

2025 AIS Watercraft Inspection Program Summary

MARCH 2026

2025 AIS Watercraft Inspection Program Summary

Manitoba has been operating mandatory watercraft inspection stations since 2016 following the enactment of AIS legislation. 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 waterbodies within Manitoba and assess and mitigate their risk before they launch into other water bodies.

Inspectors are trained in watercraft inspection and decontamination and follow established protocols 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, Inspectors conduct a risk assessment questionnaire paired with a physical inspection of the watercraft and water-related equipment. Risk-assessment questions include:

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

During the physical inspection, Inspectors are looking for signs of aquatic invasive species or carriers of invasive species such as aquatic plants, sediment and standing water. Together, the information obtained from the questionnaire and physical inspection are used to assess the risk the watercraft poses for transporting AIS and determine the best method for mitigating that risk.

In most cases, high-risk boats can be mitigated by a decontamination which is also performed on site by Inspectors. 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 high-risk watercraft. In some cases where on-site decontamination is not possible watercraft owners may be issued a decontamination order with specific and legally binding conditions to meet before launching again.



Station Overview

In 2025, the Watercraft Inspection Program operated from May 10 to November 2 for a total of 177 operating days. There were seven fixed stations located at strategic points on provincial highways and at high-volume boat launches (Figure 1 - red). These stations included Selkirk Park, St. Vital Park and Eriksdale, which operated seven days a week, and Dauphin, Minnedosa, The Pas and Grand Rapids, which operated five days per week.

There were also two teams of mobile inspectors that visited several new locations across the province. Aside from increasing inspection and decontamination capacity in these areas, the mobile stations were also used to gather data on potential AIS risks.

Mobile stations were set up either strategic pinch-points on highways or at waterbodies. Highway locations included Hwy 1 at the Manitoba-Ontario Border, Neepawa and Cranberry Portage. Boat Launch locations included Lake of the Prairies, St. Malo Reservoir, Oak Lake, Pine Falls (Winnipeg River), Brandon Riverbank Discovery Center (Assiniboine River), Pelican Lake, Winnipeg Main Street boat launch (Red River), Lake Wahtopannah and Buffalo Bay (Lake of the Woods). (Figure 1 – orange).

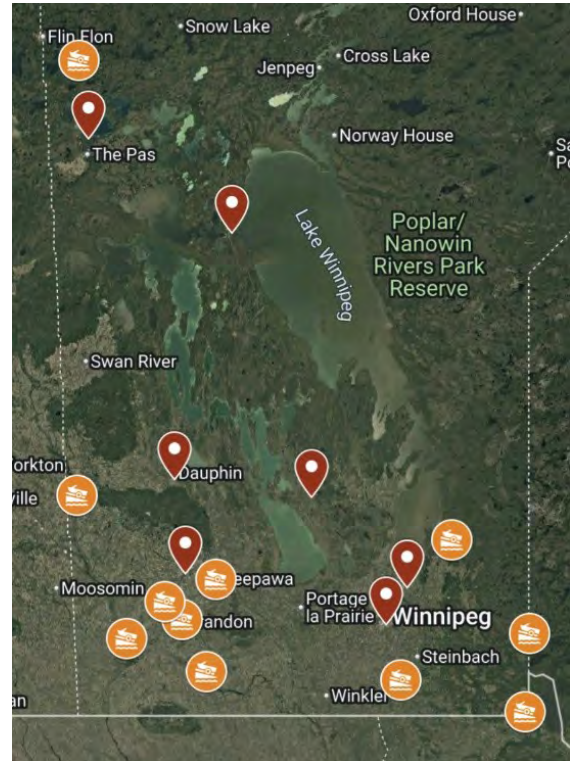


Figure 1. Fixed (red) and roving (orange) watercraft inspection stations of 2025

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 (Fisheries and Oceans Canada (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, a total of 1,394 watercraft inspections were conducted, with 52 watercraft receiving decontamination.

Inspection Statistics

Inspection crews completed 17,307 inspections throughout the season with a decontamination rate of 17.6 per cent. The majority of watercraft inspected originated from within Manitoba (92.7 per cent), followed by Ontario (1.8 per cent), Saskatchewan (1.7 per cent) and various American states (1.8 per cent).

Stopping compliance for the 2025 season was 94.9 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, 98.9 per cent were compliant with the legal requirement to remove drain plugs when transporting watercraft. This is consistent with 2024 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.

Table 1. Watercraft inspection statistics for the 2025 season.

Station Type	Station Location	Inspections	Mussel Fouled
Fixed	Dauphin	917	1
	Eriksdale	2607	15
	Grand Rapids	559	3
	Minnedosa	2073	0
	Selkirk Park Boat Launch (Red River)	6645	7
	St. Vital Park Boat Launch (Red River)	2054	1
	The Pas	1616	1
	Total	16,471	34
Roving	Brandon Riverbank Discovery Center (Assiniboine River)	24	0
	Buffalo Point (Lake of the Woods)	6	0
	Cranberry Portage	37	0
	Lake of the Prairies	426	0
	Lake Wahtopanah	13	0
	Main St. Boat Launch (Red River)	1	0
	Neepawa	97	0
	Oak Lake	16	0
	Pelican Lake	30	0
	Pine Falls (Winnipeg River)	134	0
	St. Malo Reservoir	52	0
	Total	836	0
	Total Fixed & Roving	17,307	34

Though a high percentage of watercraft were found to be Clean, Drained and Dry, there were 34 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 waterbodies. 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).