to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Zebra mussels in particular, are extremely invasive organisms and are currently established in Big and Middle McKenzie Lakes. 2019 has shown more have inhabited the two lakes. Landowners have reported finding thousands of them covered on bottom of boats, motors and docks. Monitoring plates that citizens use on the McKenzie Chain of lakes, are reporting an increased population than years past. Zebra mussels reproduce quickly, remove important food sources for other water-living organisms and destroy motors and water intake pipes which can be very expensive to repair. Depending on conditions, they may survive out of water from several days to several weeks. To date, no other lakes in Washburn or Burnett Counties have found zebra mussels.

The following steps should be made when taking equipment out of the water for winter storage:

1. Inspect and remove all plants, mud or other debris found equipment that has been sitting in water: dock posts, wheels, boats, rafts, pontoons, kayaks, jet skis.
2. Drain all water if possible.
3. Spray all equipment (including live wells) with a pressure washer sprayer. This will help get unwanted invasive species that are hanging on tight or that you can't see.
4. Run water pumps and start motors out of water to flush out remaining water out of the cooling system.
5. Spray down your equipment with a bleach/water solution, including the inside of live wells. One tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water and let it air dry to help kill unseen hitchhikers.
6. Talk to your own service provider and neighbors about taking these steps.
7. If you find something suspicious, take a picture, bag it and contact Lisa Burns, Conservation Coordinator with Washburn County at 715-468-4654 or lburns@co.washburn.wi.us.



Wheel from a pontoon lift full of zebra mussels