



Washburn County
Land and Water Conservation Department

On February 23, 2018, the Washburn County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance regarding boat decontamination as a tool to prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Zebra mussels are currently inhabiting Big and Middle McKenzie Lakes.

The ordinance is an amendment to the current "No Transport" ordinance passed in 2008. The updated ordinance states that ***if a decontamination station is present at a boat landing, the boater is required to use it, going in and out of a waterbody.*** A decontamination station could consist of a high-powered pressure sprayer operated by trained personnel or a simple bleach/water solution to spray boating equipment. The solution is 2 tablespoons bleach per gallon water.

Burnett County has passed the same ordinance. We have been working together with local lake groups to provide decontamination stations at boat landings. The station consists of an informational sign, handouts, a long-handled soft scrub brush and a grab hook to help remove weeds or mud. The mild bleach solution is in a gallon sprayer and is likely placed in a bucket.

Attached on page 2 of this memo, is a decontamination frequently asked question (FAQ) sheet and a picture of a decontamination station.

To view the ordinance, visit the Washburn County Government website and click on:

- County and Local Info
- County Ordinances
- Chapter 46 Article 4, Section 46-48

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Decontamination Station Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is decontamination?**
 - a. It is the process of removing all aquatic plants and animals, including materials that may contain or transmit aquatic invasive species (AIS) beyond physical removal or other methods.
2. **What is a decontamination station?**
 - a. The station may consist of high temperature water (140 degrees or more) applied with a pressure washer by trained personnel or a recommended chemical solution applied with a low pressure sprayer, or other techniques or devices.
3. **Why have a decontamination station?**
 - a. Hand removal is effective at removing plants from watercraft equipment and removes small animals. Decontamination is another tool to help kill invasive species that are not visible or very difficult to see (zebra mussels and spiny water fleas).
4. **Who owns a boat landing?**
 - a. Boat landings can be owned by various entities, including a private citizen, township, state or federal government. Permission to install a decontamination station must be approved by the landing owner.
5. **Who maintains the decontamination station?**
 - a. Citizen members of a lake association or district change the solution to the recommended mix of 2 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water. They are trained to properly apply the solution to equipment.
6. **What is the concentration of bleach?**
 - a. Standard bleach is 52,500 ppm chlorine, while the bleach concentration being used here is ~500 ppm. Reported in percentage, regular strength household bleach is 5.25% sodium hypochlorite while this solution is 0.05% sodium hypochlorite.
7. **Where should the decontamination station be installed?**
 - a. It is recommended to be installed away from the launch area and where vehicles use an area for turn-around/back up. If there is a sloped launch, it is installed away from the slope, upward on land.
8. **Are there runoff issues?**
 - a. A fine mist of the bleach/water solution is applied using a hand-pump sprayer. The solution covers the boat and trailer and is thoroughly applied around its perimeter. It evaporates quickly and no runoff into the lake occurs. There is no harm to the lake once the boat/trailer goes into the water.
9. **Will it kill grass?**
 - a. The concentration of the bleach solution being used is low enough that it should not kill grass. A much stronger solution (1 cup bleach/gallon vs 2 tablespoons/gallon) is often used to clean vinyl siding on houses with no effect on nearby grass and landscaping.
10. **I'm worried that this decontamination method will harm my boat/equipment.**
 - a. There are no known cases of damage from properly using any decontamination method. As stated in #9 an even higher solution is recommended to clean vinyl siding on a house. The WI DNR uses this solution on all of their boating equipment every day and tournament fishing boats have been sprayed down and have shown no harmful effects.
 - b. **Ranger Boats:** *"At any rate—household bleach at full concentration is not going to harm the gel coat when used during washing and rinsed off."*
 - c. **Tuffy Boats:** *"The described bleach solution is 100% safe on all gelcoat applications."*

11. I'm worried that the bleach/water solution in my live well will harm fish I keep in there.

- a. Between the low initial concentration of the applied solution, the off-gassing of the chlorine while sitting, and then the dilution of any residual chlorine, the likelihood that fish would be impacted by the bleach is very low.
- b. An alternative would be to use ice to keep fish fresh until you get home.

12. I don't think that this will make a difference.

- a. The vast majority of invasions are human mediated and theoretically preventable. Each prevention action we take, reduces the probability of a new invasion by a boat moving aquatic invasive species.
- b. Recreational boating is a way AIS move around and once they are here, we all share a responsibility to be doing everything we can to prevent their spread.

13. What are people doing about other pathways? That's a big reason AIS moves around.

- a. Ballast water – Recently approved regulations will facilitate the placement of ballast water treatment technology on ocean going shipping vessels.
- b. Ducks and turtles – If ducks and turtles were moving AIS, we'd expect a much more random distribution. More small ponds and lakes without access would contain AIS. As it stands, lakes that have boat ramps have AIS, indicating they are much more likely to be moved by people with boats than ducks and turtles.
- c. People letting pets go-The national Habitattitude campaign promotes responsible pet ownership and outlines alternatives to pet release. Wisconsin uses this program to develop pet rehoming networks so that people have alternatives to pet release.

As of February 2018, Washburn and Burnett Counties have passed an ordinance that states "if a decontamination station is available at a boat landing, the boater is required to use it".



For more information contact:

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