

2011 Summary Report of Watercraft Inspection Results at Potato, Eagle and Big Sand Lakes

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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 Hubbard County COLA received a prevention grant from the MN DNR in April of 2011 for 500 hours of inspection time during the 2011 watercraft inspection season. The contract dates were May 14th through September 18th of 2011. Four watercraft inspectors were hired in the Beltrami/Hubbard County Lakes area and some were assigned to work at Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lake accesses to accomplish 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 Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes in the 2011 season.

Inspection Results:

Watercraft Inspectors worked 451.5 hours (361 hours of access time and 90.5 hours of drive time) at the Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes access. During this time 369 inspections were completed (table 1).

Table 1. Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes summary of inspections in 2011.

Access Name	Number of Boaters/Inspections	Enter/Exit/Unknown	Hours	Insp. per Hour
Potato North East	259	172/84/3	175.25	1.47
Potato West	110	58/51/1	121.25	0.91
Big Sand	14	12/2/0	27	0.51
Eagle	15	5/10/0	37.5	0.40

Out of the 398 watercraft inspected at Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes only 8 were found to have attached vegetation. Of those 1 was inspected while entering the West access and was asked to remove any vegetation. The other 7 were inspected while exiting the Northeast access. No other plants or animals were found.

The following information has been provided as a summary of the inspections done at Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes 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 6 boaters out of 398 inspections completed, or less than 1.50%, had come to Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes from a waterbody in Minnesota known to be infested with zebra mussels (table 2).

Table 2. Watercraft entering or exiting Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes that last used zebra mussel infested waters.

Waterbody	Last Waterbody	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft
Big Sand	Mille Lacs	Exit	1
Potato	Gull Lake	Enter	1
Potato	Mississippi River	Enter	3
Potato	Prior Lake	Enter	1

The surveys found that about 8.04% of the boaters who were inspected either entering or exiting Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes 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 Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes

Waterbody	State	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft	ZM Present in State
Eagle	ND	Enter	1	
Potato	IA	Enter	5	X
Potato	IA	Exit	5	X
Potato	IL	Enter	2	X
Potato	IL	Exit	1	X
Potato	KS	Enter	1	
Potato	KS	Exit	2	

Potato	NC	Enter	1	
Potato	ND	Enter	8	
Potato	ND	Exit	1	
Potato	NE	Exit	1	X
Potato	SD	Enter	1	X
Potato	SD	Exit	2	X
Potato	WI	Enter	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 Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes, comparison from 2009 to 2011

Year	Inspections	Entering	Exiting	Curr Yr Dec	Prev. Yr decal	No decal
Potato 2009	104	64	40	24	28	52
Potato 2010	262	165	83	46	54	159
Potato 2011	369	230	135	97	118	154
Eagle 2009	0					
Eagle 2010	81	56	23	17	14	50
Eagle 2011	15	5	10	3	6	6
Big Sand 2009	165	102	56	26	29	104
Big Sand 2010	95	46	46	10	18	65
Big Sand 2011	14	12	2	0	10	4

We have data for 398 boaters who were asked if they are familiar with invasive species, 19 (or 4.77) of them were not familiar with invasive species. These numbers illustrate that while many of the boaters who are using Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes are aware of the problems associated with invasive species and the specific problems that are caused by Eurasian water milfoil and zebra mussels we also contacted users who are not aware of these issues.

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 247 boaters who were entering the water 18 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 147 exiting boaters 71 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 104 watercraft were out of the water at least 3 days before coming to Potato, Eagle, and Big Sand Lakes and 101 were in the water less than one day, both of which lower risk.

Discussion:

Our goal in the 2011 season was to accomplish 500 hours of inspection; we completed 451.5 hours. Our biggest challenge in accomplishing goal hours in the 2011 season was the government shutdown.

Per your original grant application we did include Big Sand and Eagle Lakes in the contract even though our 2010 data showed that each of these lakes had fewer inspections per hour than our requirement of .74 inspections per hour. As you can see we did spend some time of each of these lakes, 27 and 37.5 hours respectively, during this time the inspections per hour at Big Sand were .51 per hour and .40 per hour at Eagle.