

Oregon's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program 2020 Legislative Report



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Executive Summary

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2220 that created an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Program and established a new user fee to boaters, (Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit) which funds the AIS Prevention Program. The objective of the AIS Prevention Program is to keep Oregon's waters free of new aquatic invasive species and limit the spread of existing invasive species. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) are partners in managing the AIS Prevention Program. Watercraft inspection staff and AIS monitoring activities are managed by ODFW. Administration of the AIS Prevention Permit and law enforcement coordination are managed by OSMB.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife operated five watercraft inspection stations located near or at Oregon's southern, northern and eastern borders. Ashland and Ontario watercraft inspection stations operated year-round. All motorized and non-motorized boats (canoes, kayaks, rafts, etc.) regardless of size are required to stop at inspection stations. Watercraft inspection stations in Brookings, Klamath Falls and Umatilla opened in May and closed in September or October (Umatilla). The five Watercraft Inspection Teams (WIT) conducted 23,043 watercraft inspections and watercraft decontaminations, including 12 for quagga or zebra mussels (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*, *D. polymorpha*).

In the 2020 fiscal year, revenue generated from AIS Prevention Permit totaled \$818,415. The AIS Prevention Program provided (either partial or full) funding for eight full-time positions, and nine seasonal or part-time positions. Additionally, these funds supported law enforcement activities such as checking boaters for a current Waterway Access Permit and enforcing mandatory stops at watercraft inspection stations. State and county law enforcement officers issued 1,031 warnings and 97 citations for failure to possess a Waterway Access Permit; 233 warnings and 45 citations for failure to stop at a watercraft inspection station.

We received additional funding from the US Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) for \$489,570; these monies help fund additional inspectors and hours of operation at the inspection stations.

During 2020, the watercraft inspection program faced several challenges due to COVID-19 and wildfires. We observed lower compliance rates, fewer inspections and almost zero in-person trainings or outreach activities. We delayed opening three of watercraft inspection stations due to COVID-19 and governor recommendations. Additionally, during the wildfires we had to intermittently close some of our inspection stations due to poor air quality and proximity to wildfires.

Background

In response to the growing threat of an infestation from dreissenid mussels, the 2009 Oregon Legislature approved an AIS Prevention Program. A new user fee (AIS Prevention Permit) was established to owners of watercraft ≥ 10 feet in length. Monies generated from the AIS Prevention Permit are used to fund ODFW and OSMB permanent staff, ODFW watercraft inspectors and supplies, outreach and education materials, and other AIS related activities. Watercraft inspections began in spring of 2010 and in 2011, with the passage of House Bill 3399,

roadside watercraft inspections became mandatory. For more detailed information about the AIS Prevention Program, please refer to www.odfw.com or www.oregon.gov/OSMB.

The goal of the AIS Prevention Program is to prevent new introductions of aquatic invasive species and limit the spread of existing ones. Quagga and zebra mussels and hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) are among the top species of concern, due to their destructive nature and ease of translocation by watercraft. Quagga and zebra mussel populations have spread rapidly in the United States (Figure 1) due their adaptability, lack of natural predators and ease of physical transport. Species like Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and New Zealand mudsnails (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) already contaminate some Oregon waterbodies. For more information about these and other aquatic invasive species, please visit: [USGS Non-Indigenous Aquatic Species](#).

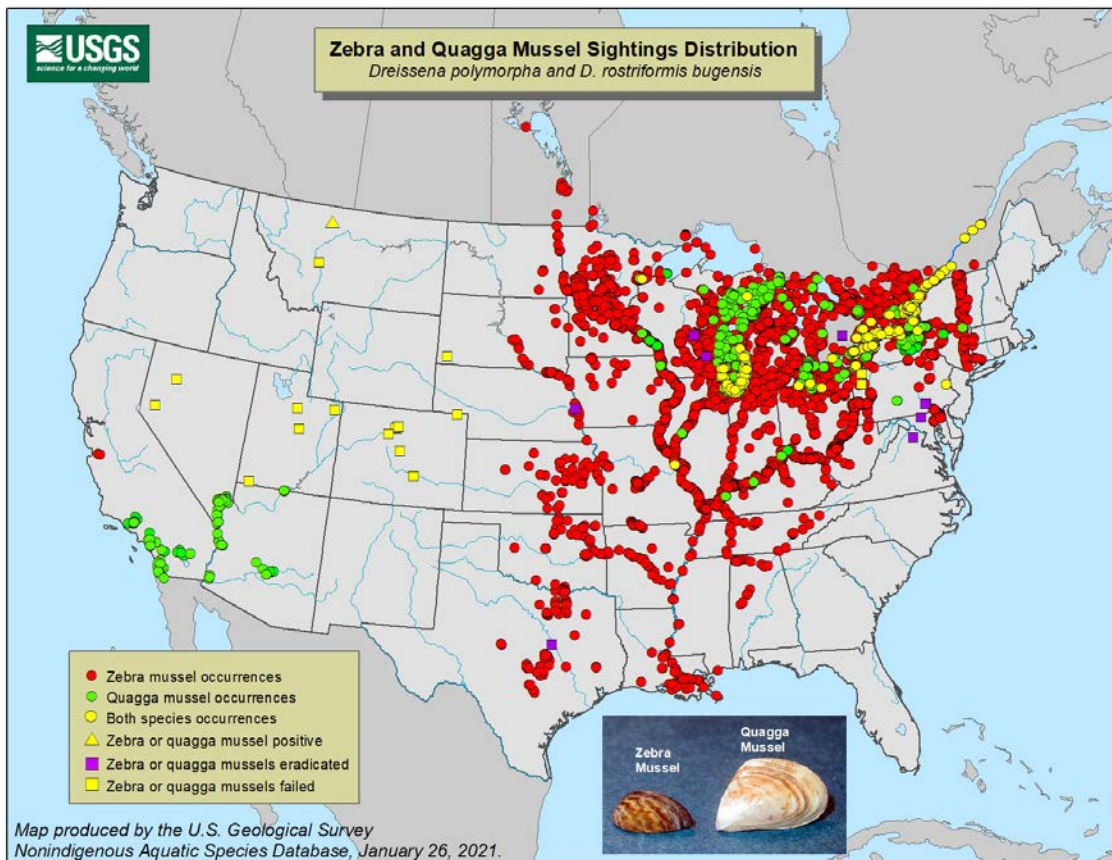


Figure 1. Current zebra and quagga mussel distribution in the United States, map provided by US Geological Survey Non-indigenous Species Database January 26, 2021.

Program Activities

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has the primary responsibility of operating watercraft inspection stations. ODFW Technicians are trained in inspection and decontamination protocols set by “[Uniform Minimum Protocols and Standards for Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Programs for Dreissenid Mussels in the Western United States III](#)”; additionally, all technicians complete *Level 1 – Watercraft Inspection Training* and *Level II – Decontamination Training*. We divided technicians between five stations (Table 1).

The AIS program coordinators (ODFW and OSMB) and a senior technician are stationed in Salem. These positions have a variety of duties, including:

- Training WIT on procedures and protocols (watercraft inspection and decontamination, data collection and entry and interpersonal communications)
- Providing AIS training opportunities to other agencies, schools, fishing groups, boating clubs, volunteers and concerned citizens
- Developing, purchasing and disseminating invasive species educational material (fact sheets, brochures, signs, risk assessments, etc.)
- Conducting watercraft inspections and decontaminations
- Providing assistance during eradication and control efforts
- Responding to public inquiries and sightings
- Surveying and collecting aquatic invasive species
- Staffing booths at public events
- Selling, processing and oversight of permit sales
- Providing updates to Oregon Legislature
- Contracting and managing interagency agreements
- Serving as members of:
 - [Oregon Invasive Species Council, 100th Meridian Columbia River Basin Team, Western Regional Panel for Aquatic Invasive Species, Ballast Water Task Force, Building Consensus in the West, American Boat and Yacht Council](#)

Inspections and Compliance

In 2020, ODFW completed 23,040 watercraft inspections (Table 1). Watercraft inspected included boats from nearly every US state and four Canadian provinces, Mexico, Australia and Cayman Islands (Figure 4). Salem staff performed three additional special inspections. In addition to watercraft inspections and decontaminations, our WIT track watercraft-inspection compliance. Inspectors record the number watercraft that bypass an inspection station, time of day, number of watercraft and watercraft type. We compared the number of bypassed watercraft to the number of inspections each day to get an estimate of watercraft-inspection compliance rate. Compliance rates varied between stations, the overall compliance rate was 76%, which was a 3% decrease from 2019.





Figure 2 and 3. Watercraft inspectors at Brookings (upper photo) and Klamath Falls (bottom photo) watercraft inspection station conducting boater interviews and performing inspections, July 2020.

Station	Number of inspectors	Inspection dates	Inspections (N)	Inspections from contaminated states (n)	Compliance rate (%)
Ashland	4	Year-round	9,074	5,281	87
Brookings	2	5/12 – 9/16	1,911	748	56
Klamath Falls	2	5/13 – 9/12	2,002	1,668	67
Ontario	3	Year-round	6,073	1,259	81
Umatilla	2	5/12 – 10/21	3,983	92	64

Table 1. Summary of Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife’s Watercraft Inspection station information: station location, number of inspectors, dates of operation, total number of inspections, number of inspections from states with quagga or zebra mussel populations and watercraft inspection compliance rates, 2020.

Decontaminations

During the inspection process if an inspector observes a vessel to be contaminated with any aquatic invasive species, a decontamination is immediately performed on-site. Two-hundred-sixty-four of the vessels inspected were contaminated with aquatic vegetation, marine or freshwater organisms, or other biofoulings, we were able to perform a simple decontamination on these vessels; however, 12 vessels were contaminated with quagga or zebra mussels, where we performed a full decontamination (hand removal, followed by hot-water high-pressure) on-site. These vessels originated from Arizona, Missouri, Nevada, Tennessee and Utah. If the vessel was remaining in Oregon, a follow-up inspection/decontamination was performed at the owner’s residence before the vessel was launched.

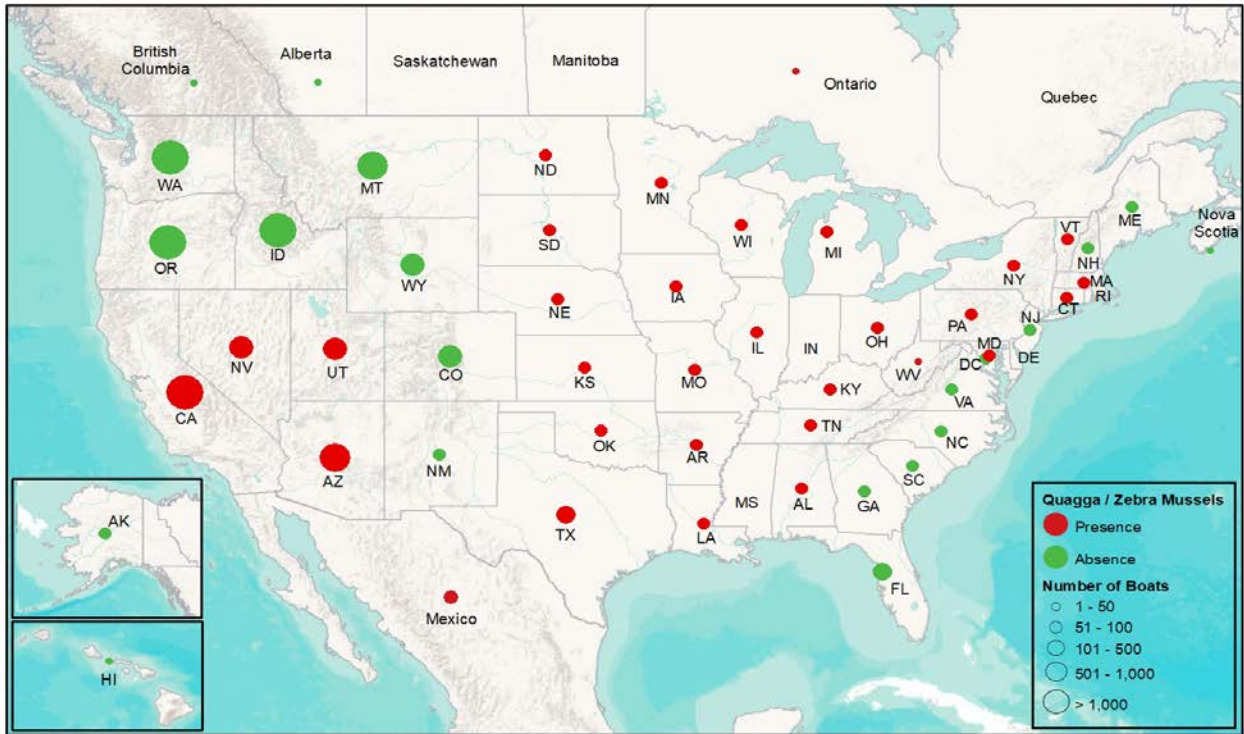


Figure 4. North American map of locations with quagga or zebra mussel presence, and the number of watercraft inspections from each location performed at Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Watercraft Inspection Stations in 2020. Basemap provided by ODFW, ESRI, NOAA, and USGS.



Figure 5 and 6. Two boats intercepted at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Ontario watercraft inspection station both boats were inspected and attached quagga mussels were found. We decontaminated both boats on-site, and re-inspected with no additional mussels found. Ontario, Oregon July 2020.

Outreach and Education

Education and outreach are key components of the AIS Prevention Program. Outreach occurs at the inspection stations, special events and requested trainings. These contacts enable face-to-face opportunities to explain the program and its benefits and the impacts of invasive species in Oregon. Additionally, ODFW and OSMB provided printed materials at all inspection stations, AIS trainings, public meetings and special events.

During 2020, our in-person education and outreach activities were extremely limited due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nearly all outreach events were held virtually, with the exception of events held prior to March 2020; which included the Portland Boat Show and Pacific NW Sportsman's Show. Additionally, staff from OSMB and ODFW participated in a virtual Early Detection Rapid Response exercise, detailed information about this exercise can be found [here](#).

Since 2009, the AIS Prevention Program has offered a special training course to the public and government agencies upon request. Level I – Watercraft Inspection Training is a half-day class based on the 100th Meridian Initiative curriculum. The Level I instructors teach basic AIS biology and behavior and explain Oregon laws and regulations associated with the AIS Prevention Program. All ODFW and OSMB Level I instructors have completed the 100th Meridian Initiative Level I and Level II – Watercraft Inspection trainings.

In 2020, the AIS Prevention Program provided information to a variety of Oregonians, including:

- Portland Boat Show and Pacific Northwest Sportsman's Show
- Bureau of Land Management, other ODFW programs, US Forest Service
- Mt Hood Community College, Portland State University and Oregon State University
- Marine Law Enforcement Training Academy
- Central Oregon Conservation Summit
- Fern Ridge Reservoir Marina Outreach Workshop

WRRDA Funds

As part of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, we received (\$489,570) federal funds from the US Army Corps of Engineers. These federal grant monies are designated for protection of the Columbia River Basin against aquatic invasive species and require matching funds; therefore, we used AIS Prevention Permit revenue as match. During 2020, we used this grant money to fund additional watercraft inspectors and increase hours of operation. Beyond 2021, funds are not secure and we may have to look for other grant monies or we may have to consider staff reductions.

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit

Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) has the lead role in implementing the AIS Permit Program. This permit program is the funding mechanism that supports activities outlined in this report. The OSMB distributes monies to ODFW, law enforcement agencies, and other partners via intergovernmental agreements and contracts for services (Figure 7). Permit revenues are deposited into a dedicated AIS Prevention Fund maintained by the OSMB.

Permit requirements vary for different types of watercraft. Oregon-registered motorized watercraft owners pay a \$5 fee every two years when they renew their registration. Current

registration decals serve as proof of payment into the AIS Prevention Program. Owners of out-of-state motorized watercraft must purchase a non-resident motorized AIS Permit (\$20 yearly) prior to boating in Oregon waters. Operators of all non-motorized watercraft 10 feet or longer in length (regardless of residency) must possess a [Waterway Access Permit](#) (\$17 yearly). This is a new permit for non-motorized watercraft which includes payment into the AIS Prevention Fund. Out-of-state motorized AIS permits and Waterway Access Permits are transferable to other watercraft within their respective categories. Discounted permits are available through OSMB for businesses that rent watercraft (liveries) and river guides using non-motorized watercraft are offered permits at a discounted price through the OSMB.

Waterway Access Permits and out-of-state motorized AIS Permits are available for purchase online at [OSMB](#) and [ODFW](#) websites, in-person at OSMB headquarters, and anywhere that sells Oregon hunting/fishing licenses.

Program Financial Statement

The funds collected from AIS permit sales totaled \$818,415 for fiscal year 2020. Permit revenue is deposited directly into the AIS Prevention Program Fund established by the State Treasury, which is separate and distinct from the General Fund. These funds are used for activities directly related to the program that are outlined within this report. The OSMB administers this fund and distributes monies to ODFW, law enforcement agencies and other partners via intergovernmental agreements and contracts for services (Figure 7).

During the 2020 fiscal year, revenue collected from permit sales totaled \$818,415. Oregon motorized permit revenue from boater registrations was \$331,836; non-motorized watercraft \$366,904; out-of-state motorized \$116,080; liveries and guides \$3,595.

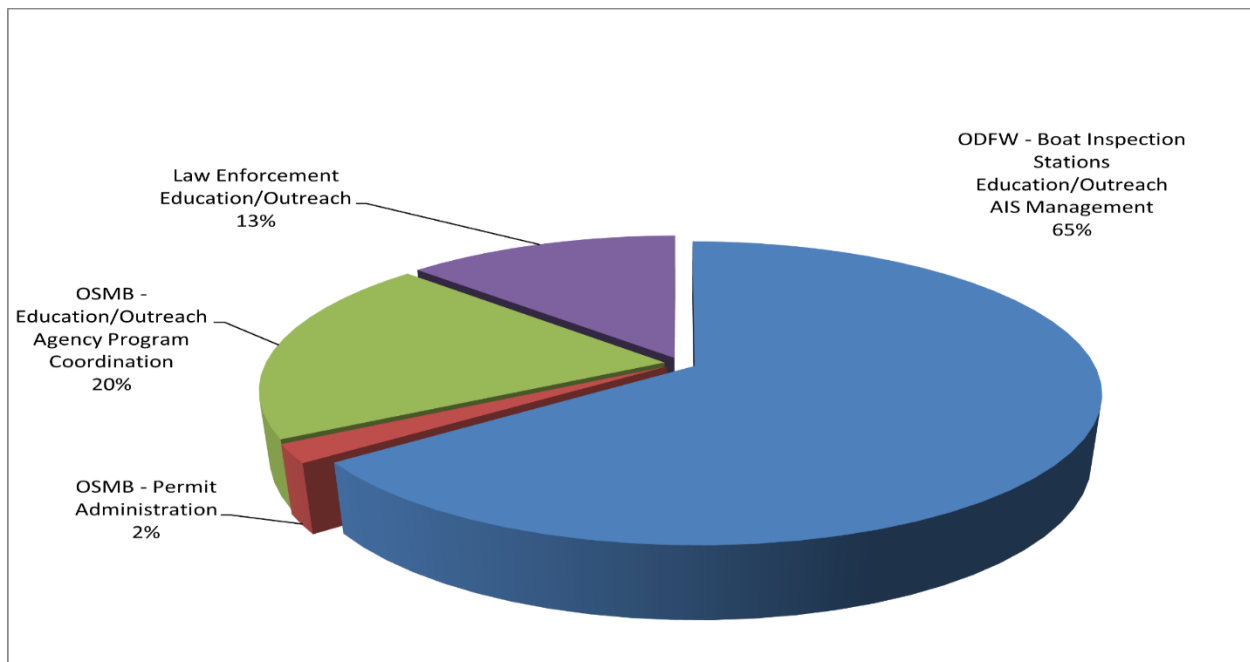


Figure 7. Allocation of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program funds for fiscal year 2020, Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

Law Enforcement Activities

Law enforcement officers (LEO) (County Marine Patrol Deputies and the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Troopers) conduct on-water-patrols and interact with the boating public. When LEO contact boaters on the water or at boat access sites, they enforce boating laws, perform safety checks, and respond to questions from the public about the AIS prevention program. The OSMB provides yearly trainings and program updates to LEO. During 2020, officers documented contacts with 31,857 boaters.

The LEO are encouraged to focus on education rather than issuing citations to boaters that lack an AIS prevention permit or fail to stop at watercraft inspection stations. In 2020, LEO issued 97 citations and 1,031 warnings for failure to possess an AIS Permit. Additionally, 233 warnings and 45 citations were issued for failure to stop at a watercraft inspection station. Law enforcement will continue focusing on permit and inspection compliance during target weekends.

Acknowledgements

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife would like to thank many folks for a successful inspection season. First thank you to our AIS technicians: **Ashland:** Tim Bower, Peter Garner, Rita Kivett, Chris Shelton and Adam Smith; **Brookings:** Christen Holly and David Padgett; **Klamath Falls:** Alec Mauk and Kayden Purnell; **Ontario:** Nathan Richey, Thomas Shenk and Rod Willet; **Umatilla:** Connor Randolph and Chris Schrieber. Thank you to ODFW district staff for providing guidance and assistance throughout the season. Thanks to ODOT (especially Dan Roberts, Kevin Pang and Lloyd Pratt and his amazing staff) for allowing us to have inspection stations at the Ashland, Brookings and Umatilla ports-of-entry. Thanks to Oregon Travel Experience in Ontario and Klamath Falls for granting us permission to set up inspection stations.

The Oregon State Marine Board would like to thank the Oregon Invasive Species Council and its members for their continued support and guidance for implementing this AIS Prevention Program.