

2011 Summary Report of Watercraft Inspection Results at Forest Lake

Author: Maureen Ziskovsky

Watercraft Inspection Program Assistant

Invasive Species Unit, Ecological and Water Resources, MN DNR

12/5/11

Introduction:

The watercraft inspection program's goal is to reduce the spread of invasive species into and around the state. To accomplish this we complete at least 10,000 hours of watercraft inspections each year, work with citizen groups and educate the public at events such as the state fair.

In January of 2008 the MN DNR Invasive Species Unit created a grant program to allow citizen groups to increase the number of hours of inspection at their water accesses. This was done as a way to increase watercraft inspections in the state, work with citizen groups and satisfy requests from citizen groups for more hours of inspections at their accesses.

The Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District received a prevention grant from the MN DNR in April of 2011 for 500 hours of inspection time during the 2011 watercraft inspection. The contract dates were May 1st through October 1st of 2011. Two watercraft inspectors were hired in the Forest Lake area to fulfill the 500 hours.

The inspection process consists of a six-question survey that ensures that boaters are aware of the issues surrounding invasive species and incorporates the inspector walking the boater around the watercraft to show them where they should be looking for invasive species. Survey questions focus on boater knowledge and behavior with information given on the impacts of invasive species and what can be done to prevent their spread.

The data in this report will be based on all hours and inspections done at Forest Lake in the 2011 season.

Inspection Results:

Watercraft Inspectors worked 534 hours (476 hours of access time and 58 hours of drive time) at the Forest Lake accesses. During this time 1,296 inspections were completed (table 1).

Table 1. Forest Lake summary of inspections in 2011.

Access Name	Number of Boaters/Inspections	Enter/Exit/Unknown	Hours	Insp. per Hour
Forest Lake-West	620	345/266/9	171	3.62
Forest Lake-Central	128	89/36/3	122.75	1.04
Forest Lake-East	548	285/251/12	182.25	3.00

Out of the one thousand, two hundred and ninety-six watercraft inspected at Forest Lake fourteen watercraft were found to have attached vegetation. All fourteen were inspected after exiting the waterbody. All watercraft users are asked to inspect and clean their watercraft during the inspection process.

No other plants or animals were found to be attached to watercraft.

The following information has been provided as a summary of the inspections done at the lakes included in this contract in the 2011 season. Information we gather helps us understand risks involved, for example boaters coming from waters infested with zebra mussels are more likely to transport zebra mussels than those coming from non infested waterbodies.

The surveys done during the inspection process found that 72 boaters out of 1,296 inspections completed, or more than 5.55%, had come to Forest Lake from a waterbody in Minnesota known to be infested with zebra mussels. The majority of the watercraft were coming from Mille Lacs Lake and the St Croix River (table 2).

Table 2. Watercraft entering or exiting Forest Lake that last used zebra mussel infested waters.

Last Waterbody	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft
Gull Lake	Enter	1
Gull Lake	Exit	1
Mille Lacs Lake	Enter	14
Mille Lacs Lake	Exit	14
Mississippi River	Enter	4
Mississippi River	Exit	4
Prior Lake	Enter	2
Prior Lake	Exit	1
St. Croix River	Enter	14
St. Croix River	Exit	14
St. Louis River	Enter	1
Superior	Enter	1
Superior	Exit	1

The surveys found that about 0.15% of the boaters who were inspected either entering or exiting the lakes included in this contract had come from another state. These boats likely represent another high-risk group (table 3).

Table 3. Watercraft from states other than MN who used Forest Lake.

State	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft	ZM Present in State
WI	Enter	1	X
WI	Exit	1	X

We use a decal with the current year on it to track if a boater has been inspected in the current year. Boaters who have been inspected in the current year are more likely to be educated about invasive species and how to prevent their spread. Below is the number of inspections broken

down by whether they had a current year decal and would be a repeat, had a previous year's decal and had talked to us in past years, or had never spoken to us before (table 4).

Table 4. Decal summary at Forest Lake from 2007 to 2011

Year	Inspections	Entering	Exiting	Curr Yr Dec	Prev. Yr decal	No decal
2007	134	49	83	13	43	78
2008	240	95	144	29	85	126
2009	631	363	260	145	204	282
2010	1,802	1241	550	369	721	711
2011	1,296	719	553	432	465	385

We have data for 1,296 boaters who were asked if they are familiar with invasive species, 27 (or 2.08%) of them were not familiar with invasive species. These numbers illustrate that many of the boaters who are using the lake are aware of the problems associated with invasive species.

Due to the new drain plug law that was enacted on July 1st of 2010 the Watercraft Inspection survey now includes data showing if the watercraft inspector observed that the drain plug was out when arriving at the access and was removed before leaving the access. Out of the 719 boaters who were entering the water 65 did not have their drain plug out while arriving. These watercraft users were asked to drain all water away from the access. Out of the 559 exiting boaters 17 had water in their watercraft at the time of inspections, these watercraft users were reminded to remove their drain plugs and drain all water from their watercraft before transporting. We also asked entering boaters how long their watercraft were out of the water prior to the inspection and exiting boaters how long their watercraft had been in the water. The amount of time watercraft are in or out of the water impacts the risk of transporting invasive species. Watercraft inspection surveys show that 521 watercraft were out of the water at least 3 days before coming to Forest Lake and 519 were in the water less than one day, both of which lower risk.

Discussion:

Our goal in the 2011 season was to accomplish 1,100 hours of inspection (600 DNR and 500 grant hours); due to the loss of an employee early in the season and being unable to refill that position along with the government shutdown we only completed 534 hours. You will not receive an invoice for any hours of watercraft inspection because we did not exceed the number of DNR hours that we had planned to accomplish.

Out of the 1,296 inspections done at the lakes included in this contract 850 (or 65.5%) had not been inspected prior to 2011 and were an important audience for us to contact.