



For immediate release:

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WHITEFISH AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM ANNOUNCES OFF-SEASON RULES

WHITEFISH, MT – The Whitefish Lake Institute, City of Whitefish and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks asks watercraft users to comply with off-season rules on Whitefish Lake.

The City Beach Watercraft Inspection Station, Whitefish Lake State Park Watercraft Inspection Station, and the Whitefish Decontamination Station all close for the off-season on Saturday, September 30th. The following rules go into effect from October 1 through April 30th:

CITY BEACH AND STATE PARK BOAT RAMPS

The **City Beach and Whitefish Lake State Park** boat ramps will be locked in the off season. All motorized and non-motorized watercraft users may launch in the off season by demonstrating via the *Off-Season Online AIS Self-Certification Program* they have acquired sufficient knowledge of aquatic invasive species risks and self-inspection techniques. Users who successfully pass the program test will be issued a **certificate** and **lock code** to enter and exit the boat ramp at City Beach and Whitefish Lake State Park. Find the *Off-Season Online AIS Certification Program* at www.cityofwhitefish.org or www.whitefishlake.org. Non-motorized watercraft users who previously passed the test and received their certificate during boating season will receive an email with the lock code.

HIGH RISK WATERCRAFT

Because decontamination is not available during the off-season, we ask *high-risk watercraft to abstain from launching in Whitefish Lake during this time*. Your cooperation will help protect our waterways and is greatly appreciated. This includes boats:

- with ballast tanks or bags that have not been out of the water for 30 days,
- with standing water that have not been out of the water for 30 days,
- that have been in mussel infested waterways in the last 30 days,
- that have dirt, mud, vegetation or animal life on any internal or external surface.

“Because it is not feasible to keep the inspection and decontamination stations open year-round, we are extending our trust to high risk watercraft users to show care and abide by these important rules during the off-season,” noted Carla Belski, Community Services Coordinator for City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation. “We appreciate all watercraft users continuing to access the lake respectfully during these months when our staff and facilities are not available.”

Montana’s fight to protect state waters against AIS has increased throughout the state in 2017, with particular focus on Montana’s borders and the Continental Divide. In an effort to step up protection of Whitefish Lake, the City of Whitefish, Montana State Parks, and the Whitefish Lake Institute raised and contributed extensive funding and updated their AIS management program to include an additional inspection station at Whitefish Lake State Park and a decontamination station.

“We have greatly appreciated the patience of watercraft users as we worked out the many challenges of this comprehensive program,” said Mike Koopal of the Whitefish Lake Institute. “Watercraft users at City Beach, Whitefish State Park and the Decontamination Station recognize the importance of the effort and have been very supportive of the program.”

Full program details are available at: http://whitefishlake.org/AIS_Mgmt_Pgm.php.

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