

# **Watercraft Inspection Program Summary**

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**2024**

## 2024 AIS Watercraft Inspection Program Summary

Manitoba has been operating mandatory watercraft inspection stations since 2016. The goal of this program is to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species into, within, and outside of Manitoba. The primary focus is to intercept watercraft travelling from invaded water bodies within Manitoba and assess and mitigate their risk before they launch into other water bodies.

Provincial Watercraft Inspectors are designated under The Water Protection Act. Inspectors are trained in watercraft inspection and decontamination and follow well established protocols that are consistent with inspection programs across North America.

It is mandatory for persons transporting watercraft to stop at open stations on their route of travel. At these stations, Watercraft Inspectors assess a watercraft's risk of transporting aquatic invasive species (AIS) by conducting a series of screening questions such as:

1. When was the watercraft last launched?
2. What was the last water body visited?
3. Where do you plan on launching next?

The information obtained from these questions is coupled with a physical inspection of the watercraft that includes looking for signs of aquatic invasive species or carriers of invasive species such as aquatic plants, mud, and standing water. This information is then used to assess the risk the watercraft poses for transporting AIS and determine whether the watercraft requires a decontamination to mitigate this risk. Decontamination involves using hot water and, at times, high pressure water or other tools to kill and remove any aquatic invasive species that might be present on these high-risk watercraft. Decontaminations may be performed on site, or watercraft owners may be issued a decontamination order with specific and legally binding conditions to meet before launching anywhere in Manitoba.

This report summarizes results from the 2024 watercraft inspection season.



## Station Overview

In 2024, the Watercraft Inspection Program operated from May 6 to November 1 for a total of 180 operating days. There were seven fixed stations located at strategic points on provincial highways and at high-volume boat launches (Figure 1 – red markers). These stations included Selkirk, Headingley and Eriksdale, which operated seven days a week, and Ste. Rose du Lac, Minnedosa, The Pas and Grand Rapids, which operated five days per week.

The program also underwent an expansion in 2024, which included introducing two teams of mobile inspectors to complement the existing fixed stations. This allowed the program to provide coverage at difficult-to-staff fixed stations (e.g., Grand Rapids) and expanded the program's presence to new locations across western and eastern Manitoba.

Locations for mobile inspections included Lake of the Prairies, Oak Lake, Pelican Lake, Lac du Bonnet, and Falcon Lake (Figure 1 – orange icons). Aside from increasing inspection and decontamination capacity in these areas, the mobile stations were also used to gather data on potential AIS risks.

## Coordination and Collaboration

The Manitoba Watercraft Inspection Program regularly coordinates and collaborates with the inspection programs of other jurisdictions, including the provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, as well as the federal government (Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)) which operates a watercraft inspection station at the Emerson border crossing.

This summer, Manitoba collaborated with DFO to conduct watercraft inspection blitzes at the Manitoba-Ontario border over two weekends. These blitzes included Provincial Watercraft Inspectors, Patrol Officers and Conservations Officer, as well as DFO Inspectors, Biologists, and Fisheries Officers. Over these two weekends, 941 watercraft inspections and 108 decontaminations were conducted.

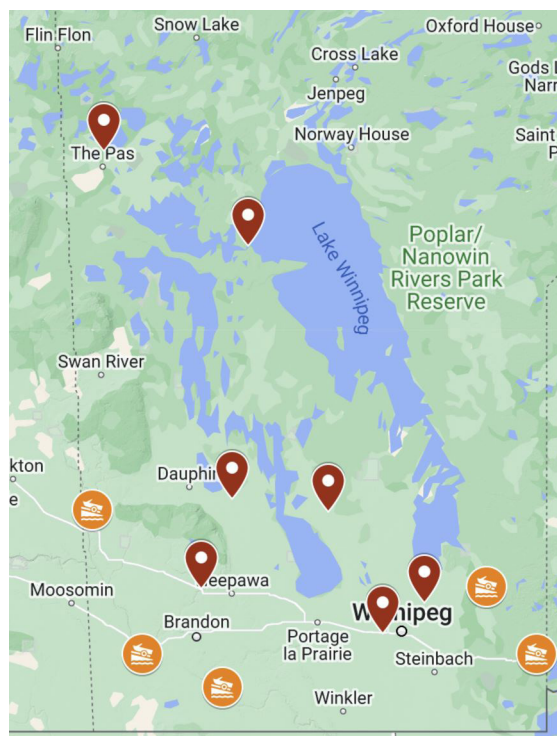


Figure 1. Fixed (red) and roving (orange) watercraft inspection stations of 2024.



Figure 2. Watercraft Inspection Station

## Inspection Statistics

Inspection crews completed 18,500 inspections throughout the season with a decontamination rate of 13 per cent. The majority of watercraft inspected originated from within Manitoba (89.8%), followed by Ontario (2.8%), Saskatchewan (1.9%) and various American states (1.6%).

Stopping compliance for the 2024 season was 82.6 per cent. All watercraft passing an open station are legally required to stop and failing to do so could result in a \$672 fine.

Of the total inspections, 97 per cent were compliant with the legal requirement to remove drain plugs when transporting watercraft. This is consistent with 2023 data and is a positive demonstration that many water users are willing to comply with simple measures to help mitigate the risk of spreading AIS.

| Station Type | Station Location                | # Inspections | # Mussel Fouled |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Fixed        | Eriksdale                       | 3,177         | 6               |
|              | Grand Rapids                    | 813           | 15              |
|              | Headingley                      | 2,366         | 3               |
|              | Minnedosa                       | 1,899         | 1               |
|              | Selkirk                         | 6,199         | 8               |
|              | Ste. Rose du Lac                | 1,231         | 3               |
|              | The Pas                         | 1,730         | 0               |
|              | <b>Total</b>                    | <b>17,415</b> | <b>36</b>       |
| Roving       | Oak Lake                        | 93            | 0               |
|              | Pelican Lake                    | 255           | 0               |
|              | Falcon Lake                     | 414           | 1               |
|              | Lake of the Prairies            | 199           | 0               |
|              | Lac du Bonnet                   | 124           | 0               |
|              | <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1,085</b>  | <b>1</b>        |
|              | <b>Total Fixed &amp; Roving</b> | <b>18,500</b> | <b>37</b>       |

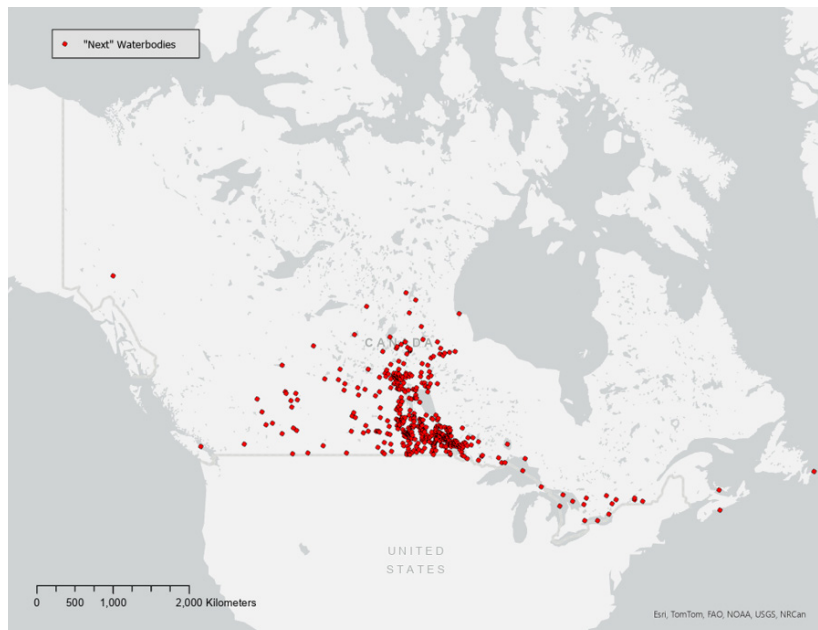
Table 1. Total Number of Inspections Completed and Number of Mussel Fouled Watercraft Found in the 2024 season.

Though a high percentage of watercraft were found to be Clean, Drained and Dry, there were 37 instances of watercraft with evidence of zebra mussels (Table 1). The types of fouled watercraft ranged from pontoon boats and fishing boats with outboard motors to jet skis, highlighting the need for all forms of watercraft to comply with inspections. Possessing zebra mussels and other AIS in Manitoba is not only illegal but also poses a significant threat to Manitoba water bodies. The fine for possessing/transporting AIS is \$1,296. The majority of mussel-fouled watercraft originated from invaded water bodies within Manitoba (e.g., Lake Winnipeg).

## Watercraft Movement

Watercraft users identified over 420 unique water bodies across Canada as their next destination. The top 10 destination water bodies included:

1. Red River
2. Lake Manitoba
3. Clearwater Lake
4. Lake of the Prairies
5. Lake Winnipeg
6. Cedar Lake
7. Falcon Lake
8. Lake of the Woods
9. Rocky Lake
10. Saskatchewan River



*Figure 3 – Destination water bodies*

As noted above, 1.6 per cent of watercraft users indicated as last launching in a U.S. water body. The top five most popular states of origin were:

1. North Dakota
2. South Dakota
3. Iowa
4. Minnesota
5. Nebraska

## Conclusion

It is important to remember that, while watercraft inspection stations can help the public prevent the spread of AIS and comply with the law, they cannot be everywhere. It is crucial that all water users do their part to prevent the spread of AIS every time they use a water body. More information on the requirements for watercraft and how to prevent the spread of AIS can be found by visiting: [Manitoba.ca/StopAIS](https://Manitoba.ca/StopAIS).