

Aquatic Invasive Species – Tips for Fishing Tournament Organizers

Invasive plants, animals and diseases can harm lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, water quality, and wildlife habitat. People can unintentionally spread aquatic invasive species (AIS) by moving boats, gear, and equipment from one waterbody to another or releasing non-native species into the environment.

Fishing tournaments attract many anglers to Minnesota! Some anglers come from states that may have different regulations than Minnesota. Tournaments, under the leadership of their organizers, should strictly adhere to state AIS laws and demonstrate good practices that minimize the potential spread of AIS. Tournament anglers may be seen as role models for the angling community, and their actions and behaviors can set examples for the boating and angling community. Taking actions to prevent the spread of AIS shows that tournament anglers care about the health of Minnesota's lakes and rivers.

In Minnesota, it is illegal for anyone to move AIS on roads or into public waters. Minnesota statute 84D prohibits the transportation of aquatic vegetation or prohibited invasive species on any public road. This statute prohibits placing any watercraft or trailer into state waters that have any aquatic vegetation, zebra mussels or any prohibited species attached. Additionally, a person leaving waters of the state must drain boating-related equipment holding water and live wells and bilges by removing the drain plug before transporting the watercraft and associated equipment on public roads. Drain plugs, bailers, valves, or other devices used to control the draining of water from ballast tanks, bilges, and live wells must be removed or opened while transporting watercraft on a public road. Water from portable bait containers must also be drained (a person may not dispose of bait in waters of the state).

Whether or not a lake has invasive species, Minnesota law requires people to:

- **Clean** watercraft, trailers, gear, and equipment to remove aquatic plants and prohibited invasive species.
- **Drain** all water and leave drain plugs out during transport.
- **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash.
- **Never release** bait, plants, or aquarium pets into Minnesota waters.
- **Dry** docks, lifts, and rafts for 21 days before moving them from one waterbody to another.

Tournament organizers should help participants prevent the spread of AIS by increasing awareness of AIS and promoting opportunities for all participants to:

- **Decontaminate** watercraft and equipment – find free stations on the courtesy decontamination webpage of the DNR website (mndnr.gov/decon).
- **Spray** equipment with high-pressure water or **rinse** it with water.
- **Dry** watercraft and equipment for **at least five days** before using in another water body.

Additional Considerations for Tournament Organizers

- For contests involving multiple waters, fish non-infested waters before moving to infested waters.
- Inform all participants of the AIS status of contest waters (infested or not infested).
- Encourage participants to be aware of AIS status of any waters used prior to the scheduled tournament (pre-fishing, recreation, etc.).
- Remind participants that transporting water in live wells is illegal.
- Provide fresh water to contestants wishing to save bait. Exchanging lake water with fresh water will allow contestants to transport bait for use on their next fishing trip – this step is mandatory on all waters, not just infested waters.
- Inspect participants' boats and trailers to ensure participants have followed contest requirements and state AIS regulations.
- Encourage participants to have their boats washed both before entering contests waters and following completion of the contest.
- Provide power-washing equipment on-site or notify participants of locations of nearby wash stations.
- Set-up boat inspection area that ensures that water and plant materials are properly disposed.
- Consider adding an AIS rule to the tournament, in which the participant may be disqualified for not following AIS regulations.

For more information

Additional information can be found on the [DNR website](http://dnr.state.mn.us) (dnr.state.mn.us).

For questions about AIS prevention, please contact an AIS specialist:

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Northeast Region

- Grand Rapids - Richard Rezanka 218-328-8821
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Central Region

- St. Paul - April Londo 651-259-5861
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