



STATE OF IDAHO



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 7, 2011

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Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds
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Boise - The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) announced Monday that mandatory watercraft inspection stations will begin opening in Idaho between March 15 and April 2. The first station to open in the state will be westbound on Interstate 90 near the town of Wallace. Stations on Idaho's southern border also will open early in the season this year. Additional stations will be opening statewide throughout the boating season. The stations will be open from 7 a.m.-7 p.m., seven days a week.

Boaters should expect inspections! Quagga and zebra mussels do not occur in Idaho, and this program is preventative. All boaters must stop at the stations. Watercraft inspectors will be looking for high-risk boats that have been in quagga mussel- and zebra mussel-impacted states. All boats will be inspected for any attached mussels and/or standing water. Owners also will be asked where they have boated in the previous 30 days. **It is important that boaters arrive in Idaho with a clean, drained and dry watercraft.**

Idaho's inspection program underscores the importance of preventing these mussels from becoming established in Idaho," Agriculture Director Celia Gould said. "If introduced, these mussels could impact Idaho's water bodies and recreation and likely impose a heavy maintenance burden on irrigated agriculture, power generation and water suppliers."

Zebra mussels and quagga mussels are invasive species. They are European in origin and range in size from microscopic to the size of a fingernail, depending on the life stage. They are prolific breeders and attach themselves to hard and soft surfaces, fouling freshwater ecosystems and clogging intake pipes drawing water from infested water bodies. They cause significant maintenance challenges for raw-water systems, costing millions of dollars a year to treat. Although populations have been widespread in the Great Lakes for almost two decades, these mussels were found for the first time west of the Continental Divide in the past three years, specifically in parts of Nevada, California, Arizona, Colorado and Utah.

The state is seeking the public's help to prevent the introduction of this invasive species. Boats are the primary transporters of zebra mussels and quagga mussels. Mussels attached to watercraft or trailers can easily be transported to other water bodies. Water in boat engines, bilges, live wells and buckets can carry microscopic mussel larvae (veligers) to other water bodies. Multiple state and federal agencies are urging boaters and watercraft users to clean, drain and dry boats and equipment before entering Idaho.

ISDA urges all boaters to take the following steps to prevent the introduction of the mussels to Idaho:

- Inspect all exposed surfaces - small mussels feel like sandpaper to the touch
- Wash the hull thoroughly, preferably with hot water
- Remove all plant and animal material
- Drain all water and dry all areas
- Drain and dry the lower outboard unit
- Clean and dry all live wells
- Empty and dry any buckets
- Dispose of all bait in the trash
- Wait five days and keep watercraft dry between launches into different fresh waters

For more information contact Matt Voile at 208-332-8667 or email at Matt.voile@agri.idaho.gov

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