

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 invasive organisms that have established in Big and Middle McKenzie Lakes. 2020 has shown an increase in Big McKenzie. Landowners continue to report finding thousands of them covered on bottom of boats, motors, docks and along the shoreline. They cut feet, clog and overheat boat motors, and eat microscopic organism needed for fish and other species and suffocate native clams, mussels and aquatic insects. 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. 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.
5. Talk to your own service provider and neighbors about taking these steps.
6. 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.

