



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Glacier National Park
International Peace Park
Biosphere Reserve
World Heritage Site

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Glacier National Park Media Release

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Glacier to lift restrictions on hand-propelled boats with invasive species inspections this season

Private motorized watercraft still restricted during 2017 assessment of threat to park waters from non-native mussels

WEST GLACIER, MT. – Glacier National Park announced today that hand-propelled, non-trailer watercraft including kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards will be **permitted in the park with mandatory inspection** beginning May 15 for Lake McDonald and the North Fork and June 1, 2017 for all remaining areas of the park. Last November, park waters were closed to all boating as a precaution after invasive species of non-native mussels were detected in two popular Montana reservoirs east of the park.

Hand-powered boat users will be required to have their craft certified mussel-free (“**clean, drained, and dry**”) by Glacier staff under a new inspection program with stations in four popular locations in the park. (Local users who live in more remote locations will be directed to the nearest ranger station for inspection.) This is a **change from last season**, when hand-propelled watercraft required visitors to complete an AIS-free self-certification form before launching into Glacier’s lakes.

Privately owned motorized and trailer watercraft brought into the park will not be allowed to operate on Glacier’s waters this summer while a comprehensive assessment of the threat from mussels is underway. Among other measures, this will include comprehensive testing of waters in the park and elsewhere in Montana for the presence of quagga and zebra mussels. These non-native mollusks reproduce quickly and can wreak havoc with lake environments, water quality, native wildlife, lake infrastructure, and cause significant economic harm to infested regions.

“We are continuing to evaluate the emerging threat of aquatic invasive mussels to Glacier’s lakes and streams,” said Jeff Mow, superintendent of the park. “To prepare for lake recreation after the spring thaw, we are implementing a rigorous inspection process for human-powered boats, which have a lower risk of transporting these harmful mussels. This will allow many out of town visitors and local residents to continue enjoying this very popular activity in the park.” Hand-propelled watercraft aren’t typically left on the water for extended periods of time and lack the bilges, complex

engines, live wells and other common features of motorized boats that can harbor live invasive species. “

Glacier National Park sits at the headwaters of three continental scale watersheds that drain into the Pacific Ocean, Hudson’s Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico. Contamination of park waters by invasive mussels would mean not only devastating effects on the park’s thriving and diverse aquatic ecosystem, but also detrimental impacts to recreation, waterways and communities downstream.

It is estimated that if the infestation were to spread into the Columbia River Basin, affected states and provinces would be expending hundreds of millions of dollars annually to mitigate the impacts of infestations to infrastructure such as irrigation canals, hydroelectric dams, and utility systems.

The park is coordinating its response to the discovery of invasive mussels in the state with Montana’s Mussel Response team, the Blackfoot Tribal Business Council, Waterton Lakes National Park, the Flathead Basin Commission, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe, the province of Alberta, the City of Whitefish, and all the states downstream on the Columbia River.

Inspection stations for hand-propelled watercraft will be located on the west side of the park in Apgar Village (for Lake McDonald and North Fork area lakes), and the east side of the park at Two Medicine, St. Mary, and Many Glacier Ranger Stations. With additional funding in 2017 through the Glacier National Park Conservancy and a match from the NPS Centennial program, the goal is to provide additional capacity for inspections in more remote locations.

The only recreational motorized watercraft allowed in the park this year will be the concession tourboats and the concession motorboat rentals. These are boats that remain in the park year-round and have not been and will not be launched on bodies of water elsewhere.

For more information about boating procedures, location of inspection stations in the park, and hours of operation, please see: www.nps.gov/glac. For information about the statewide response see: <http://musselresponse.mt.gov/>.

Glacier first closed park waters to all boating in November after state inspectors found invasive mussel larvae in water samples from Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs, about 100 miles east of the park. Such closure is specified as the first in a series of actions in the park’s Aquatic Invasive Species Response Plan. Glacier adopted this plan in 2014 to protect the park’s natural resources and public enjoyment of its lakes if invasive mussels were ever detected within the state.

The park’s **threat assessment activities will continue throughout the spring and summer**, including testing of samples taken in Glacier’s lakes and lakes and reservoirs across Montana this summer as waters warm. Glacier will update the public with any findings and conclusions available when testing results are available later next fall.

--NPS--

Frequently asked questions

- **Q.** Why did Glacier National Park close its lakes to boating in November 2016?
A. Glacier closed its waters on an interim basis because the state of Montana detected invasive mussels in Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs east of the park. This protective action is the first response to such a threat in the park's aquatic invasive species response plan developed in 2014.

- **Q.** Why would zebra/quagga mussels be a problem in Glacier's waters?
A. Invasive mussels have created devastating economic, ecological and recreational consequences for communities where they occur. They reproduce quickly and grow in numbers to infest and damage water pipes, docks and other lake infrastructure, and irrigation systems. Mussels consume microscopic food sources in lake waters that are critical to the natural food chain of native aquatic life including fish. Mussels also strip critical food sources from the water, reducing its availability to support other aquatic life, such as fish populations. As non-native creatures, they also interfere with the ecology and environment of lakes and compete for food and habitat with native species. Finally, invasive mussels are a significant detriment to communities that rely on water-based recreation as part of their economic and tourism livelihood.

- **Q.** Why are you allowing paddled watercraft at Glacier, but not motorboats?
A. Kayaks, paddleboards, inflatable rafts and other hand-powered boats have few places in which water can remain from a previous use without easily being found and emptied. Invasive mussels and their larvae can survive in such residual boat water in transit from contaminated water bodies elsewhere to Glacier's uninfested waters. Motorboats have mechanical compartments, live wells and other catchments in which leftover, mussel-contaminated water may collect and remain hidden. It can be more difficult to spot and empty this residue from such boats.

- **Q.** How long will motorboats be prohibited on Glacier's waters?
A. The park is assessing the risk of contamination to its lakes after invasive mussels were found in Montana east of the park in November 2016. This summer, the process will rely heavily on water sampling by the state and park inspection of all hand-power watercraft at least through the 2017 boating season. Results of water testing and new DNA-based inspection/detection technology, as well as future tools yet to be developed, may influence if and when motorized watercraft are allowed back on park waters.

- **Q.** How will the non-motorized boat inspections work?
A. Through the mandatory permit system, park inspectors will examine every kayak, canoe, paddleboard or other hand-powered craft. In boat inspection terms, this means each vessel or device must be "Cleaned, Drained and Dry" when it arrives at the inspection station. Inspectors will ask when and where the boat was last used to determine if it was recently in contaminated waters. Boats found to have been in such waters recently (e.g., the Missouri River drainage) will not be permitted until they have been dry and out of the waterbody for at least 5 days.

- **Q.** Where will the inspection stations be?
A. Glacier will have four primary inspection stations for self-propelled watercraft, at Apgar, Two Medicine, St. Mary, and Many Glacier. Limited inspections may be

available in remote areas on a case by case basis. That service will depend on availability and resources to provide park staff inspectors. Those and other details of Glacier's inspection program are still being developed and finalized.