2020

Enforcement Program

Captain Eric Anderson & Sgt. Pam Taylor

Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

[*WATERCRAFT INSPECTION PROGRAM*]

2020 - Final Report

WDFW Program overview and brief history:

In 2005, the Washington State Legislature unequivocally supported the belief that Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are a major threat to the economy, environment and public health of the citizens and aquatic resources of Washington State by passing ESSB 5699. The Bill was an effort "to prevent the introduction or spread of highly destructive AIS currently to Washington's waters." The legislation concluded that prevention is significantly less expensive and causes far less ecological and economical damage than controlling new AIS infestations. The Bill mandated that the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington State Patrol (WSP) would each have duties related to the enforcement of AIS laws. While this Bill was ground- breaking legislation with regards to the prevention of AIS introduction by using enforcement as a tool for interdiction, the bill had deficiencies concerning authority and funding allocations and these deficiencies needed to be addressed. In 2007, with support from WDFW, the Washington State Legislature passed ESSB 5923. The new bill now allowed WDFW to have joint access to funds in the AIS enforcement account which had been previously managed solely by WSP. The legislation also clarified responsibilities with regards to cooperative enforcement efforts. It did this by naming WDFW as the primary agency with authority to enforce Washington State AIS laws. ESSB 5923 also corrected a regulatory gap by granting check station authority to WDFW to operate mandatory watercraft inspection stations in effort to interdict AIS. The AIS program is administered through a cooperative agreement between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington State Patrol and is now codified under Chapter 77.135 RCW.

To develop a successful AIS prevention and enforcement program, it was necessary for WDFW to develop a set of core missions to guide this endeavor. The core missions would be used to ensure that activities executed would support the overlying goal of AIS prevention and enforcement and were consistent with mandated requirements set forth in Washington State AIS Laws. The core missions support the ideology that prevention of AIS introductions are substantially less harmful environmentally and economically than trying to contain, control or eradicate an AIS population after it has been established. The following are the core missions:

Prevent AIS from entering Washington State- The prevention of AIS from entering into Washington State is the cornerstone upon which all WDFW AIS interdiction efforts are to be built. This mission is an expansive effort which must encompass the main pathway of AIS spread, which is the overland transport of infected recreational and commercial watercraft, watercraft trailers and all associated equipment. This mission also includes other pathways, such as pet trade, commercial aquaculture, live sea food, and live fishing bait importation.

Minimize expansion of established AIS populations in Washington State- Washington State has many AIS populations which are established and are expanding their ranges. While WDFW has little ability to control expansion by natural means, it is imperative to take steps to control the spread of these populations through "human actions." Again, the overland transport of infected recreational and commercial watercraft, watercraft trailers, and all associated equipment within Washington State is the main pathway. Additionally, illegal transportation of live fish/shellfish, illegal use/release of live bait, illegal fish

stocking activities, and illegal releases of aquatic pets or live seafood are pathways that need to be stopped.

Develop effective working relationships with stakeholder groups- Washington State has many federal, state, municipal, and private stakeholders who are all affected when an AIS becomes introduced and/or established. These stakeholders are valuable allies in the fight against AIS. WDFW will make every effort to seek out these stakeholder groups and incorporate them into its AIS prevention activities.

Promote public knowledge of AIS threats and laws- It has been proven time after time that an educated general public is an effective weapon in stopping AIS introductions and range expansions. WDFW will endeavor to educate the general public about AIS threats and laws through outreach opportunities.

Enforce Washington State AIS laws- The number one weapon that WDFW can use against AIS is the enforcement of existing AIS laws.

2020 Program Description:

The 2020 WDFW Watercraft Inspection Program was a continuation of our 2019 program. We run a "static station" model (similar to the surrounding PNW States). The Static Station model focuses on operating the watercraft inspection stations at fixed locations, with a set operational schedule. Additionally, we supplemented" with concurrent "roving" stations that occurred at specific High Use/High Risk bodies of water (boat ramps) within the Columbia River Basin.

The 2020 program again focused on running two (2) stationary inspection stations in Eastern WA and Southeastern WA. The stations were located at; ***Spokane - Interstate 90 (exit 299) WDFW Inspection station & Pasco- WSP Scale #39, Highway 395 (Hwy-395).*** These locations were strategically selected as they are the main travel routes into the central Columbia River Basin from two identified threat areas (Great Lakes Region & Lower Colorado River basin reservoirs). The fixed stations operated;

Spokane (I-90)

Open Seven (7) days per week
April, May, September, & October*; 7:30am to 8:00pm*
November*; 8:00am to 6:00pm*
June, July, & August; *730am to 10:00pm*

Plymouth/Pasco (Hwy-395)

Open Seven (7) days per week
April, May; *Thursday - Sunday 7:00am to 5:00 pm*
June, July, & August*;* Seven days per week 8:00am to 7:00pm
September, October & November; *Thursday - Sunday 7:00am to 5:00 pm*

2017/2018/2019/2020 Inspection Station Information Statistics

Total Number of Check Station Days 2017	Total Number of Check Station Days 2018	Total Number of Check Station Days 2019	**Total Number of Check Station Days 2020**
216	469	559	***645***

No. of Boats Inspected 2015	No. of Boats Inspected 2017	No. of Boats Inspected 2018	No. of Boats Inspected 2019	**Boats Inspected In 2020**
993	9,054	24,645	32,502	**32,735**

# of Mussel fouled Boats found 2017	# of Mussel fouled Boats found 2018	# of Mussel fouled Boats found in 2019	**# of Mussel fouled Boats found in 2020**
0	18	16	**25**

Number of "traffic stops" conducted on watercraft failing to stop for check station – 2017	Number of "traffic stops" conducted on watercraft failing to stop for check station - 2018	Number of "traffic stops" conducted on watercraft failing to stop for check station - 2019	Number of "traffic stops" conducted on watercraft failing to stop for check station - 2020
191	686	386	**210**
**89 Citations issued, and 121 warnings given (written and verbal)*			

2020 Successes

Check station operations recorded 654 check station days. 32,735 inspections were conducted. 25 boats with Z/Q mussels were checked entering the state. **It should be noted that out of the 25 mussel infested boats contacted, 12 of them were found by our inspectors, receiving no notifications from any other areas;** 109 boats entered the state with standing water from known infested areas; 625watercraft were found with aquatic plants attached.

The WDFW AIS Program also trained and certified all staff as WA WID I Inspectors and certified five additional WDFW staff members in WA WID II Watercraft Decontamination. WDFW also trained and certified 12 National Park Service Personnel (Lake Roosevelt NRA) as inspectors and Decontaminators.

The Spokane WDFW Inspection & Education Station broke ground on the inspection site improvements and installation of the new "permanent" decontamination unit. Staff training was conducted on the operation of the unit in August and construction was completed in September.

Puddles continues to assist with the inspections and detection of Z/Q on Watercraft, even finding mussels on a watercraft that would have been hard for inspectors to locate without her assistance. We received notification that the boat was coming to Washington and suspected that there would still be mussels somewhere on the boat and Puddles pinpointed a location where the inspectors located mussels. She continues to be invaluable to the AIS program in our efforts of education and outreach.

The Pasco AIS Inspection Station was moved from Plymouth POE to Scale #49, on Hwy 395, north of Pasco. A new office (shipping container) was purchased and installed to improve the inspection area and working conditions of staff.

2020 Challenges

STAFFING/FUNDING
With current funding levels, WDFW continues to operate at minimal staffing. WDFW relies heavily on the WRDDA funding to enable basic operational costs for the viability of the current program. As is likely with everyone, WDFW was hit hard by Covid-19. Stay at home orders, Fishing closures and State budget cuts are looming for our future. WDFW had hopes of consistent state funding when the legislature passed a $400K AIS Inspection Station Bill that was subsequently vetoed by the governor.

FORCED CLOSURES
Inspection operations were impacted slightly by the Covid-19 closures and restrictions. Although the Inspection Stations remain open throughout the pandemic, there were state fishing closures and public access restrictions that effected the movements of the boating/watercraft user base.

HAZARDOUS AIR QUALITY
Was another issue that effected AIS Inspection operations. Both Spokane and Pasco experienced several days of Hazardous Air Quality conditions forcing the closure of the inspection stations for four days, due to Forest Fire smoke.

CONSTRUCTION
The Spokane Inspection Station expansion project was completed this season. Juggling construction activities with boater traffic was at times challenging. Intermittent station closures were necessary throughout the construction.

Goals & Objectives for the 2020 Work Plan Met/Exceeded

In 2020, WDFW requested $500,000 in WRRDA funds, with the overall goal being expansion of our existing Watercraft Inspection Program and to continue establishing a consistent Inspection Station strategy similar to surrounding states. For the 2021 season, we plan to again have re-occurring Inspection Stations at two of our High priority/High Potential Entry points into Washington State. Additionally, we plan on opening an inspection station near Cle-Elum on I-90 as we have been awarded a two-year operational grant from BOR.
The two deliverable objectives for the 2020 Work Plan were;

1) ***Address Zebra & Quagga Mussel threat to central Columbia River Basin by***; Conduct at least 400 Mandatory Watercraft Inspection Station (days).
    a. **In 2020, we conducted a total of 645 check station days which exceeded our goal by 245 days. WDFW conducted 32,735 inspections which was an increase from 2019** *(but still extremely high considering the challenges of 2020)***.**

WDFW exceeded this objective for this grant cycle.

2) ***Complete the construction of the Permanent Eastern WA Watercraft Inspection/Decontamination Station to be the "Cornerstone" of WDFW AIS efforts in the Columbia River Basin***;
    a. **Utilizing both WA State AIS funds in conjunction with WRRDA Funds we were able to maintain operational hours and continue plans to improve the first permanently located Watercraft Inspection/Decontamination Station in Washington State. All our Eastern WA AIS prevention efforts will now be based out of this facility.**

WDFW met this objective for this grant cycle.

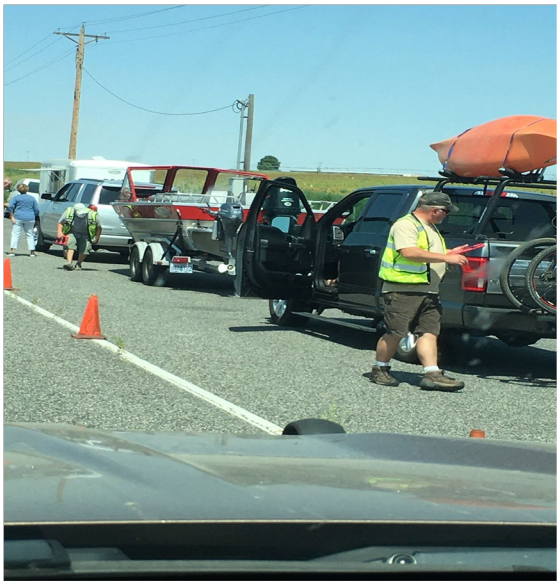
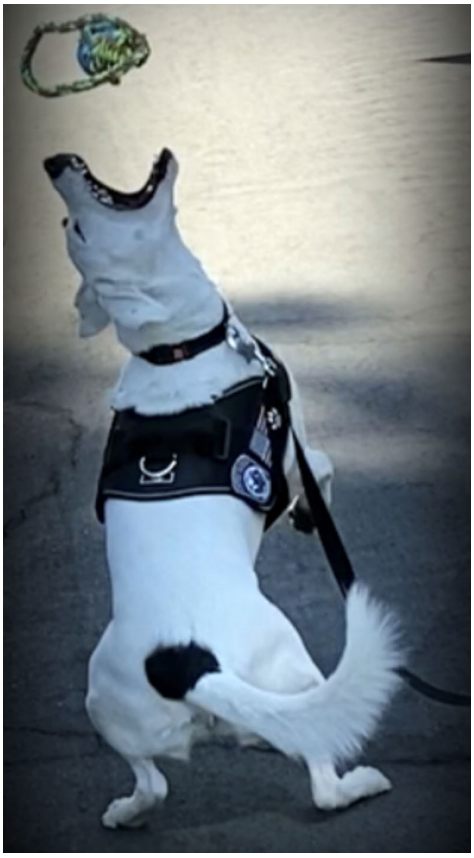
Adjustments for 2021
In 2021, WDFW will again be focused on continuous operation of our two Highway inspection stations.

Spokane (I-90) Station operations are now established and very robust so our adjustments for that station will be minimal site improvements and updating decontamination protocols/procedures due to the installation of the permanent decontamination unit.

****Plymouth (Hwy-395)*** Station operations is also established, but not as robust as Spokane. *We have moved the location of the Inspection Station to Pasco and installed a new office and improved the site and operational structure. We have added a shipping container style office to help establish an maintain a "permanent" type operational appearance. Watercraft entering Washington State from Lake Powell and Lake Mead, primarily travel this route. It is imperative to have a check station in the Pasco area to intercept these potentially threatening watercraft coming from infected bodies of water. We plan to continue to update and improve this inspection station.

Pilot Project; New Inspection Station, located on I-90 Eastbound near Cle Elum. Thanks to a generous grant from Bureau of Reclamation, we will be focusing on watercraft headed towards

the Columbia Basin from states to the south and Provinces from North. We plan to evaluate the long- term necessity for a third permanent Inspection Station.

Importance of Federal Funding

The WDFW Watercraft Inspection Program has an annual operational budget that fluctuates each year between; $250,000 - $300,000 (*amount is dependent of number of WA Boats licensed each year and number of WSAPP sold*). Out of the four states within the Columbia River Basin, Washington continues to have the lowest funded program for watercraft Inspection operations. The Federal funds are extremely important to WDFW and have allowed us to establish continuous watercraft inspection stations thus providing much needed protection to the Columbia River Basin and Federal Hydro-Electric facilities within Washington State.