

# Northwest Wisconsin Zebra Mussel Rapid Response Plan

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## SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

This document was developed by the Northwest Wisconsin Zebra Mussel Management Team as reference for responding to newly detected populations of zebra mussels (ZMs). To be most effective, a response to a new introduction should occur quickly during the “pioneering” stage when the identified populations are still small and manageable. The management team utilized *Wisconsin’s Rapid Response Framework for Invasive Species*, which is a flexible non-species-specific tool to broadly guide response actions. This plan assists citizens and professional partners to respond more specifically to zebra mussels and the many challenges that may result. Activities will depend on staff and funding availability.

## First NW WI Zebra Mussel Discovery

In October 2016, a local citizen found zebra mussels on his pier, and DNR staff verified them in Big McKenzie Lake, Burnett and Washburn Counties. This was the first confirmed inland population in the 12 northwestern counties of Wisconsin. To date, an established population has been confirmed, and two zebra mussels have been verified in Middle McKenzie Lake.

Closing a boat landing is not a viable option. Wisconsin’s lakes are held in trust for the public so existing public access cannot be removed or altered to prevent use. It is acknowledged that there are barriers and frustrations preventing laws from becoming more stringent for aquatic invasive species (AIS) control. Contacting your local and elected officials is a good start to advocate law changes.

It’s important to remember, some lakes are more suitable for certain AIS than others, but everyone should always take the same precautions to prevent their spread: **inspect, remove, drain, and never move** plants or animals from a waterbody.

**1. REPORTING A FINDING (initial observer)**

Newly discovered or suspected zebra mussels must be verified and documented as soon as possible after initial discovery.

\*Bag it and call DNR or AIS Coordinator for a possible site visit or bring sample to office.

\*Take a picture, record location (gps if possible), date and number found.

\*DNR can verify with a picture if clear enough to confirm.

\*If possible, fill out the incident report form found on DNR website:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/forms/3200-126-animalincident.pdf>

**2. COMMUNICATION & PLANNING**

✓	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	Verification	DNR or County Staff	Inform Initial Observer
	Notify Lake Association (if one available)	Initial Observer	Be prepared to identify alternative person to communicate results
	Write and send out press releases, newsletters, emails blasts, hold meetings (if appropriate)	Lake Association County AIS Coordinator Land & Water Department Lake and River Association Federal Partners	Communicate so you don't duplicate efforts
	Install Statewide AIS prevention sign at boat landing	County, DNR, or Volunteer	Sign and post available through DNR, who can also record sign installation info. (SWIMS)
	Consider forming a Management Team consisting of multiple partners. Select a Coordinator	Lake Association DNR County LWCD Federal & Tribal Partners Local citizens Others?	Strategize: education, monitoring, watercraft inspections, legislative actions
	Consider applying for a DNR Rapid Response Grant	Lake Association (preferred) or alternative sponsor	Contact local DNR Grant Coordinator

**3. PREVENTION AND CONTAINMENT ACTIVITIES**

Once zebra mussels are verified, it is imperative that containment activities be implemented as soon as possible.

\**Signs*

-Construct a customized sign or kiosk at the landing to inform the public ZMs are present in the waterbody. Please note that species-specific signs are typically not

preferred or recommended. We are making an exception to this policy given the high-profile and new nature of zebra mussels in northwest Wisconsin.

**\*Outreach**

- Contact DNR, County Land and Water Department or UW Extension-WI Lakes for educational materials for kiosks, meetings, newsletters, websites, etc.
- Contact marinas, bait shops, dock installers, fishing guides, etc. Discuss what they can do to prevent the spread.
- Communicate what you are doing to surrounding lake associations and landowners to help get them involved with prevention practices.
- Engage interested lakeshore owners to form a lake association.
- Create a progress and planning report as activities are implemented.
- Contact your local and statewide legislators to advocate law changes to stop the spread of AIS.
- Continue public outreach.

**\*Monitoring**

- Attend an AIS Citizen Lake Monitoring workshop. They are usually provided by a County Land and Water Department in your region, late spring or upon request.
- Design a monitoring and sampling plan to better understand the number, location, and distribution in the waterbody. Map locations and numbers found.
  - Engage in citizen AIS monitoring and ZM plate sampler monitoring.
  - Assist DNR or County staff with professional monitoring, including veliger sampling.

**\*Watercraft Inspections**

- Attend a Clean Boats Clean Waters workshop. They are usually provided by a County Land and Water Department in your region, each spring or upon request.
- Engage in watercraft inspections with lake associations, DNR Water Guard, County staff and citizen volunteer. Schedule shifts during weekends, peak holidays and fishing tournaments. 24/7 watercraft inspection isn't possible, so be prepared to prioritize timeframes that will be most effective at preventing the spread.

**\*Decontamination Stations** have the greatest success in preventing zebra mussels from entering and leaving a waterbody.

- Provide a decontamination station at the boat landing for boaters to clean off their watercrafts, trailers, and gear.
  - \* Brush and spray solution using one tablespoon bleach per gallon water. (The solution needs to be changed daily, in order sustain viability).
  - \* High pressure hot water unit with trained personnel operating it.
  - \* Information on how to "set-up" a station is available in link below.

Burnett and Washburn Counties have recently passed an ordinance stating if a decontamination station is available at a boat landing, the boater is required to use it. Specific information can be found in the in link provided below.

**4. CONTROL OPTIONS**

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Zebra mussel chemical control remains experimental. The primary criteria for experimental control are an isolated population in a small area. Total eradication of zebra mussels is not possible.

**Manual Removal** (hand removal) and the use of SCUBA gear for deeper depths works in very small, isolated areas to reduce nuisance conditions.

**Chemical Treatment** requires a DNR permit and can be only applied by a licensed applicator. Exposure times are relatively high and unlikely to occur in natural lakes and collateral damage to native mussels and fish is likely.

#### **5. FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION**

After the field season, meet with the Management Team to review monitoring results, lessons learned and discuss future planning and communication strategies.

#### **CONTACTS:**

\*By Region: <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/invasives/topics.aspx>

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#### **Available Resources:**

*Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association* <http://wclra.org/>

*Animal Incident Report Form:* <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/forms/3200-126-animalincident.pdf>

*UW-Extension Lakes* <https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/default.aspx>

*Burnett County Decontamination Ordinance:* <http://www.burnettcounty.com/index.aspx?NID=1043>

*Washburn County Decontamination Ordinance (link coming soon)*