Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Silos Decontamination Station at Canyon Ferry Reservoir, 2017.

2017

Watercraft Inspection Station Annual Report

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Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

2017 ANNUAL WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) collectively implement the Montana Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management Plan. The goal of the Plan is to minimize the harmful impacts of AIS by limiting or preventing the spread of AIS into, within, and out of Montana. This goal is achieved through coordination and collaboration between our partner agencies and stakeholder groups; prevention of new AIS introductions in the state; 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 and containment of AIS at Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs, which is accomplished primarily through watercraft inspection stations.

Montana FWP has been operating watercraft inspection stations since 2004. Watercraft inspections have always been mandatory for anglers and have been required for all other boaters since 2011. As watercraft and water-based equipment are the most common vector for the transport and subsequent introduction of AIS, these check stations are a key part of Montana's overall prevention strategy. Montana Department of Agriculture operated a handful of watercraft inspection stations from 2009-2012, but due to changing authorities FWP now operates all of Montana's State-run stations. Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area operate watercraft inspection stations within Park boundaries, and the City of Whitefish and the Blackfeet Nation have been inspecting boats for several years. The Flathead and Swan Lakers also conduct volunteer boat inspections on their respective lakes on selected days, and Missoula County operated Clearwater Junction and the Swan Roving crew.

Staff at State-run inspection stations inspect boats and equipment for any aquatic organisms, standing water, illegal bait and fish, and educate the public about the importance of following Clean, Drain and Dry protocols. FWP also gathers information on water user origin and movement. These data not only give the inspector insight into the relative risk of that vessel for carrying AIS, they are vital to the overall guidance of the FWP AIS Program.

NEW IN 2017

In the fall of 2016, invasive mussel larvae were detected in Tiber Reservoir and a suspect detection in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. This prompted Governor Bullock to declare a natural resource emergency along with the

commission of an incident command system to coordinate a rapid response effort to address the issue. Through this process many changes were made for the 2017 watercraft inspection season, such as:

1.) New administrative rules in 2017:
    a. Mandatory inspection and decontamination for all vessels and equipment leaving Tiber or Canyon Ferry Reservoirs, unless approved by the Department for local travel.
    b. At Canyon Ferry and Tiber reservoirs, all bait and fish must be transported without water.
    c. The transport of standing water is prohibited.
    d. Mandatory inspection for watercraft heading west over the continental divide into the Columbia River watershed.
    e. Watercraft and equipment entering Montana must be inspected prior to launch in any Montana waterbody.
    f. Measures must be taken to clean, drain and dry your vessel after each use.
2.) Five area supervisors were hired full time to manage watercraft inspection stations (Figure 1).
    a. Northwest
    b. Southwest
    c. South Central -- Canyon Ferry decontamination stations
    d. North Central -- Tiber decontamination stations
    e. Eastern

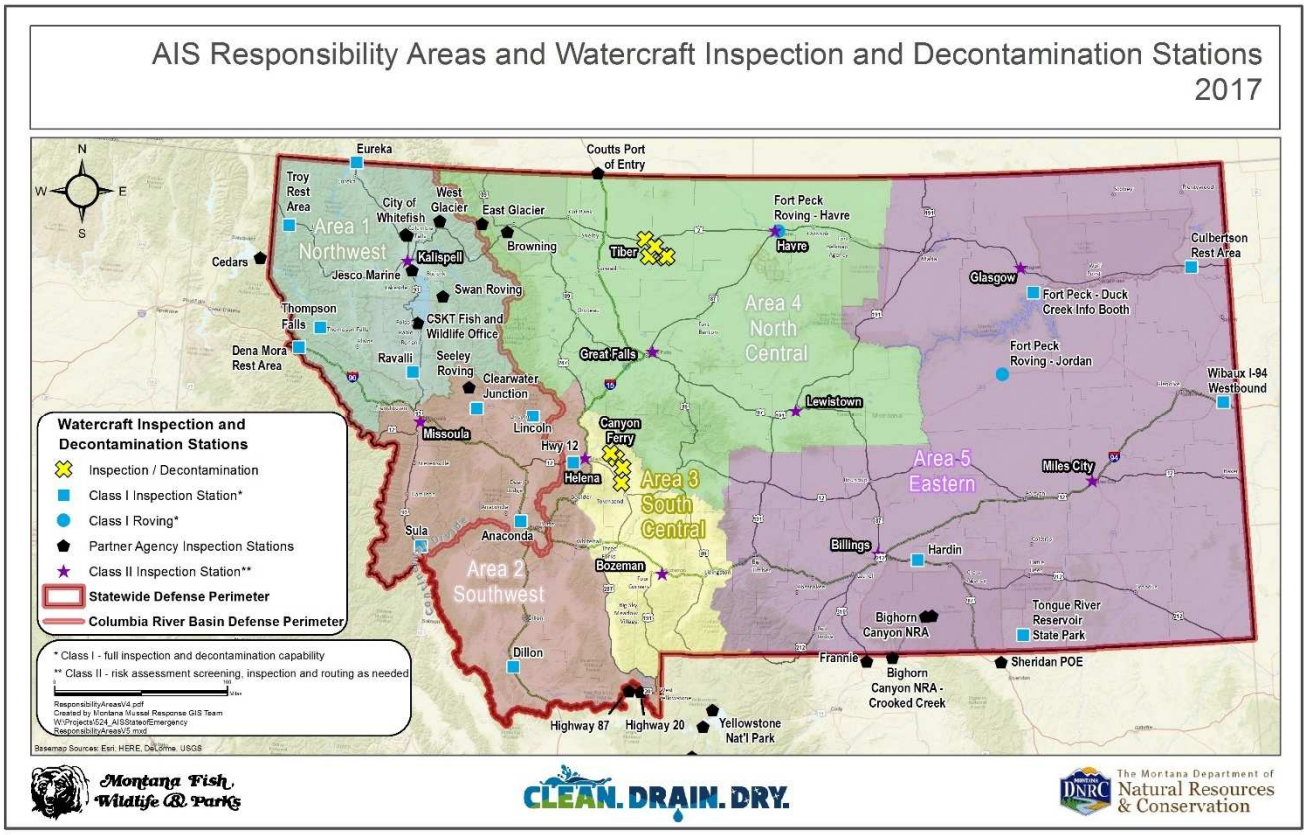

Figure 1. Geographic areas of responsibility for each of the five new watercraft inspection and decontamination station supervisors.

3.) Increased the number of watercraft inspection stations from 16 to 35 locations around the state (Figure 2).
4.) Expanded inspection station season and hours of operation (Table 1).
5.) Created a Certified Local Boater Program for people who generally use only Tiber Reservoir or Canyon Ferry Reservoir. This program allows people to get certified as a local boater by watching a short video and passing a test. Then, they take in their proof of passing the test to a regional office, register their boats into the program, and sign an agreement to follow the rules of the program. Two stickers are then applied to their boats as proof of being a certified local boater. This allowed certified local boaters to go back and forth from one reservoir (either Tiber Reservoir or Canyon Ferry Reservoir) without seeking out an inspection so long as they are returning to that same reservoir. If not, then these boaters would need to seek out an inspection prior to leaving Tiber Reservoir or Canyon Ferry Reservoir.
6.) Decontamination stations established on Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs (Figure 2). Because of the detection of invasive mussels in the fall of 2016, Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs had mobile decontamination units at several locations to decontaminate vessels when they exited the water. Tiber Reservoir had two locations: one at Galata on US Highway 2 and one at the overlook by the dam. Canyon Ferry Reservoir had 4 locations: Silos Area, Hellgate Recreational Area, Goose Bay Marina, and one on the north end of the lake at the Bureau of Reclamation visitor center.

7.) Operation of class II inspection stations located at regional and area offices (Figure 2). These stations are additional locations for members of the public to comply with the new rule stating all watercraft coming into the State of Montana must be inspected prior to launch.
8.) In 2017, FWP entered into a cooperative agreement with Flathead Basin Commission (FBC) and Missoula County delegating mandatory inspection authority to both parties. As such, FBC opened a station in Pablo on March 1st and Missoula County opened the Clearwater Watercraft Inspection Station on March 1st hoping to intercept any boats bound for the Flathead Basin early in the season. The Pablo station moved to Ravalli on April 15th and FWP took over for the remainder of the field season. The Clearwater Inspection Station remained under the management of Missoula County until the end of the field season.

WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION LOCATIONS

Montana's watercraft inspection station sites are selected based on angler pressure, boater movement, estimated risk of AIS introduction, safety, logistics, and input from other agencies and stakeholder groups. Much analysis has gone into site locations, length of season, and other logistics over the years, and assessment tables have been developed which gives each station a score based on empirical and qualitative data. Those scores help guide discussions on how FWP and its partners can best protect Montana from AIS. In the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017, the AIS program was part of an incident command team that planned intensively about how the watercraft inspection portion of the program would respond to the detection of invasive mussels In Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs.

Following this discussion, FWP selected the locations listed in Figure 2 and Table 1 to operate stations. As in the last few years, FWP has focused much of its effort on border stations to prevent AIS from entering the state but has also continued to have a significant presence at internal locations, popular waterbodies, and extra protection for the Columbia River watershed. The goal of this balanced approach is to:

1. Intercept AIS at Montana's borders.
2. Prevent the internal spread of AIS already present in the state, knowing that there are likely populations of AIS that biologists have not found.
3. Protect the Columbia River watershed.
4. Reach those users who may not encounter a border or highway station during their travels.
5. Provide a presence at some of Montana's popular waterbodies for outreach and education as well as providing additional prevention.

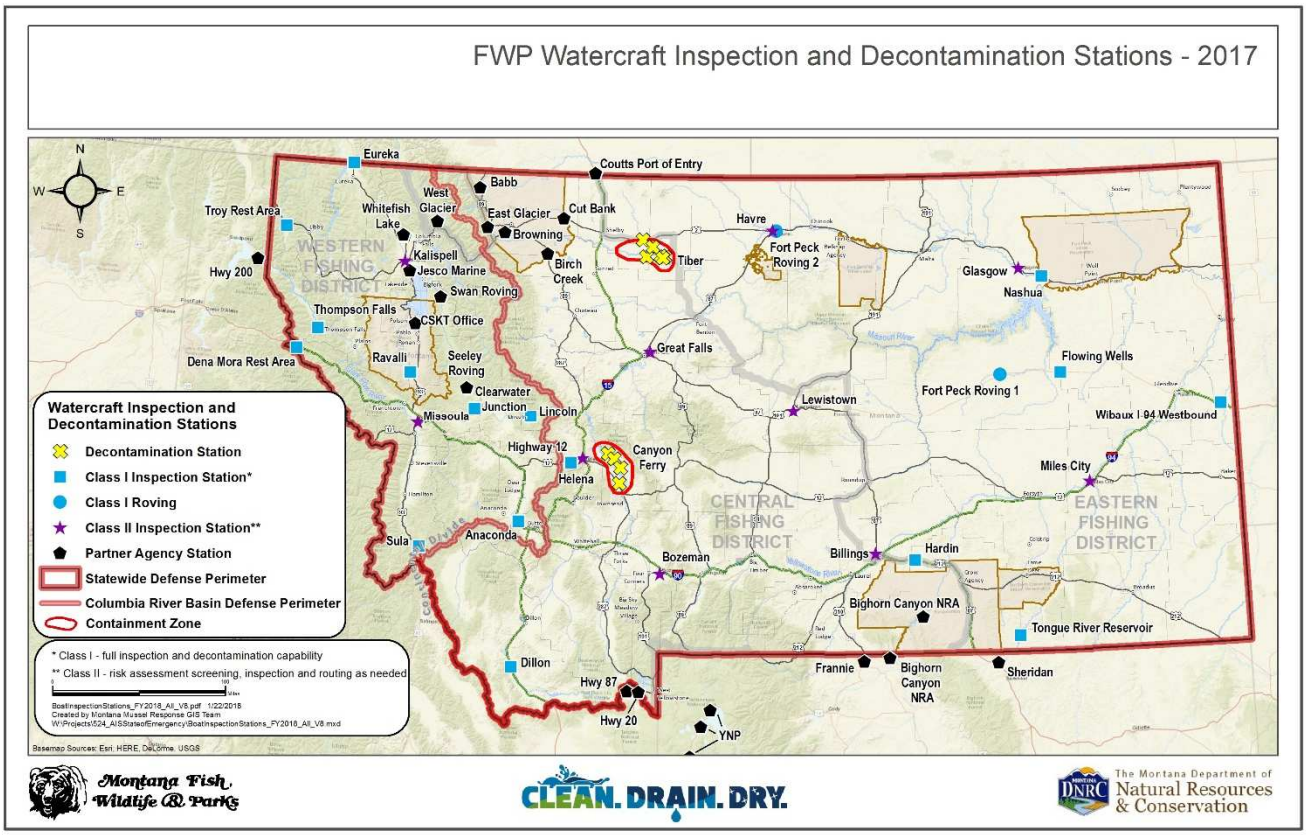

Figure 2. 2017 FWP Seasonally-permanent and roving watercraft inspection stations.

One issue that continues to play a significant role in the selection and operation of stations is the shortage of workers and housing in eastern Montana. For the past five years, it has been very difficult to find local staff at the wages the Program can pay, or to provide housing for potential workers from outside the area. In 2017, this challenge proved difficult at Tiber Reservoir as well even with provided housing. Because of this, we were short staffed at Culbertson, Tiber Reservoir, and Wibaux. The FWP AIS Management Team continues to try to find creative solutions to this ongoing problem.

Another challenge the AIS Program continues to face is that many boaters refuse to comply with the law and drive past watercraft inspection stations (Figure 3). Over the last three seasons we purchased enough large trailered reader board signs to have one at every seasonally permanent roadside inspection station starting in the 2018 season to make stations more visible. Despite additional signage, total drivebys were slightly higher in 2017 (6,477) than in 2016 (5,405). It should be noted that for the 2017 season, we inspected over twice as many boats than in 2016. Electronic reader boards coupled with additional outreach and education and greater law enforcement presence will help to achieve greater boater compliance.

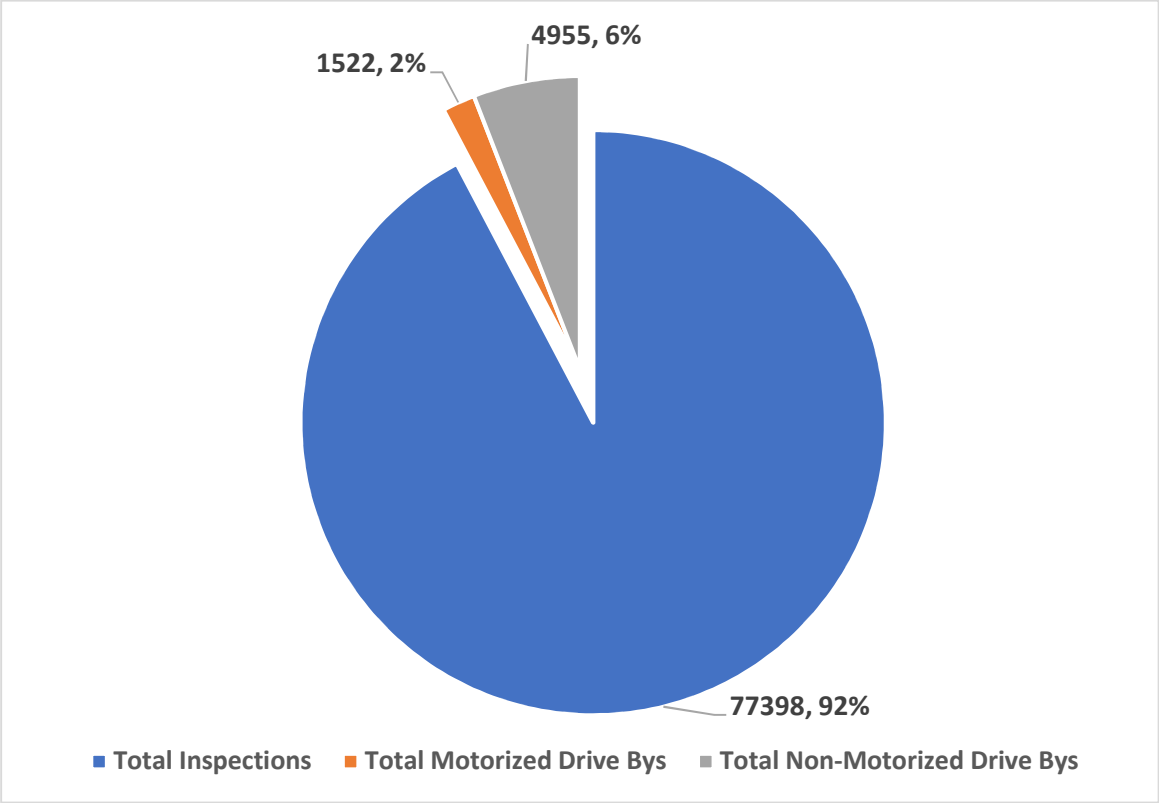

Figure 3. Motorized and non-motorized drive by numbers and as a percentage of total boats passing Watercraft Inspection Stations in 2017

Table 1. Summary of FWP 2017 Watercraft Inspection Stations.

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Maximum Hours per day	Start date	End date	# of High Risk Hot Washes	Total Inspections	Total Failed Interviews
Border stations									
Culbertson	US 2	West	7	12	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	407	0
Dena Mora	I-90	East	7	10	15-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	3,526	35
Dillon	I-15	North	7	16	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	2,033	8
Eureka	US 93	South	7	12	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	1,932	3
Hardin	I-90	West	7	12	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	5,664	38
Troy	US 2/ MT 56	East/North	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	5,328	189
Wibaux	I-94	West	7	12	15-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	1,077	13
Continental Divide Stations									
Anaconda	I-90	West	7	13	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	5,569	42
Hwy 12 Helena	HWY 12	West	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	4,427	46
Lincoln	HWY 200	East	7	16	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	3,366	8
Sula	HWY 93	North	7	16	15-Apr	14-Oct	N/A	1,571	15
Interior stations									
Clearwater Junction (MSLA)	MT 200	West	7	12	1-Mar	15-Oct	N/A	12,417	5
Fort Peck Info Booth	HWY 24	East	7	10	7-May	14-Oct	N/A	3,770	3
Fort Peck 2 (Fresno Reservoir)	Fresno	N/A	4	10	1-Jun	5-Aug	N/A	696	6
Jesco Marine near Kalispell	HWY 93	South	4	10	4-May	1-Oct	N/A	3,436	9
Pablo (FBC)	US 93	North/South	7	10	1-Mar	14-Apr	N/A	185	2
Ravalli	US 93	North	7	14	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	12,119	207
Swan Lakers	Boat Ramp	N/A	Varied	8	1-Jul	5-Aug	N/A	228	0
Thompson Falls	MT 200	East	7	12	14-Apr	15-Oct	N/A	4,262	66
Parks									
Bighorn NRA	Fort Smith	North	4	10	26-May	24-Sep	N/A	2,980	1
Tongue River Reservoir State Park	State Park	N/A	4	10	4-May	15-Oct	N/A	1,346	0

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Maximum Hours per day	Start date	End date	# of High Risk Hot Washes	Total Inspections	Total Failed Interviews
Roving Crews									
Fort Peck 1	N/A	N/A	4	10	2-Jun	8-Aug	N/A	362	0
Swan Roving	N/A	N/A	4	10	6-Jul	3-Sep	N/A	297	1
Regional Offices									
FWP Region 1 Office	Kalispell	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	56	0
FWP Region 2 Office	Missoula	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	15	0
FWP Region 3 Office	Bozeman	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	32	1
FWP Region 4 Office	Great Falls	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	21	4
FWP Region 5 Office	Billings	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	51	1
FWP Region 6 Office	Glasgow	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	8	0
FWP Region 7 Office	Miles City	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	36	0
Lewistown Area Resource Office	Lewistown	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	1	0
Havre Area Resource Office	Havre	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	10	0
Helena Area Resource Office	Helena	N/A	5	10	15-Apr	31-Dec	N/A	6	0
Canyon Ferry Reservoir									
Goose Bay Marina	Canyon Ferry	N/A	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	273	670	N/A
Hellgate Recreational Area	Canyon Ferry	N/A	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	426	1,057	N/A
North BOR Site	Canyon Ferry	N/A	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	173	1,278	N/A
Silos Area	Canyon Ferry	N/A	7	16	15-Apr	15-Oct	836	4398	N/A
Tiber Reservoir									
Tiber Boat Ramp -- Marina	Tiber	N/A	7	12	15-May	15-Oct	45	257	N/A

Station Name	Hwy	Direction of Travel	Open days/week	Maximum Hours per day	Start date	End date	# of High Risk Hot Washes	Total Inspections	Total Failed Interviews
Tiber Boat Ramp -- N. Bootlegger	Tiber	N/A	7	12	26-Jun	15-Oct	0	27	N/A
Tiber Boat Ramp -- VFW	Tiber	N/A	7	12	16-May	15-Oct	168	692	N/A
Tiber Boat Ramp -- Willow Creek	Tiber	N/A	7	12	21-Jun	15-Oct	19	58	N/A
Tiber East Decon -- Overlook	Tiber	N/A	7	12	28-Apr	15-Oct	52	185	N/A
Tiber North Decon -- Galata	Tiber	N/A	7	12	2-May	15-Oct	34	234	N/A
TOTALS							2026	86,090	703

WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION TOTALS

FWP performed 86,047 watercraft inspection interviews and inspected 101,473 watercrafts (sometimes multiple watercraft hauled by an individual) and provided outreach and education to 155,501 people during the 2017 field season. This is the highest number since the inception of the watercraft inspection station program (Figure 4). The high numbers were due to the increase in the number of stations from 16 to 35, and the increase in operational hours from 10 hours days to 12-15 hours days along with many stations operating 7 days a week rather than four. Most stations in 2017 operated for a 26-week period between April 15th and October 15th (Table 1), although some started later and ended earlier based on employee availability or agreements with program partners. Not surprisingly, the July 4th weekend was again the busiest period for boater movement (Figure 5).

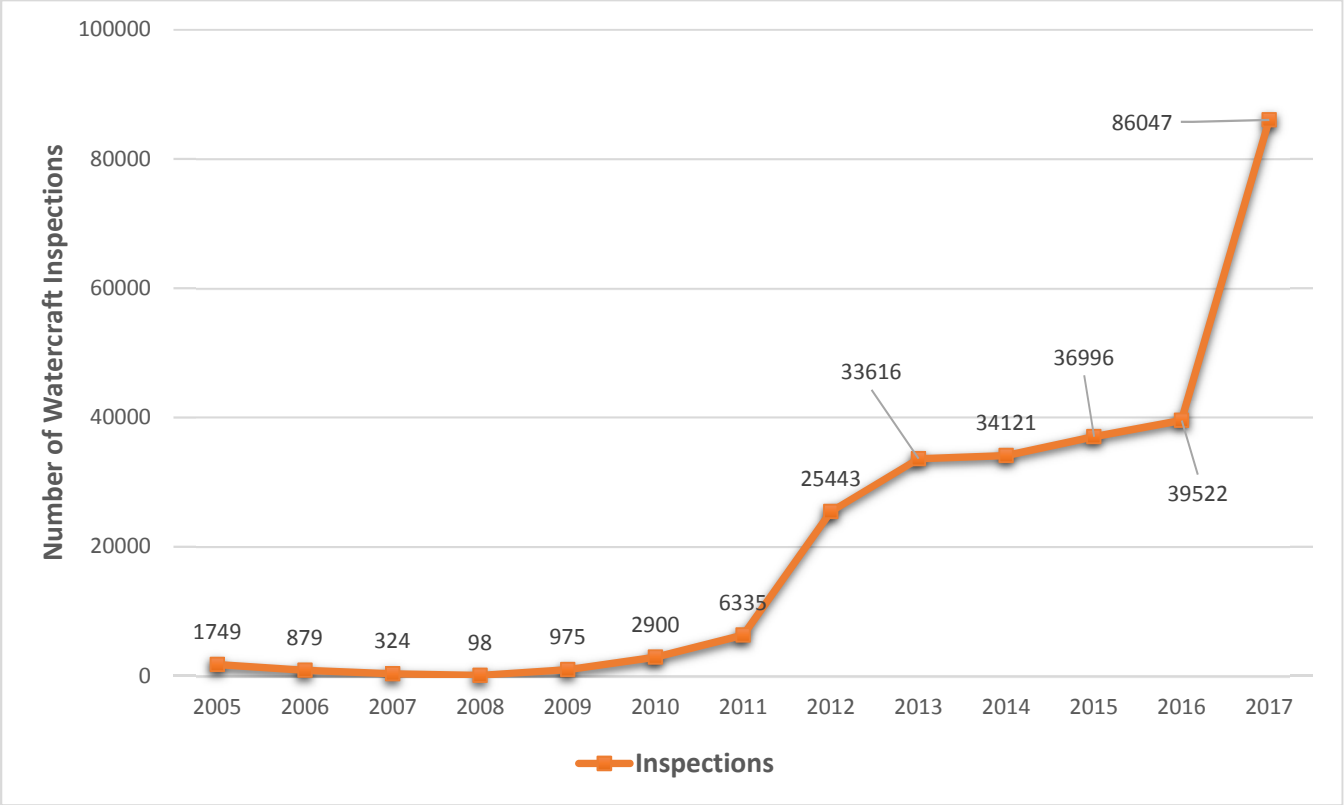

Figure 4. Number of Watercraft Inspections by Year.

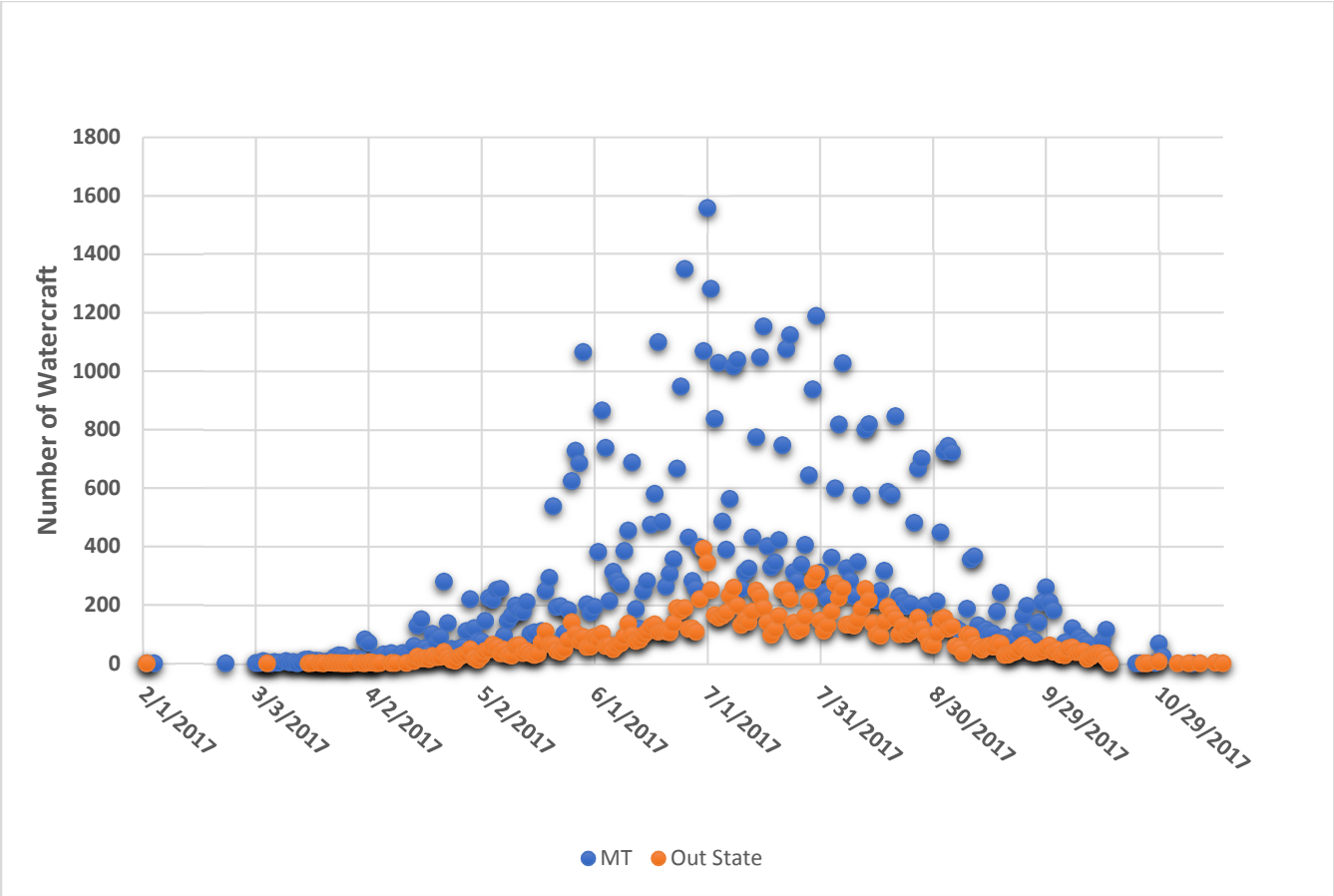

Figure 5. Number of Watercraft Inspections by Day for 2017.

OTHER WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS

Besides inspections conducted at border, highway, and roving locations, FWP staff completed other inspections of watercraft or equipment as needed. Most of these inspections were of commercially-hauled watercraft that intended to launch in Montana (see section on commercially hauled watercraft on page 20). FWP is alerted to the entry of all commercially-hauled watercraft into the state through a Department of Transportation notification system, and all drivers carrying vessels that intend to launch in Montana waters receive a follow-up call and, if warranted, an inspection. Once information on these boats are received, western partners (such as neighboring states) are notified that a boat has entered Montana and may be heading to another state. Other times FWP receives calls from companies that are conducting work in or near waterbodies to ensure that equipment coming from out-of-state is not carrying AIS. For example, in 2017 some infastructure work was being done on Hauser Reservoir outside of Helena requiring out of state barges from Texas. The AIS program inspected all of the barges prior to launching into the reservoir. FWP staff also checks and decontaminates boats from partners as needed and responds to members of the public who had purchased boats from out-of-state and wanted them inspected before launching in Montana.

ORIGIN OF WATER USERS, RELATIVE RISK, AND BOATER MOVEMENT

The origin of watercraft and subsequent movement is valuable information that helps guide the placement of

FWP watercraft inspection stations and monitoring priorities, and helps inspectors assess relative risk. Those boats traveling from eastern states tend to come from areas where zebra mussels, quagga mussels, and Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) are prevalent, such as the Great Lakes region. Those coming to Montana from western states such as Washington, Idaho and Oregon are likely to have been in waterbodies infested with EWM, other invasive aquatic plants, or Asian clams. Those from more southwestern states could be carrying quagga mussels from the lower Colorado River System. The origin of in-state boats is important as well, as they might be coming from Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs, waters positive for New Zealand mudsnails (NZMS), EWM, curlyleaf pondweed (CLP), flowering rush, whirling disease, proliferated kidney disease caused by the *T. bryosalmonae* parasite, or some other AIS that biologists have not encountered before in the state, but overall Montana boats are typically lower risk than out-of-state boats.

Of the 101,473 watercraft that passed through inspection stations during the 2017 season, 78% were from Montana. After Montana, the most common states/provinces of origin for surveyed users were from Idaho, followed by Washington, Alberta, Wyoming, Colorado, Oregon, Utah, British Columbia, North Dakota, and Minnesota. For a complete breakdown of origin and movement of water users by state, refer to Appendix A, B, and C.

Figure 6 shows the origin of surveyed water users from 2017 and illustrate the great distances that people travel to recreate in Montana. As explained earlier, it is important to the overall prevention strategy to contact both out-of-state and in-state water users to reach as much of the public as possible. If the program were to operate only border stations, many Montana residents would never encounter an inspection station and not receive the education and information on AIS presented there. A good example of this scenario is Fort Peck, which is heavily infested with EWM and many Montana residents visit the lake and then return home to areas not known to harbor the plant. If the state operated only border check stations, few of those users would pass through a station on their way to and from the lake and would not receive information on how to reduce the chances of spreading EWM and other AIS.

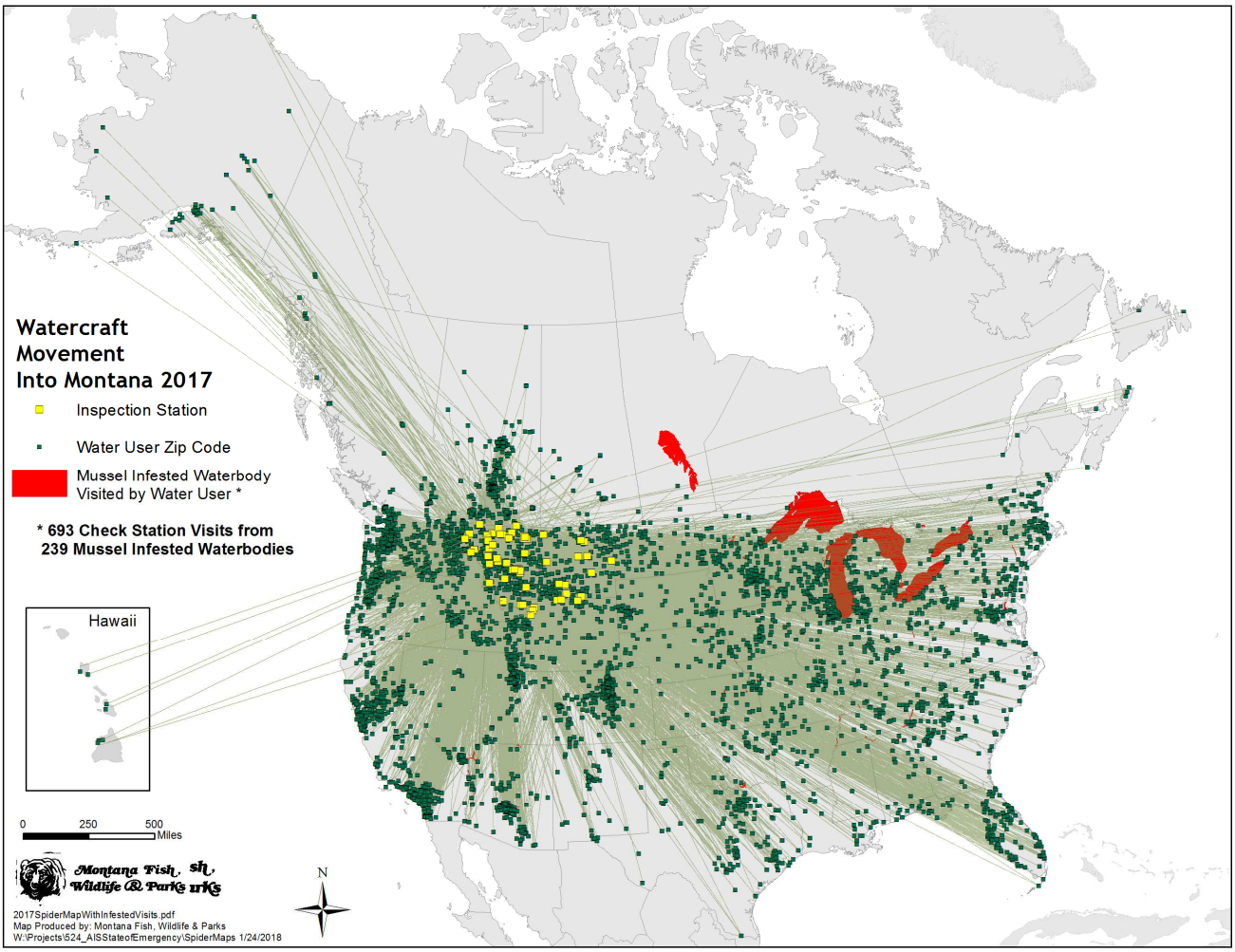

Figure 6. Distribution of surveyed water user postal codes from data compiled from both mussel infested (Red) and non-infested waterbodies (Green) that visited Montana in 2017.

HIGH RISK BOATS

FWP categorizes high-risk boats as motorized boats that launched in a waterbody in a zebra or quagga mussel-positive state less than 30 days ago, are from a mussel-positive state, or Canyon Ferry or Tiber Reservoirs. These boats are more likely to be carrying adult or veliger (larval) mussels, therefore extra time and care is taken during inspection of these boats. Determining which stations see the most high-risk boats helps in cost-benefit analysis and in program guidance. In 2017, there were a total of 5,705 high-risk boats that passed through FWP inspection stations, which was 7% of all inspections. The stations with the highest number of high-risk watercraft were Anaconda, followed by Hardin, Helena, and Wibaux (Figure 7). It is also useful to look at the total of high-risk boats as a percentage of total inspections at a given station (Figure 8). The station with the highest percent of total inspections that are high-risk was Wibaux followed by Culbertson and Anaconda.

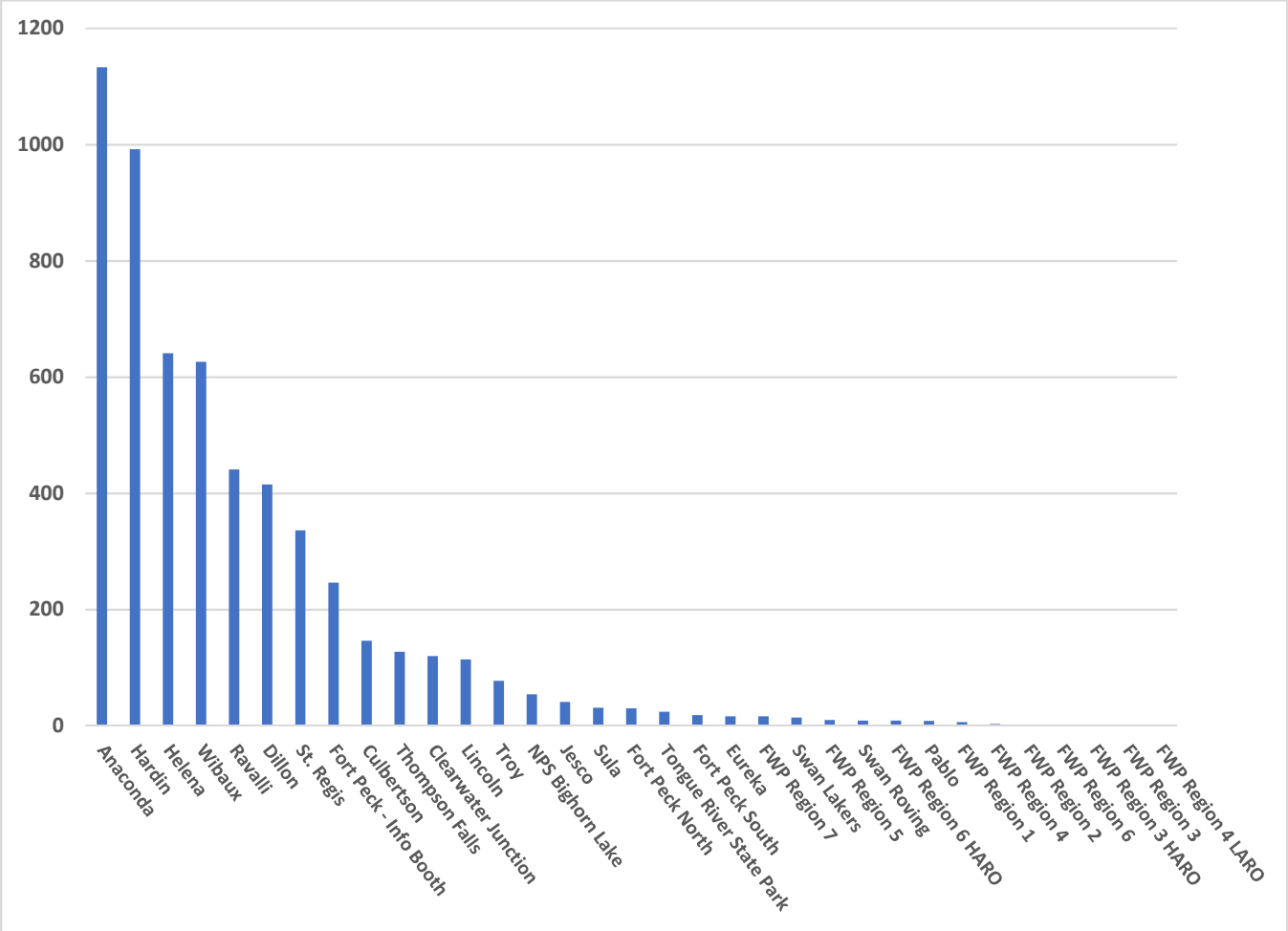

Figure 7. Number of high-risk boats by station, 2017.

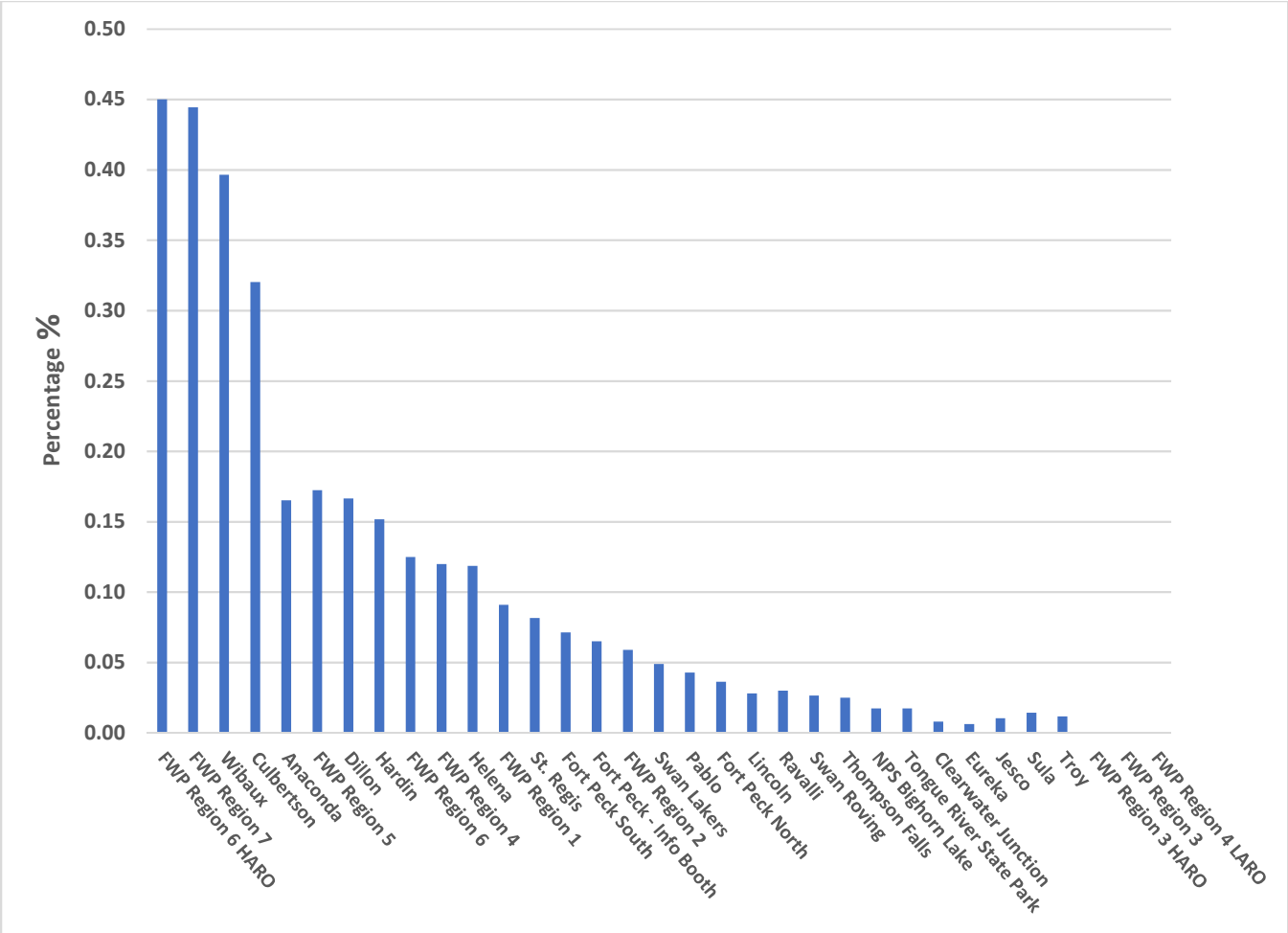

Figure 8. Percentage of the total inspections at each station that were high-risk in 2017.

IN-STATE AND OUT-OF STATE BOATS

Figure 9 shows the percentage of in-state vs out-of-state boats at all seasonally permanent and roving inspection stations illustrating that border stations see higher percentages of out-of-state boats than internal stations and roving crews. However, internal stations are still extremely important to the overall prevention strategy. First, many Montana boaters regularly recreate in AIS-positive waters and could potentially spread those invasives to other clean waterbodies in the state. It is also common for Montana residents to purchase used boats from out-of state, particularly from Minnesota. Internal stations provide another level of protection for these in-state boats that might miss an inspection at the border. Second, internal stations help prevent movement of AIS between Montana waters. In-state boats might be carrying EWM, NZMS, illegal bait/live fish, pathogens, or an AIS that is not yet detected in Montana. There is often a delay between the time that an AIS becomes established in a waterbody and the time it is detected so internal stations can mitigate this. Internal inspection stations help contain AIS and minimize the potential spread among Montana waters.

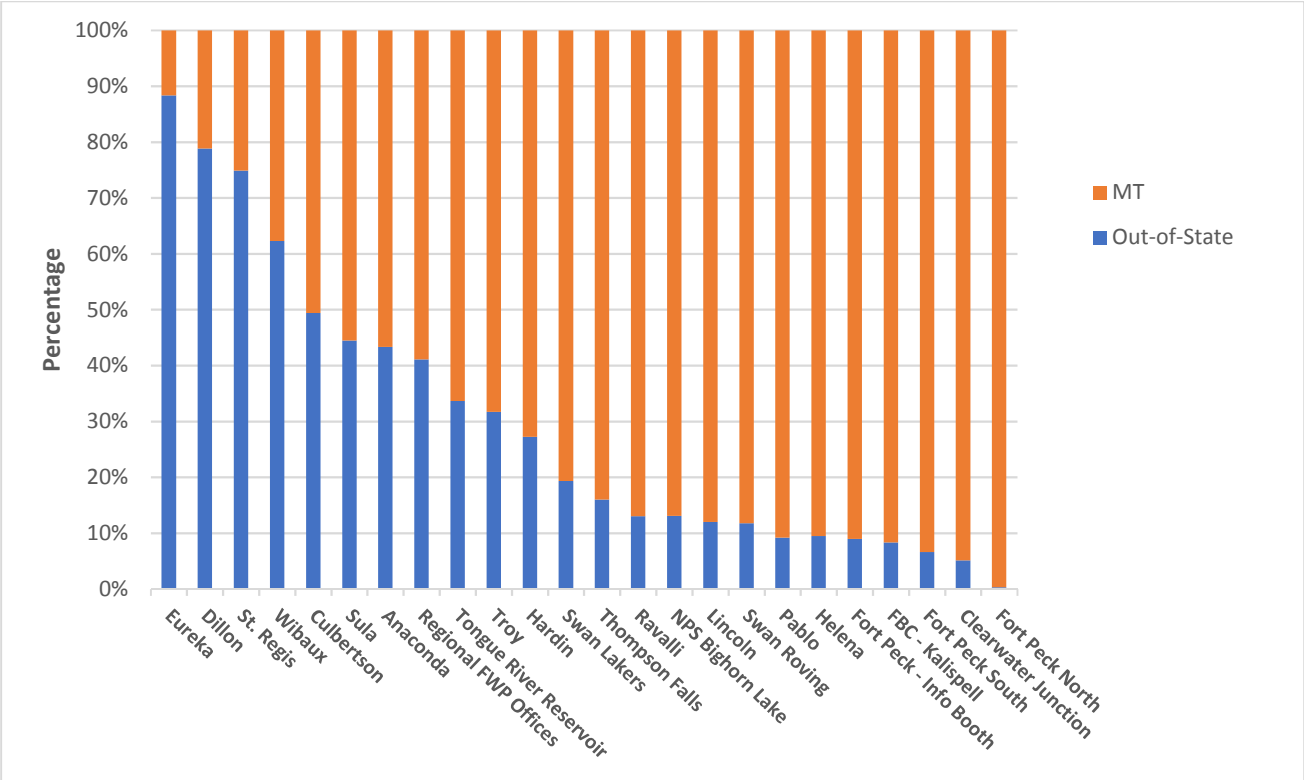

Figure 9. Percentage of out-of-state and in-state vessels by station.

AIS OBSERVED

Out of the 86,047 interviews and 101,473 vessels inspected during the 2017 field season, 703 (<1%) boats had some type of fouling (Table 2 and Figure 10). Standing water (water in bilges, live wells, etc.) was the most common type of boat fouling, closely 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 17 boats over the course of the season, all of which were believed to be dead because they were, crumbly, open, or floated in water. Because we cannot be certain that every mussel can be seen, we take precautions and hot wash vessels on site and then meet up with the boat owners and do a throughout hot wash at a later date prior to any launch.

When a Dreissenid mussel-infested boat or piece of equipment is found, protocol mandates that staff from the FWP AIS management team is contacted and oversee decontamination of that watercraft. If the boat is especially complex (has a head, air conditioning, seas strainers, multiple internal compartments, complex plumbing, or ballast tanks), marine mechanics are brought in to aid in the decontamination process. Boats must pass a second inspection before they can launch in Montana waters. 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.

Table 2. Data Summary of 2016 Watercraft Inspection Stations

Station	Out-of-State	In-State	Total	Failed To Get Decontaminated at CFR or Tiber	Zebra / Quagga Mussels	Vegetation	Standing Water	Illegal Bait	Illegal Fish	*Total Failed Boats*
Border Stations										
Culbertson	201	206	407	0	0	0	0	0	0	*0*
Dena Mora	2,641	885	3,526	0	0	14	15	0	1	*30*
Dillon	1603	430	2033	0	1	1	5	0	0	*7*
Eureka	1707	225	1932	0	0	0	3	0	0	*3*
Hardin	1542	4,122	5,664	5	4	3	18	0	1	*31*
Troy	1,688	3,640	5,328	0	0	55	124	0	2	*181*
Wibaux	671	406	1077	3	7	0	2	0	0	*12*
Continental Divide Stations										
Anaconda	2412	3157	5569	15	*1*	*4*	*16*	*0*	*0*	*36*
Highway 12 Helena	*419*	*4008*	*4427*	*41*	*0*	*0*	*5*	*0*	*0*	*46*
Lincoln	*404*	*2962*	*3366*	*7*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0*	*0*	*8*
Sula	*699*	*872*	*1571*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*14*	*0*	*0*	*15*
Interior Stations										
Clearwater Junction (MSLA County)	634	11,783	12,417	1	0	2	2	0	0	5
Fort Peck Info Booth	338	3433	3771	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Fort Peck 2 (Fresno Reservoir) *	2	694	696	1	0	1	4	0	0	6
Jesco Marine	287	3149	3436	4	1	0	4	0	0	9
Pablo (FBC)	17	168	185	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ravalli	1577	10542	12119	14	2	22	163	0	0	201
Swan Lakers	44	184	228	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thompson Falls	683	3,579	4,262	4	0	52	10	0	0	66
Parks										

Tongue River State Park	**453**	**893**	**1346**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	***0***
Bighorn National Recreation Area	**390**	**2590**	**2980**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	***0***
Roving Stations										
Fort Peck 1	**24**	**338**	**362**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	***0***
Swan Roving	**35**	**262**	**297**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	***1***
Regional Offices										
Regional Offices	**97**	**139**	**236**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**0**	***6***
Totals	***18,568***	***58,667***	***77,235***	***99***	***17***	***155***	***390***	***1***	***4***	***666***

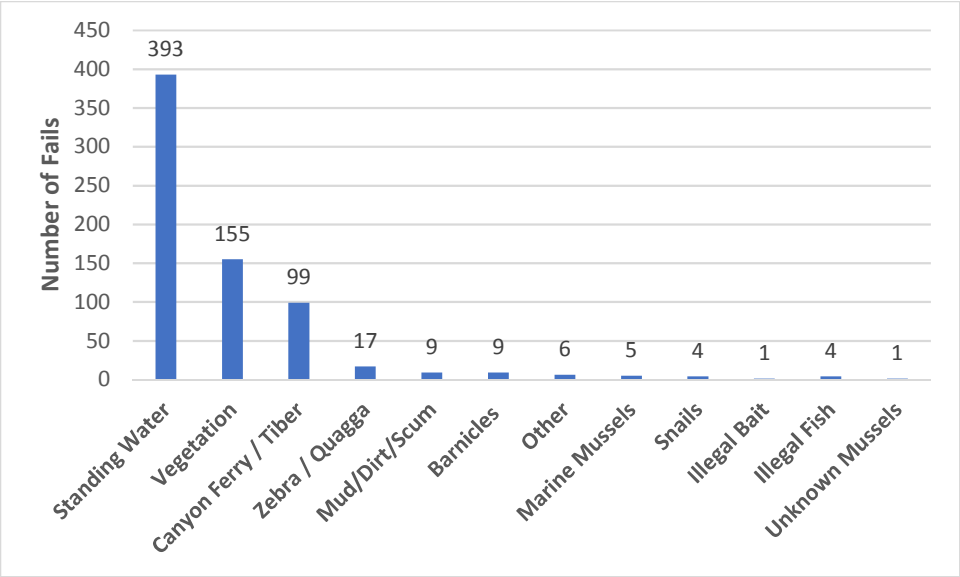

Figure 10. Occurrences of fouling during the 2017 inspection season

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 and because the fish and the water they are transported in could be carrying disease-causing pathogens, weeds, snails, mussels, etc. In 2017 inspectors found 4 cases of illegal live fish over the course of the season: Hardin (1) fish was taken from Tongue River Reservoir but no other information is available, Thompson Falls (1) fish was taken from Bull Lake but no other information is available, and Troy (2) one fish unidentified but was killed and warden allowed owner to take it home, the other fish was a pumpkin seed which the warden confiscated. Standard protocol for inspection staff is to confiscate any illegal live fish and call an FWP game warden.

LIVE BAIT OTHER THAN FISH

Live bait (including minnows or leeches) other than fish was used by 1222 (<2%) anglers in 2017 interviewed at watercraft inspection stations (Figure 11). Information from other FWP creel surveys is not included in this report. Live animals such as mealworms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures, but live bait animals may not be imported into the state without authority from FWP. 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 didn't encounter any cases of illegal leeches in 2017.

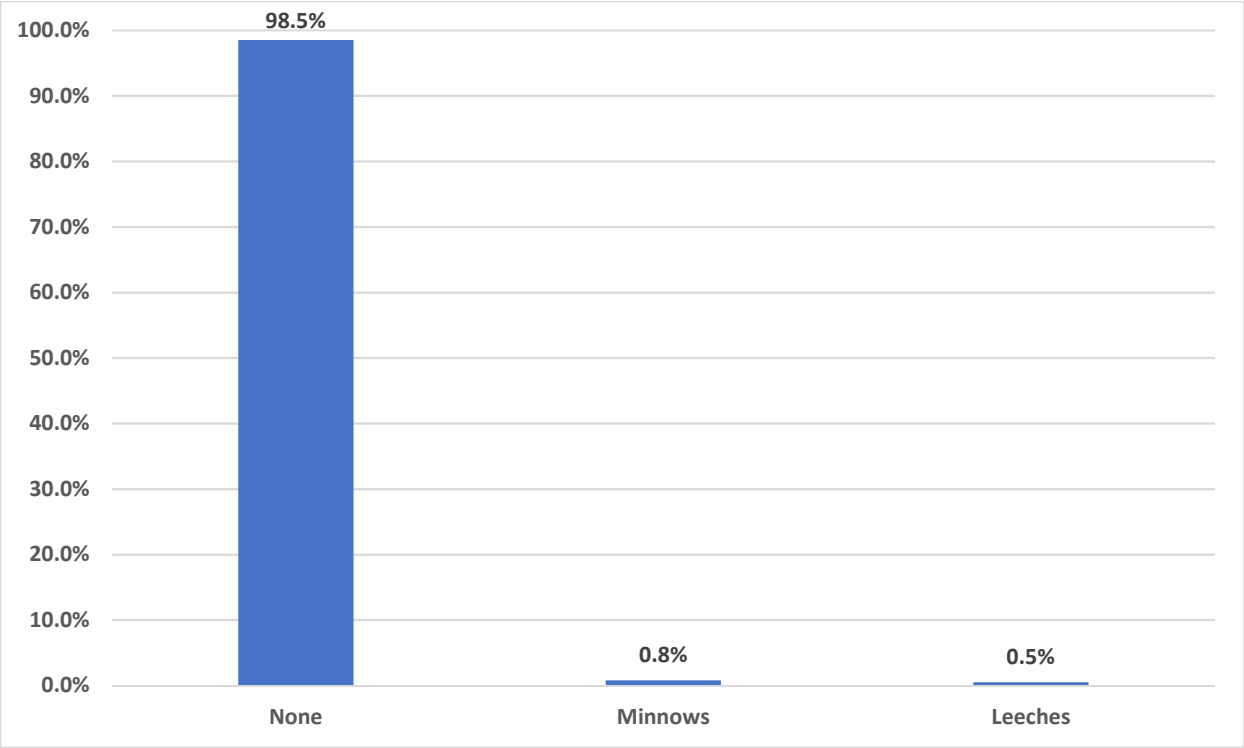

Figure 11. Percentage of anglers possessing live bait at the time of inspection in 2017

COMMERCIALLY 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. 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. Staff with the FWP AIS Program receive notifications for all permitted vessels entering the state and follow up with all boats whose destination is Montana, including providing an inspection prior to launch if that is warranted. Montana forwards all notifications on to partners in neighboring states. Most commercially hauled boats (179, 79%) are just passing through Montana (Figure 12). Two percent of commercially hauled watercraft came from MT heading to other states. Of the 42 permits (19%) that are destined for Montana, 2 came from western states, 27 from eastern states, and 13 came from southern states.

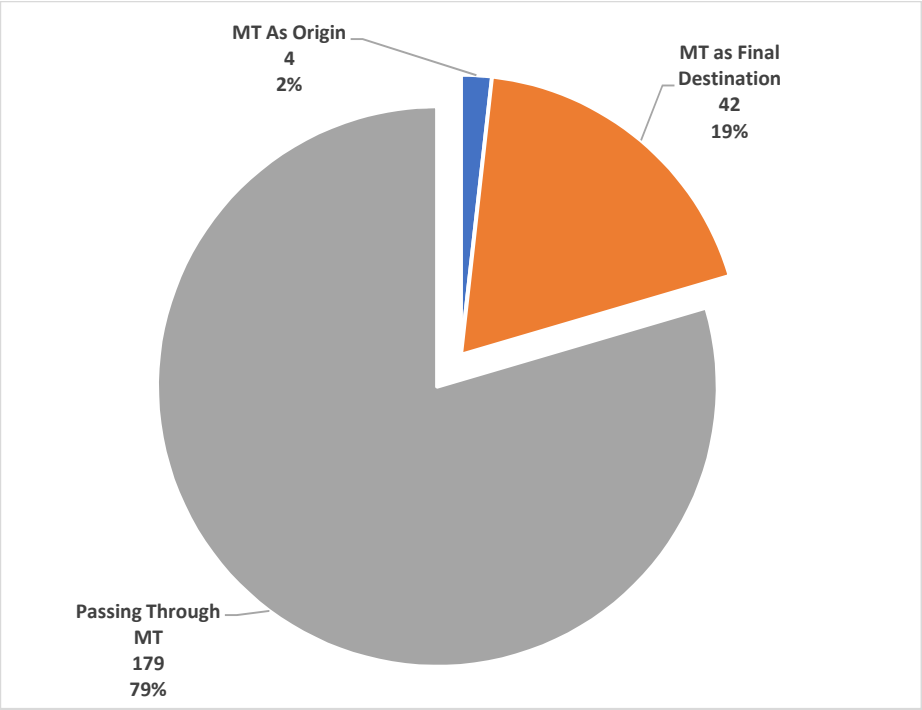

Figure 12. Percentage of Commercially-Hauled Boats Bound for MT, 2017

SUMMARY

The 2017 watercraft inspection season was highly successful. It remained difficult to staff the far eastern watercraft inspection stations including Tiber Reservoir. We also rose to the challenge with our program doubling the number of inspection stations and nearly tripling our staff. 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. The implementation of mandatory inspection leaving Canyon Ferry and Tiber Reservoirs proved difficult mostly because of the substantial number of access points to theses reservoirs, but overall the Department did well.

Knowledge and awareness of the issues surrounding AIS continues to rise, but behavior remains largely unchanged. Outreach and education efforts need to be continued until water users not only know about the problem, but change their behavior and clean, drain, and dry their boats and equipment every time they move between waterbodies. The AIS program will continue to address these areas of weakness in future strategies. FWP looks forward to continued successful collaboration on AIS issues with MDA, DNRC, MDT, and other partner agencies and groups.

Finally, looking forward to 2018 watercraft inspection and decontamination stations will be critical in preventing and containing the transmission of AIS not only from Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs but to and from all waterbodies coming into, within, or out of Montana.

APPENDIX A. ORIGIN OF SURVEYED WATER USERS

State/Province of Origin	# of Water Users	% of Total Inspections
MT	67279	78.2%
ID	3213	3.7%
WA	3127	3.6%
AB	1563	1.8%
WY	1335	1.6%
CO	914	1.1%
OR	876	1.0%
UT	854	1.0%
BC	517	0.6%
ND	458	0.5%
MN	342	0.4%
FL	326	0.4%
TX	319	0.4%
IA	318	0.4%
SD	297	0.3%
NV	250	0.3%
WI	234	0.3%
MI	188	0.2%
AZ	187	0.2%
MO	181	0.2%
IN	156	0.2%
IL	144	0.2%
OH	119	0.1%
AK	116	0.1%
TN	116	0.1%
NC	102	0.1%
NM	96	0.1%
SC	81	0.1%
PA	80	0.1%
OK	77	0.1%
GA	76	0.1%
SK	71	0.1%
VA	67	0.1%

State/Province of Origin	# of Water Users	% of Total Inspections
KS	63	0.1%
AL	61	0.1%
NY	54	0.1%
ZZ	50	0.1%
CA	48	0.1%
LA	45	0.1%
NE	45	0.1%
KY	40	0.0%
ON	36	0.0%
MA	35	0.0%
NB	32	0.0%
WV	27	0.0%
MS	25	0.0%
NJ	23	0.0%
VT	23	0.0%
NH	22	0.0%
MD	21	0.0%
AR	20	0.0%
ME	13	0.0%
CT	11	0.0%
QC	10	0.0%
RI	8	0.0%
MB	5	0.0%
PE	5	0.0%
YT	5	0.0%
DC	4	0.0%
NL	2	0.0%
NS	2	0.0%
NT	2	0.0%
DE	1	0.0%
No Information Collected	1,230	1.4%
Total	**86,047**	**100%**

APPENDIX B. THE TOP 45 PREVIOUSLY VISITED WATERBODIES.

The top 45 waterbodies that surveyed water users had visited in the last 30 days.

Destination Water Body	# of Inspections	Percent of Total Inspections
Flathead Lake	4830	5.6%
Noxon Rapids Reservoir	2983	3.5%
Blackfoot River	2566	3.0%
Missouri River	2488	2.9%
Fort Peck Lake	2421	2.8%
Tongue River Reservoir	2336	2.7%
Bull Lake	2331	2.7%
Clark Fork River	2200	2.6%
Bighorn Lake (Yellowtail Dam)	2152	2.5%
Holter Lake	1865	2.2%
Salmon Lake	1845	2.1%
Bighorn River	1681	2.0%
Canyon Ferry Lake	1033	1.2%
Hauser Lake	1016	1.2%
Seeley Lake	1011	1.2%
Bitterroot River	938	1.1%
Georgetown Lake	911	1.1%
Kootenai River	842	1.0%
Lake Koocanusa	801	0.9%
Placid Lake	780	0.9%
Bighole River	740	0.9%
Browns Lake	735	0.9%
Lake Pend Oreille	710	0.8%
Lake Como	708	0.8%
Cooney Reservoir	667	0.8%
Lake Coeur d'Alene	596	0.7%
Yellowstone River	493	0.6%
Swan Lake	489	0.6%
Echo Lake (Flathead Co.)	467	0.5%
Madison River	434	0.5%
Smith River	426	0.5%
Flathead River - above Flathead Lake	425	0.5%
Lake Mary Ronan	403	0.5%
Holland Lake	399	0.5%
Whitefish Lake	334	0.4%
Hungry Horse Reservoir	324	0.4%
Alvord Lake	316	0.4%
Flathead River - below Flathead Lake	314	0.4%
Fresno Reservoir	302	0.4%
Cabinet Gorge Reservoir	297	0.3%
Upsata Lake	284	0.3%
Dearborn River	269	0.3%
Savage Lake	261	0.3%

Lake Sakakawea	258	0.3%
Snake River	257	0.3%

APPENDIX C. THE TOP 45 DESTINATION WATERBODIES.

The top 45 waterbodies that surveyed water users indicated as destinations following the inspection.

Destination Water Body	# of Inspections	Percent of Total Inspections
Flathead Lake	9941	11.6%
Fort Peck Lake	3905	4.5%
Blackfoot River	3331	3.9%
Bighorn Lake (Yellowtail Dam)	2468	2.9%
Salmon Lake	2459	2.9%
Noxon Rapids Reservoir	2412	2.8%
Seeley Lake	2147	2.5%
Clark Fork River	2073	2.4%
Lake Koocanusa	1856	2.2%
Missouri River	1755	2.0%
Bull Lake	1563	1.8%
Bighorn River	1483	1.7%
Georgetown Lake	1446	1.7%
Holter Lake	1212	1.4%
Placid Lake	1134	1.3%
Tongue River Reservoir	1079	1.3%
Browns Lake	1017	1.2%
Swan Lake	970	1.1%
Lake Mary Ronan	940	1.1%
Kootenai River	934	1.1%
Flathead River - below Flathead Lake	705	0.8%
Flathead River - above Flathead Lake	688	0.8%
Holland Lake	682	0.8%
Bitterroot River	669	0.8%
Whitefish Lake	593	0.7%
Glacier National Park	591	0.7%
Echo Lake (Flathead Co.)	528	0.6%
Canyon Ferry Lake	522	0.6%
Lake Coeur d'Alene	494	0.6%
Yellowstone River	486	0.6%
North Fork Flathead River	447	0.5%
Upsata Lake	445	0.5%
Lake Pend Oreille	444	0.5%
Bighole River	412	0.5%
Fresno Reservoir	405	0.5%
McDonald Lake - Glacier National Park	396	0.5%
Harpers Lake	395	0.5%
Lake Alva	375	0.4%
Hungry Horse Reservoir	374	0.4%
Hauser Lake	355	0.4%
Clearwater River	351	0.4%
Cooney Reservoir	343	0.4%
Lindbergh Lake	342	0.4%
Lake Como	290	0.3%