

2015 Summary Report of Watercraft Inspection Results at Big Fish Lake

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Introduction:

The watercraft inspection program's goal is to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species into and around the state. To accomplish this we conducted watercraft inspections and decontaminations at public water accesses throughout the state, worked with citizen groups concerned about AIS, and educated 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 water accesses important to them. This was done as a way to increase watercraft inspections throughout the state, and satisfy requests from citizen groups for more hours of inspections at accesses important to them.

Inspection Process:

The inspection process involves the watercraft inspector visually and tactilely searching for aquatic invasive species or anything else that could potentially spread aquatic invasive species such as water, mud, plants or other debris. Watercraft inspectors also complete a survey while educating boaters about the issues surrounding aquatic invasive species. Survey questions focus on boater knowledge and behavior with information given on the impacts of aquatic invasive species and what can be done to prevent their spread.

Inspectors are trained to observe and document when watercraft enter a public water access with any violations, including boats with attached vegetation as well as watercraft whose drain plugs have not been removed. Information gathered by DNR and LGU authorized inspectors can help show potential risk of transporting AIS. During the inspection process watercraft users are asked to voluntarily disclose the last water body visited, as well as the location of the next planned trip. This information can be used in the future to gauge potential risks if multiple boaters report zebra mussel infested water bodies as their last visited lake.

Inspection Results:

The Big Fish Lake Association received a prevention grant from the MN DNR in May of 2015 for 450 hours of Level 1 inspection time during the 2015 watercraft inspection season. The contract dates were May 28th through October 22nd of 2014. DNR watercraft inspectors were hired to work on Big Fish Lake in order to accomplish both the grant hours (375) and the DNR goal hours (55).

The following figures and tables show the results of the inspection program at Big Fish for the 2015 season. All data is reflective of DNR and LGU Level 1 unless otherwise indicated in the figures's description. This following data does not reflect any Level 2 hours, although if not working with a decon unit, their hours can be counted as Level 1 hours to accomplish goal hours.

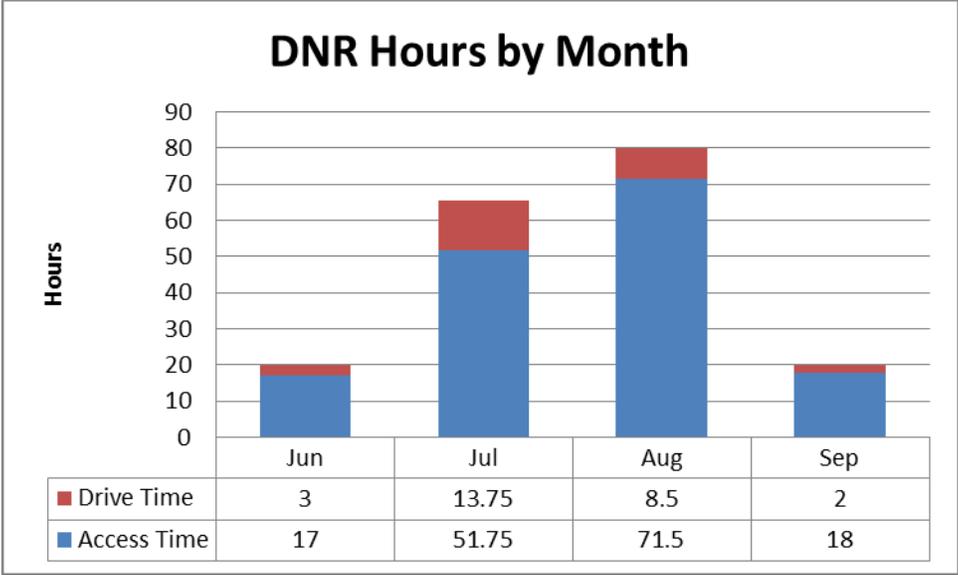


Figure 1: MNDNR Level 1 Watercraft Inspectors worked 185.5 hours (158.25 hours of access time and 27.25 hours of drive time) at Big Fish. These hours do not include Level 2 hours without a decon unit.

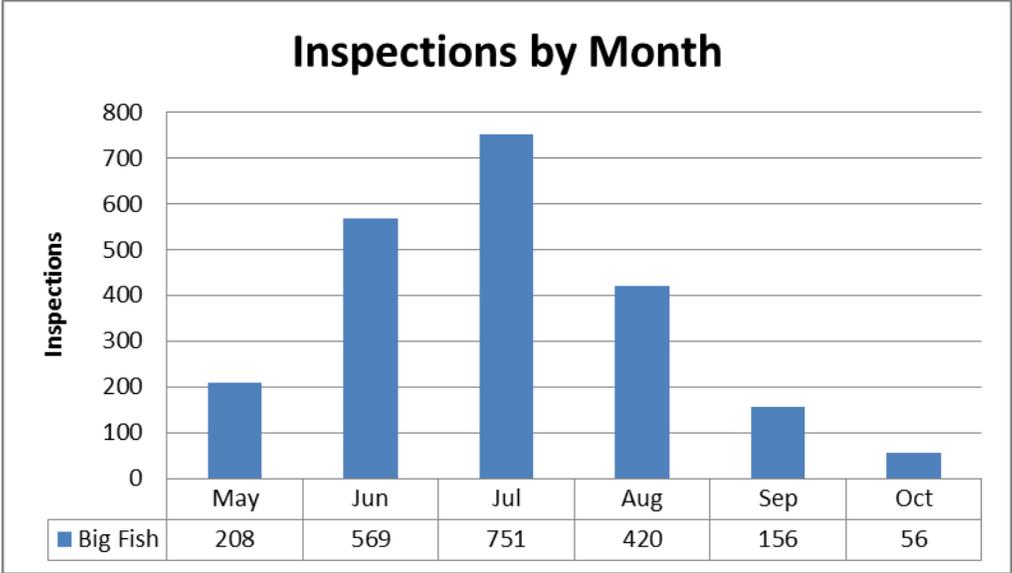


Figure 2: Inspections by Month on Big Fish Lake. A total of 2,160 inspections were conducted by DNR and LGU inspectors.

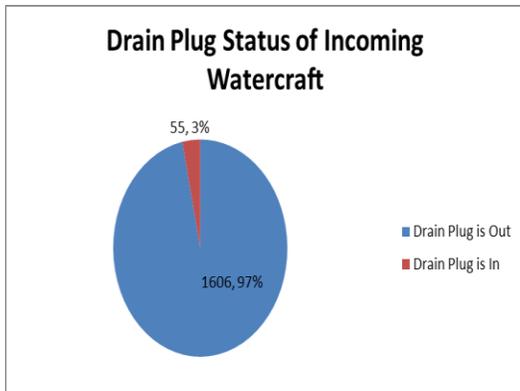


Figure 3: Drain plug status on incoming watercraft to Big Fish in 2015.

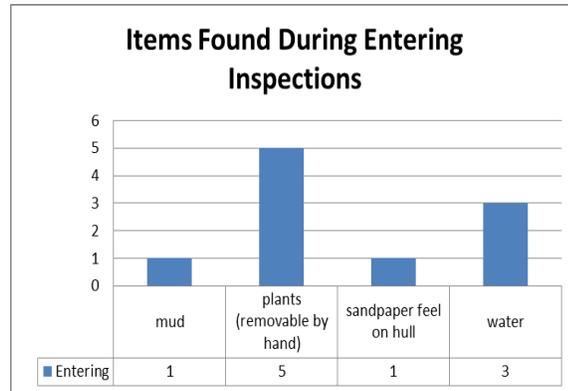


Figure 4: These items were found on incoming watercraft to Big Fish Lake in 2015.

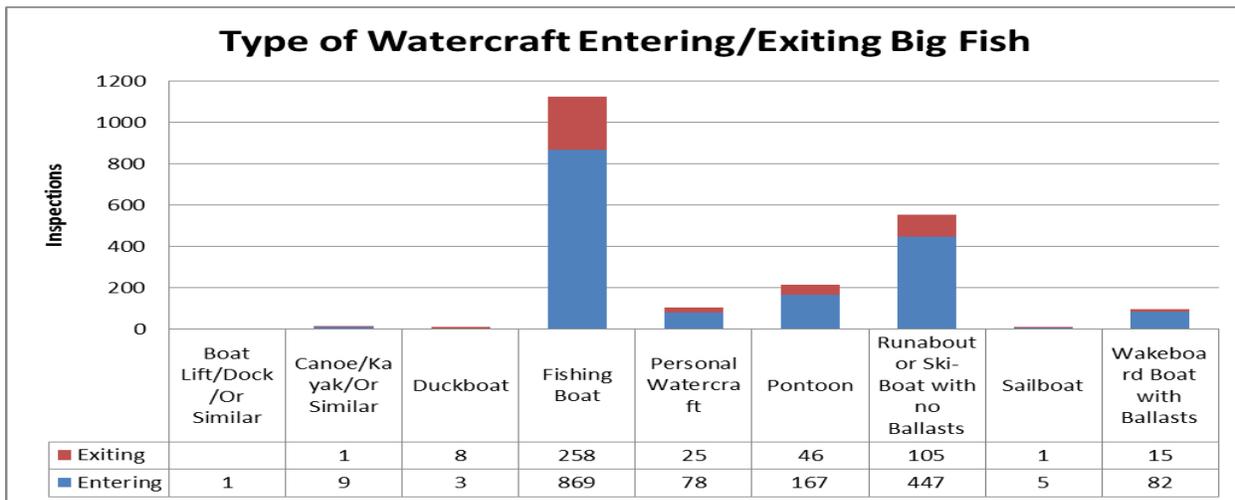


Figure 5: Breakdown of watercraft type entering and exiting Big Fish Lake during the 2015 season.

Conclusion:

Our goal was to accomplish 375 total grant hours and 55 DNR goal hours on Big Fish Lake for a grand total of 430 hours. We accomplished 185.5 Level 1 hours on Big Fish, which includes drive time. These hours do not include level 2 inspector time when they are not with their decontamination unit. The DNR was not able to fulfill all goal hours due to a lack of employees in the Sauk Rapids area. Watercraft inspectors conducted 2,160 inspections on Big Fish over the course of the summer. There was a 3% violation rate on having drain plugs installed before arriving at the access. Watercraft were sent away from the access and directed to drain any water that may have been found. During watercraft inspector contacts, inspectors are trained to help educate users about aquatic invasive species, state statutes, and help identify areas on the individual's watercraft that may be likely to contain invasive species.