

# FWP Receives Grant to Fight Invasive Mussels

Grant worth \$837,000 will be mostly spent on Tiber, Canyon Ferry reservoirs

BY BEACON STAFF

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks received a boost in its fight against aquatic invasive species in the state's waterways with an \$837,000 grant.

The grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation was awarded to FWP to combat invasive zebra and quagga mussels, a significant threat to the state's lake and river ecosystems.

Money from the grant will be used to improve inspection and decontamination stations around the state; provide campsites for the inspection staff; purchase inspection and decontamination equipment, materials, supplies, outreach materials, storage sheds, and shelters; and provide for sampling and analysis.

"Preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species like quagga and zebra mussels is a high priority for Reclamation," said Steve Davies, the Bureau of Reclamation's Montana area manager. "The state of Montana is taking a leadership role with inspection and decontamination stations throughout the state. This funding will assist them with needed resources and equipment for two 'at risk' reservoirs: Tiber and Canyon Ferry."

Most of the grant money will be used at the Tiber Reservoir, near Chester, because it's the only reservoir in the state to have tested positively for the mussel larvae, in 2016. There will be a new campground loop and inspection site near the Tiber Marina.

"We are always looking for ways to improve Montana's aquatic invasive species inspection and monitoring programs," said Tom Wolf, AIS Bureau Chief for FWP. "The improvements being made at Tiber will help make the inspection process better for both boaters and our inspection staff."

Grant funds will also be used at Canyon Ferry Reservoir near Helena because of a "suspect" sample taken from the water. Their presence is also suspected in the Missouri River near Townsend.

While the Missouri River Basin east of the Continental Divide has the state's only detected mussel presence, there is a continual threat of infestation in the Flathead River Basin due to the mussels' propensity for living and hiding in boat hulls and chambers and being transported from waterway to waterway.

The water-quality watchdog of western Montana, the Flathead Basin



Russ Hartzell, AIS area supervisor for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, demonstrates how a boat is cleaned if mussels are discovered on it. An aquatic invasive species rapid response training was held in Somers on Sept. 13. The event was organized by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Montana Invasive Species Council. JUSTIN FRANZ / FLATHEAD BEACON

Commission, saw its budget gutted by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation last year. A new group dedicated to keeping the watershed free

of invasive species, the Watershed Protection Advocates of Northwest Montana, has sprung up in its place.

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