

2011 Summary Report of Watercraft Inspection Results at Pelican Lake

Author: Anna Ness

Watercraft Inspection Assistant

Invasive Species Unit, Ecological Resources, MN DNR

2/16/12

Introduction:

The watercraft inspection program's goal is to reduce the spread of invasive species into and around the state. To accomplish this we complete at least 10,000 hours of watercraft inspections each year, work with citizen groups and educate the public at events such as the state fair.

In January of 2008 the MN DNR Invasive Species Unit created a grant program to allow citizen groups to increase the number of hours of inspection at their water accesses. This was done as a way to increase watercraft inspections in the state, work with citizen groups and satisfy requests from citizen groups for more hours of inspections at their accesses.

The Pelican Group of Lakes Improvement District received a prevention grant from the MN DNR in April of 2011 for 500 hours of inspection time during the 2011 watercraft inspection season. The contract dates were May 14th through September 5th of 2011. Four watercraft inspectors were hired in the Otter Tail County area and were assigned to work at the Pelican Lake accesses to accomplish the 500 hours.

The inspection process consists of a six-question survey that ensures that boaters are aware of the issues surrounding invasive species and incorporates the inspector walking the boater around the watercraft to show them where they should be looking for invasive species. Survey questions focus on boater knowledge and behavior with information given on the impacts of invasive species and what can be done to prevent their spread.

The data in this report will be based on all hours and inspections done at Pelican Lake in the 2011 season.

Inspection Results:

Watercraft Inspectors worked 829.25 hours (663 hours of access time and 166.25 hours of drive time) at the Pelican Lake access. During this time 1,570 inspections were completed (table 1).

Table 1. Pelican Lake summary of inspections in 2011.

Access Name	Number of Boaters/Inspections	Enter/Exit/Unknown	Hours	Insp. per Hour
West	871	571/296/4	320	2.72
East	699	475/220/4	343	2.03

Out of the one thousand, five hundred and seventy watercraft inspected at Pelican Lake twenty-nine were found to have attached vegetation. Of those, four watercraft were inspected prior to entering the water and were asked to remove any vegetation. Twenty-five were inspected while exiting the water and were asked to remove any vegetation. Six watercraft were inspected while exiting the water and were found to have attached zebra mussels. The watercraft users were asked to remove any mussels prior to leaving the access.

The following information has been provided as a summary of the inspections done at Pelican Lake in the 2011 season. Information we gather helps us understand risks involved, for example boaters coming from waters infested with zebra mussels are more likely to transport zebra mussels than those coming from non infested waterbodies.

The surveys done during the inspection process found that 15 boaters out of 1,570 inspections completed, or more than 0.95%, had come to Pelican Lake from another waterbody in Minnesota known to be infested with zebra mussels. The majority of the watercrafts were coming from Crystal Lake (table 2).

Table 2. Watercraft entering or exiting Pelican Lake that last used zebra mussel infested waters.

Last Waterbody	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft
Crystal Lake	Enter	6
Crystal Lake	Exit	1
Gull Lake	Enter	1
Gull Lake	Exit	1
Lizzie Lake	Enter	5
Rose Lake	Exit	1

The surveys found that about 41.71% of the boaters who were inspected either entering or exiting Pelican Lake had come from another state. These boats likely represent another high-risk group (table 3).

Table 3. Watercraft from states other than MN who used Pelican Lake.

State	Enter/Exit	Number of Watercraft	ZM Present in State
AZ	Enter	1	X
CA	Enter	1	X
CO	Enter	1	X
FL	Enter	1	
FL	Exit	1	
IA	Exit	1	X
IL	Enter	1	X
KY	Exit	1	X

MO	Exit	1	X
MT	Enter	4	
MT	Exit	3	
ND	Enter	436	
ND	Exit	182	
ND	Unknown	2	
NE	Enter	2	X
NE	Exit	2	X
NV	Enter	1	
SD	Enter	4	X
SD	Exit	2	X
TX	Exit	1	X
WA	Enter	1	
WI	Enter	2	X
WI	Exit	4	X

We use a decal with the current year on it to track if a boater has been inspected in the current year. Boaters who have been inspected in the current year are more likely to be educated about invasive species and how to prevent their spread. Below is the number of inspections broken down by whether they had a current year decal and would be a repeat, had a previous year's decal and had talked to us in past years, or had never spoken to us before (table 4).

Table 4. Decal summary at Pelican Lake, comparison from 2008 to 2011

Year	Inspections	Entering	Exiting	Curr Yr Dec	Prev. Yr decal	No decal
2008	671	418	237	136	145	370
2009	1,636	1,056	563	486	362	788
2010	1,483	1,087	378	608	343	519
2011	1,570	1,046	516	629	410	527

We have data for 1,570 boaters who were asked if they are familiar with invasive species, 246 (or 15.61%) of them were not familiar with invasive species. These numbers illustrate that while many of the boaters who are using Pelican Lake are aware of the problems associated with invasive species we also contacted users who are not aware of these issues

Due to the new drain plug law that was enacted on July 1st of 2010 the Watercraft Inspection survey now includes data showing if the watercraft inspector observed that the drain plug was out when arriving at the access and was removed before leaving the access. Out of the 1,046 boaters who were entering the water 278 did not have their drain plug out while arriving. These watercraft users were asked to drain all water away from the access. Out of the 516 exiting boaters 296 had water in their watercraft at the time of inspections, these watercraft users were reminded to remove their drain plugs and drain all water from their watercraft before transporting. We also asked entering boaters how long their watercraft were out of the water prior to the inspection and exiting boaters how long their watercraft had been in the water. The amount of time watercraft are in or out of the water impacts the risk of transporting invasive species. Watercraft inspection surveys show that 751 watercraft were out of the water at least 3

days before coming to Pelican Lake and 385 were in the water less than one day, both of which lower risk.

Discussion:

Our goal in the 2011 season was to accomplish 1,040 hours (500 grant hours and 540 DNR hours) of watercraft inspection at Pelican Lake. Unfortunately, we were only able to accomplish 829.25 of those hours. Even with government shut down this summer, we were able increase to the amount of inspections over last year's inspections. However, the inspectors were not at the accesses from June 30th thru July 24th. We also lost inspectors when the government shutdown went into effect due to them finding employment elsewhere.

In 2009 zebra mussels were discovered in Pelican Lake and at that time, inspections were increased in an effort to educate the public about the infestation. The Watercraft Inspection Program plans to continue to have a strong presence on Pelican Lake in the 2012 season to educate watercraft users about the zebra mussel infestation and the new laws regarding this issue.