

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Announces the Start of a New Volunteer Effort to Slow the Spread of Fish Diseases and Invasive Species at Boat Launches

Press Release

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Contacts: Mr. Gary Whelan, Fisheries Division (517-373-6948)
 Mr. Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (517-241-2054)
 Ms. Mary Dettloff, Press Secretary

The Department of Natural Resources Director Rebecca Humphries is pleased to announce the start of a volunteer effort to establish boat disinfection stations at boat launch sites. “This effort is the result of many hours of coordination and work by Mr. Jack Hartmann, Eagle Harbor and the Michigan Lakes and Streams Associations, Inc. Their efforts will begin today to establish disinfection stations at boat launches around the state and are a part of our overall strategy to reduce the movement of serious fish diseases such as Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) in our waters”, said Director Humphries. “In order to really be effective in reducing the risk from these organisms, we need the public to be involved and we expect this to be an excellent way for them to do so.”

This citizen initiative, guided by Department staff, has led to the development of a clear set of instructions on how to establish disinfection stations away from boat launch ramps, the availability of an excellent disinfectant, and instructions for boaters on how to properly disinfect their vessels. All of this information will be available on the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association website (<http://www.mlswa.org/>) and allow lake associations, boat launch operators and other interested members of the public to get boat disinfection stations established.

While the disinfection stations will not completely safeguard waters from being infected by new fish diseases or invasion species, they will help in the effort and will engage the public as allies in slowing and preventing the spread of fish diseases and invasive species. “We have for some time envisioned a system of boat disinfection stations as part of our effort to engage the public in stemming the tide of serious fish diseases and invasive species from invading our waters.” stated Dr. Kelley Smith, Fisheries Division Chief. “This is exactly the type of effort using the very best disinfectant that we use in our hatchery system which we hoped would come to fruition. We encourage lake associations and other interested groups to establish these voluntary stations around the state and use the information on the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association website to do so.”

Interested parties that wish to establish disinfection stations at boat launching ramps are reminded that they will need to get a permit from the entity that owns or operates the

facility. “It is very important that all of the proper permits are obtained before moving forward with the disinfection station. The review process may take several weeks to ensure the feasibility for each site and to ensure proper locations for installation are identified. If the boat launching facility is a DNR operated facility, then the local DNR administrating unit should be contacted for initiating the permit process. All other public administered boat launch facilities, whether they be community, county, or Federal, will require approval from those agencies for setting up a disinfection station.” explained Jason Fleming, Department Analyst, Parks and Recreation Division.

The Department would like to especially acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Jack Hartman and the Michigan Lakes and Streams Associations, Inc. who have spearheaded this effort to make boaters and anglers a part of the solution to reduce and slow the movements of fish diseases and invasive species in our waters. “Mr. Hartmann has worked tirelessly to develop the needed instructions, obtain the appropriate disinfectant (Virkon Aquatic), and has coordinated with the Michigan Lakes and Streams Associations, Inc. to get the word out to the boat launch operators and interested members of the public on how to establish disinfection stations and how to disinfect boats properly and safely. It is truly a remarkable effort” said Gary Whelan, Fish Production Manager, Fisheries Division. “The development of these disinfection stations will educate our public on how to properly disinfect their equipment and provide them easy opportunities to reduce the spread of fish diseases in our state.”