

Oregon's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program 2024 Legislative Report



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(Cover Photo: Watercraft was intercepted with Quagga Mussels at the Ontario Watercraft Inspection Station from Lake Havasu, AZ and decontaminated by Beck Harper)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background	2
Program Activities	4
Inspections and Compliance	4
Decontaminations	5
Outreach and Education	6
WRRDA Funds	6
Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit	6
Law Enforcement Activities	8
Acknowledgements	8

Executive Summary

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2220 that created the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Program and established a new user fee for boaters (AIS Prevention Permit), which funds the AIS Prevention Program. The discovery of quagga mussel veligers in the Snake River below Twin Falls, Idaho in September of 2023 and again in September 2024 emphasizes the importance of the AIS Prevention Program. Additionally, the discovery of golden mussels in the Sacramento River Delta in California further underlines the need to protect Oregon's waters from the introduction of aquatic invasive species and limit the spread of existing aquatic invasive species through the AIS prevention program. 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 activities are managed by ODFW. Administration of the AIS Prevention Permit and law enforcement coordination are managed by OSMB.

ODFW operated five watercraft inspection stations located near Oregon's southern, eastern, and northern borders. Ashland and Ontario watercraft inspection stations operate year-round. The seasonal stations in Klamath Falls, Brookings, and Umatilla opened in late April. Brookings and Klamath Falls closed mid-September, while the Umatilla station remained open until early October. The two-person Roving Team based in Salem conducted AIS outreach and education activities at various boat ramps around the state and by attending local festivals. All motorized and non-motorized boats (canoes, kayaks, rafts, etc.) regardless of size are required to stop at inspection stations. In 2024, the five stations and roving crew conducted 18,719 watercraft inspections and 278 watercraft decontaminations, which included six for quagga or zebra mussels (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*, *D. polymorpha*, respectively).

In the 2024 fiscal year, revenue generated from AIS Prevention Permit totaled \$820,397. The AIS Prevention Program provided (either partial or full) funding for seven full-time positions, and ten seasonal or part-time positions. Additionally, these funds supported law enforcement activities such as checking boaters for a current AIS or the Waterway Access Permit and enforcing mandatory stops at watercraft inspection stations.

The program received additional funding from the US Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). This grant provided \$616,352 over 18 months and was used to help fund additional inspectors and hours of operation at the inspection stations.

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 for owners of non-motorized watercraft ≥ 10 feet in length and motorized watercraft. Funds generated from the AIS Prevention Permit are used to fund ODFW and OSMB staff, ODFW watercraft inspectors and supplies, outreach and education materials, and other AIS related activities. 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.

In October of 2024 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife announced the confirmed discovery of golden mussels (*Limnoperna fortunei*) in the Sacramento River Delta (Figure 1, Red-X). This is the first time that this species of mussel, that is native to China and Southeast Asia, has been detected in North America. Golden mussels are a close relative to quagga and zebra mussels and their destructive environmental and biofouling impacts are similar. Golden mussels have a significant invasion history in locations such as Japan, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. The proximity and relatively wide environmental tolerance of this species poses a significant threat to Oregon’s waterways and further highlights the need for AIS prevention measures in Oregon.

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](https://www.usgs.gov/monitoring-and-assessment/aquatic-invasive-species).

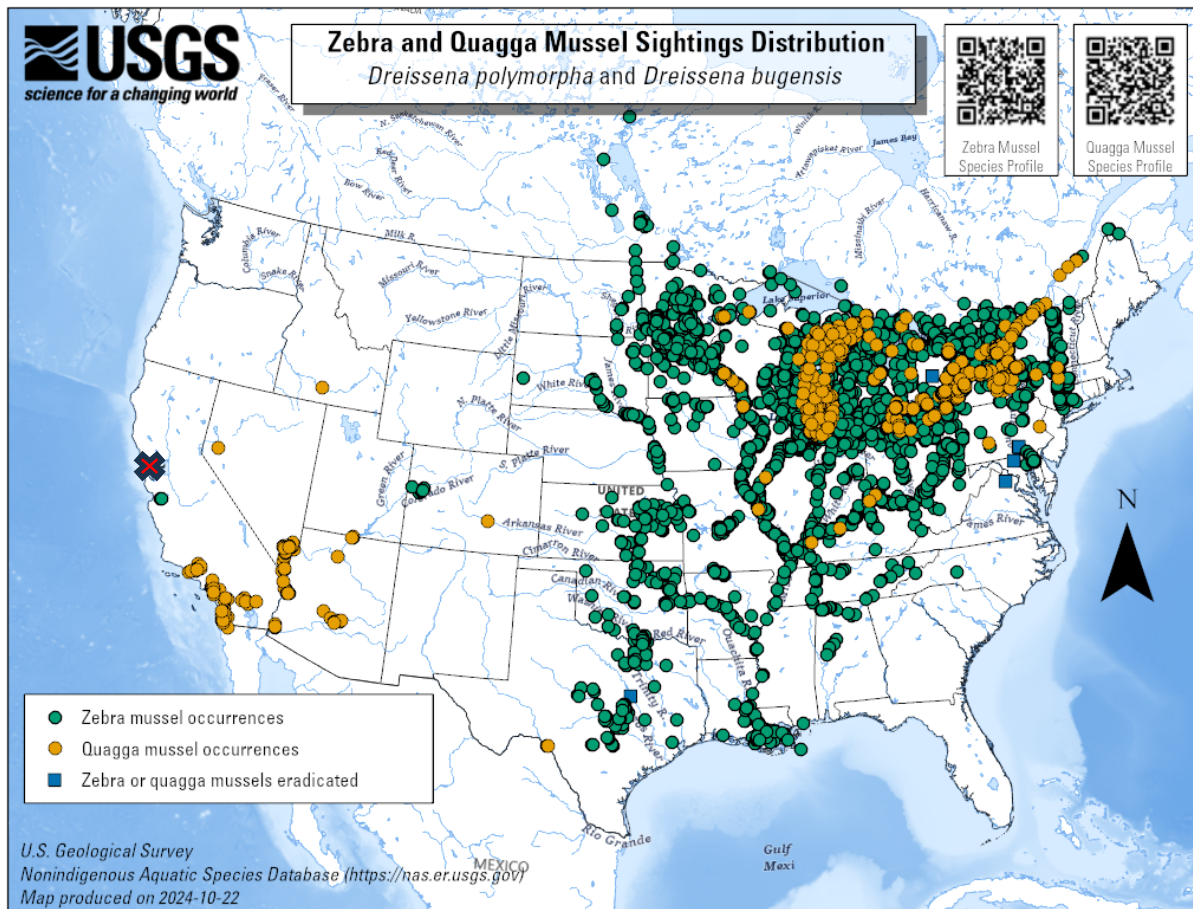


Figure 1. Current zebra and quagga mussel distribution in the United States. Map provided by US Geological Survey Non-Indigenous Species Database October 22, 2024. The golden mussel detection in California added to the map indicated by the red-X.

Program Activities

ODFW 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 IV.](#)” All technicians complete *Level I – Watercraft Inspection Training* and *Level II – Decontamination Training*. Technicians are assigned across five stations (Table 1).

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

- Training, Watercraft Inspection Team (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
- Aiding 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 the 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, Western Invasive Species Coordinator Effort, Building Consensus in the West, American Boat and Yacht Council

Inspections and Compliance

In 2024, ODFW completed 18,719 watercraft inspections (Table 1). Of these 278 inspections were performed by roving inspection staff based in Salem. These inspections were at various boat launches, public outreach events, and at the request of the general public seeking to ensure compliance. In addition to watercraft inspections and decontaminations, our WIT attempts to track watercraft inspection compliance. As able, inspectors record the number of watercraft that are observed bypassing inspection stations. Time of day, the number of watercraft and watercraft types are recorded. In 2024, a total of 4,292 watercraft were observed not complying with mandatory inspection requirements by bypassing an open inspection station. While these observations cannot be statistically analyzed due to sampling methodologies they show a significant concern regarding the compliance with required boat inspections in the state.

Table 1. Summary of ODFW’s watercraft inspection station information for 2024

Station	Number of inspectors	Inspection dates	Inspections (N)	Intercepted watercraft with biofouling
Ashland	5	Year-round	7,617	48
Klamath Falls	2	4/29 – 9/12	1,535	5
Brookings	2	4/29 – 9/12	2,163	18
Ontario	5	Year-round	5,132	151
Umatilla	2	4/29 -10/04	2,030	51
Roving (Salem)	2	4/29 - 9/12	242	5
Total	18		18,719	278

Decontaminations

During the inspection process, if an inspector observes a vessel contaminated with any aquatic invasive species, a decontamination is immediately performed on-site. The 272 vessels found with aquatic vegetation, marine or freshwater organisms, or other biofouling were decontaminated by simple manual removal of the biofouling. The six vessels contaminated with quagga or zebra mussels had a full decontamination performed on-site. The full decontamination procedure included hand removal, followed by a hot water high-pressure wash and reinspection (Figure 2 and 3). If the vessel was remaining in Oregon, a follow-up inspection/decontamination was performed at the owner’s residence before the vessel was launched, or if the watercraft was going to another state, that other state was notified.



Figure 2 and 3. Boat intercepted at the ODFW’s watercraft inspection stations. Boat was inspected and quagga mussels were found. ODFW decontaminated the boat on-site and re-inspected with no additional mussels found.

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, 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.

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 2024, the AIS Prevention Program provided information to a variety of Oregonians, including:

- Bureau of Land Management
- Other ODFW programs
- US Forest Service
- Mt Hood Community College
- Portland State University
- Marine Law Enforcement Training Academy
- Umpqua Basin Hydrologist monthly meeting (virtual)
- Treasure Valley Community College
- Oregon Water Recourses Congress
- Oregon Water Recourses Department
- Various K-12 Schools and Programs

WRDA Funds

As part of the Water Resources Development Act, the program received \$616,352 in 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 2024, we used this grant money to fund additional watercraft inspectors and increase hours of operation.

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit

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 funds to ODFW, law enforcement agencies, and other partners via intergovernmental agreements and contracts for services. Permit revenues are deposited into a dedicated AIS Prevention Fund maintained by the OSMB.

Permit requirements vary for different types of watercrafts. Oregon-registered motorized watercraft owners pay \$5 fee every two years when they renew their registration. Current registration decals serve as proof of payment in 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 permit for non-motorized watercraft 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

During the 2024 fiscal year, revenue collected from permit sales totaled \$820,397. Oregon motorized permit revenue from boater registrations was \$296,075; Waterway Access Permit for non-motorized watercraft \$413,417; out-of-state motorized 105,520; liveries and guides 5,385 (Figure 4). The 2024 fiscal year represents an average year for program revenue, long-term results show that funding has been stable and fairly consistent since the program started in 2010.

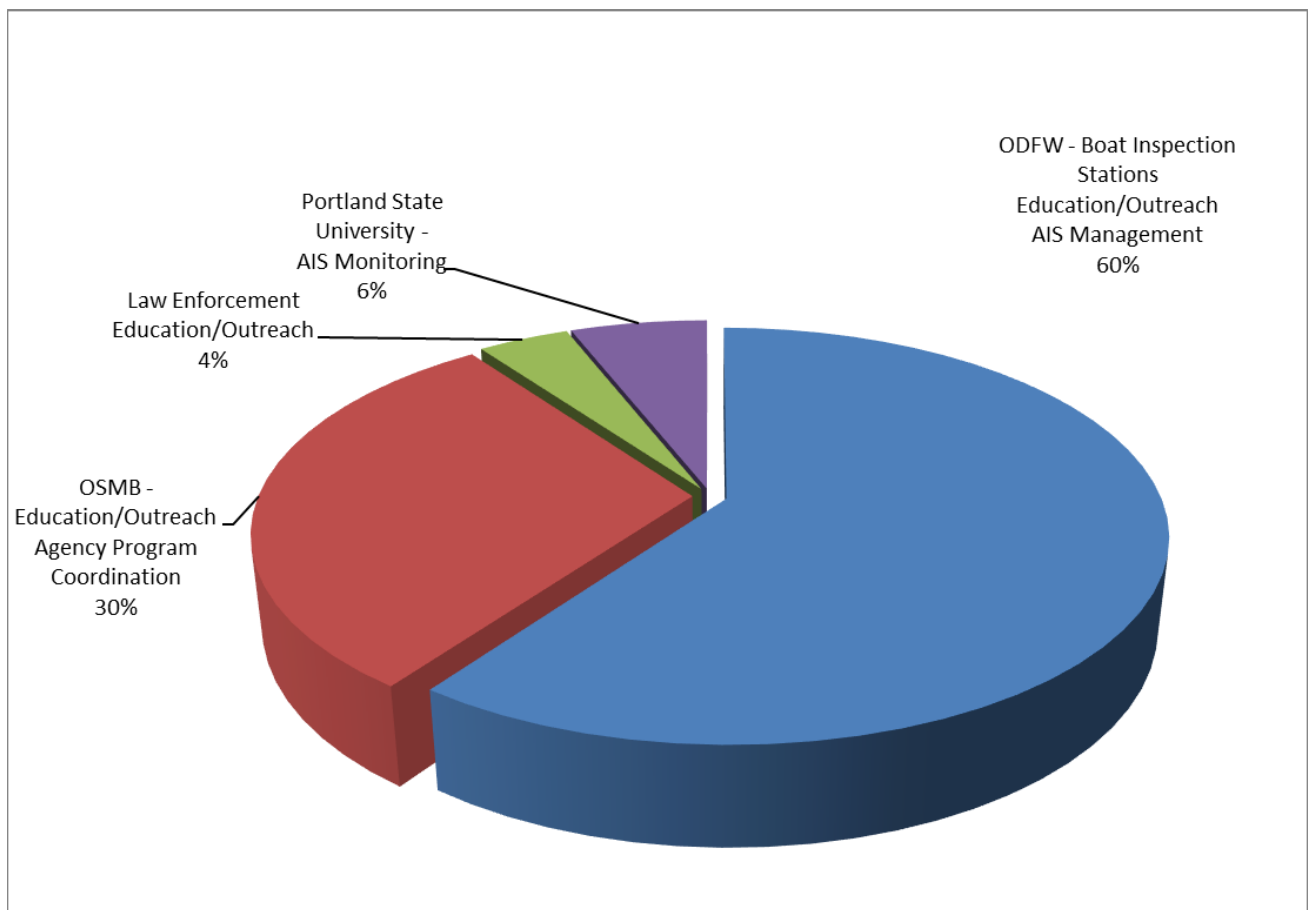


Figure 4. Allocation of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program funds for fiscal year 2024 Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

Law Enforcement Activities

Law enforcement officers (LEO) (County Marine Patrol Deputies and the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Troopers) conducted on-water-patrols and interact with the boating public. When a LEO contacts 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 training and program updates to LEO and they 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.

Acknowledgements

ODFW would like to thank many folks for a successful inspection season. First thank you to our AIS technicians: **Ashland:** Tim Bower, Wyatt Inman, Morah West, Holland Morgan and Nathan Richey (Sr. Tech.); **Klamath Falls:** Stephanie Cole and Eric Montag; **Brookings:** Robert Minter and Mallory Hoffbeck; **Ontario:** Beck Harper, Libby Adams, Callihan Johnson, and Kyle Roth; **Umatilla:** John Nissen and Quinn Nightingale; **Roving Team:** Sierra Zambrano and Sarah Beggs. Thank you to ODFW district, wildlife area and hatchery staff for providing guidance and assistance throughout the season. Thanks to ODOT for allowing inspection stations at the Ashland 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. Also, a huge thank you to our Law Enforcement partners as their support and work within this program are vital to its success.