

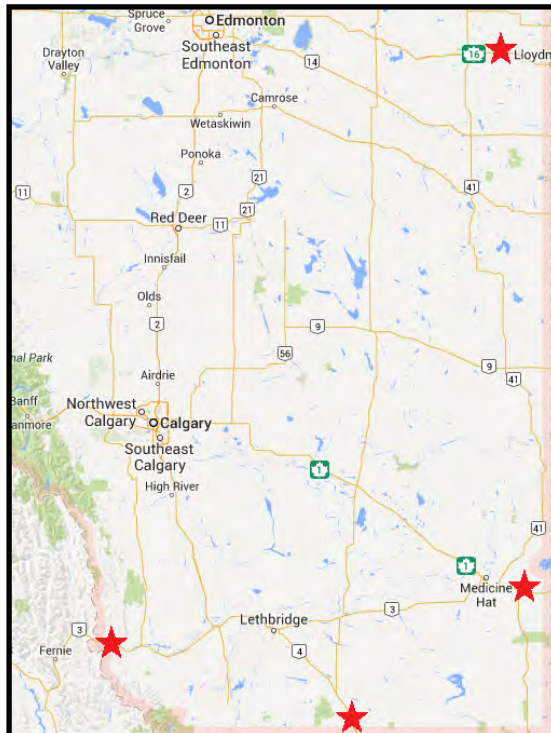
Aquatic Invasive Species Management Program

Waterton Group Update May 2014

Mussels are on the move!

With the recent zebra mussel positive on Lake Winnipeg, Alberta has decided to up its game. Based on the good work and lessons we learned last season, we are going to begin watercraft inspections again this June. This season our plan will be to fortify that AB /SK border – we have no idea what kind of boater movement traffic there is, but we do know that we don't want anybody launching who has been in infested waters east of us!

This summer we have a great partnership established with the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit of Alberta Transportation, and we will be setting up our watercraft inspections at major weigh stations. We are quadrupling the number of inspections staff from last season, and Tourism, Parks and Recreation has added an additional team of four more Inspectors to target the busy provincial park boat launches.



Exciting Update!!

We have a few canine members joining our inspections team this summer! Check out the non-profit organization Working Dogs for Conservation

<http://workingdogsforconservation.org/>

This is an amazing organization and we are so fortunate to be working with them. This summer there will be a pilot program to test canine efficacy in watercraft inspections, and is a shared program between Montana and Alberta. Stay tuned this fall for results of this pilot, but be assured these dogs have an unbelievable ability to detect what humans cannot. I have witnessed the California Fish and Wildlife Wardens (who have been using canines to detect mussels for several years) test their dogs to detect quagga veligers in small amounts of water planted on a pontoon boat. All 3 dogs alerted to the scent – truly awesome as there was only 10mls of water containing microscopic samples. It was pretty hot outside though, and the dogs got thirsty and drank the samples!

◀ Lily doing a boat inspection. Lily can also look for Chinese bush clover and emerald ash borer, and the scat of grizzly and black bears. She has even searched for Cross River gorillas in Cameroon!

Remember our AIS Hotline
**1-855-336-BOAT
(2628)**

Education and Awareness

“Clean, Drain, Dry” remains the focus of our message to Albertans. We are planning a big education and awareness blitz this summer, including hundreds of signs distributed across the province. This ESRD website has some specific information on what we mean by “Clean, Drain, Dry”. The focus right now is on the watercraft vector, but as we progress, the other vectors we identified at the risk analysis will be addressed as well.

<http://esrd.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/invasive-species/invasive-species-prevention.aspx>

CLEAN + DRAIN + DRY YOUR BOAT



Props, boats and natural ecosystems can be ruined by zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Take a few simple steps to preserve our lakes and fisheries: **CLEAN** off the plants and debris, **DRAIN** bilges and ballast, and **DRY** any wet areas of your boat.



ZEBRA MUSSELS



QUAGGA MUSSELS



EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL



DON'T LET THEM CATCH A RIDE
STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

TO REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES:
1-855-336-BOAT (2628)
esrd.alberta.ca



Monitoring

Monitoring will continue to be an important part of our prevention program. As you know, all 55 sites we checked last summer came back negative. The aim this season will be to target 70 sites, through the amazing partnership network. Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA) will lead the way along with Alberta Lakes Management Society (ALMS) with up to 55 (yet undetermined) targeted waterbodies on their list. Agriculture and Rural Development will also take a hand in monitoring down south with the Irrigation Districts. Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation has also committed to monitor 3 lakes in each region of the province. ALMS will coordinate the volunteer monitoring program (the substrate samples) that will be deployed all over the province. Contact info@alms.ca to take part in this program. And on top of all of this, Alberta will begin to monitor for Eurasian Water Milfoil for the first time!



Protocols

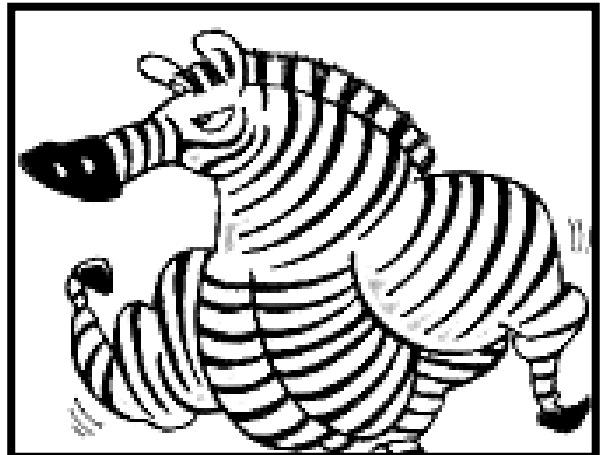
ESRD also has established a protocol for mussels that we may discover on high risk boats. As of last August, anyone designated as Fishery Officer has the authority to do whatever is necessary, including ordering a decontamination. While our inspection stations are voluntary, if we do find something our Officers can take action. There are several weigh stations in the province equipped with the proper hot water units and boat decontamination kits. Alberta sent Commercial Vehicle Inspectors down to Lake Mead this winter to get hands on training of decontamination of actual mussels. Be assured we are well equipped and in good hands with all of these Officers. Our first decontamination of 2014 has already occurred at the Balzac weigh station. Idaho inspectors alerted the Alberta hotline of a mussel-fouled boat en route to Chestermere Lake. We are hopeful that by next season we may have the ability to do mandatory watercraft inspections.

Program Development

While all of this is happening on the provincial front, efforts are ramping up with our partners on the trans-boundary front for Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. Through the Crown Managers Partnership, we held a 2 day workshop in Cranbrook with a great group of dedicated parties from the governments and invasive species councils of Alberta, Montana and B.C. Together we mapped out inspection stations, talked about the holes where the Crown is concerned, how to address gaps (like seasons of inspections and hours of inspections) and standardizing monitoring protocols. We even started the conversation around other vectors of introduction. The Crown of the Continent is free of invasive mussels and Eurasian Watermilfoil, the outcome remains the simple: lets keep it this way. Caryn Miske and myself just spoke to a group called the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative, and they were very interested in the way this collaborative effort has scaled from a small southern Alberta prototype into provincial level and Crown-wide AIS programs.

Fighting with Mussels

So we are inspecting watercraft, we are monitoring our waterbodies, now what about the big WHAT IF? Well, there is a dedicated team who is working together to produce a plan if we have a positive identification in one of our waterbodies. This planning group is led by a member of Alberta's Support and Emergency Response Team, so we are in good hands. I am sure everyone is curious as to the outcomes of Manitoba's use of liquid potash to destroy the zebra mussels discovered in Lake Winnipeg last fall as well.



Any questions or ideas to help us as we continue to grow this program, please let me know.

Cindy.Sawchuk@gov.ab.ca



Happy spring and help us spread the word!