

Watercraft Inspector Handbook

2024 Edition



Wisconsin Lakes Partnership



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Acknowledgments:

The *Watercraft Inspector Handbook* is a guide for people who are passionate about our waters and who have a vision for future generations. The Clean Boats, Clean Waters program is sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and promoted by Extension Lakes.

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Welcome to the Clean Boats, Clean Waters Watercraft Inspection Program!

Aquatic invasive species have long been recognized as a serious threat. According to a 2021 study, the global cost of aquatic invasive species conservatively came to \$345 billion, with the largest costs being reported in North America and Asia, primarily as a result of resource damages. In the United States, there are currently more than 250 non-native aquatic species from other continents and more than 450 non-native species that are from North America but have been moved outside their native ranges. In Wisconsin alone, state agency spending on invasive species totaled approximately \$5.1 million in fiscal year 2019. This funding was supplemented by additional investments made by nonprofits, local units of government, and by volunteers who donated their time. These facts make folks a little nervous about the future of Wisconsin inland waterbodies. However, the challenges posed by aquatic invasive species are manageable if the investment and the commitment to make a difference are there.

Wisconsin's 15,081 lakes are fortunate to have community members who monitor water clarity, water chemistry, aquatic plants, and invasive plants. Since 1986, these folks have functioned as the "eyes" of aquatic biologists. With the arrival of aquatic invasive species, now more than ever assistance is needed to help preserve and protect Wisconsin's waterbodies. The Clean Boats, Clean Waters program is an opportunity for people to help stop the spread of invasive species across the state.

Through Clean Boats, Clean Waters, inspectors are trained to organize and conduct a watercraft inspection and education program in their community. This program originated in northern Wisconsin as a middle school project. The Milfoil Masters program alerted adults and youth that members of the public can make a difference in helping prevent the spread of invasive species.

To continue statewide efforts, the **Clean Boats, Clean Waters Watercraft Inspection Program** was created in the fall of 2003. The mission of this program is to promote water resource stewardship by actively involving individuals in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. To accomplish this goal, the program sponsors statewide training workshops and has developed resource handbooks, tool kits, and educational information; a statewide coordinator supports inspection efforts.

Wisconsin realizes that passionate people are the keys to reaching hundreds of recreationalists visiting the state. Inspectors who instruct boaters and anglers on how to perform watercraft inspections are helping to prevent and contain the spread of aquatic invasive species and maintain Wisconsin's valuable water resources.

Thank you for taking the time to learn, act, and protect Wisconsin's waters from invasive species! The rewards of these efforts will be appreciated by many generations to come.



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