

# Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):

## Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID) at the Alaska Canada (Alcan) Border

The threat of invasive species entering Alaska is persistent, and includes highly invasive species such as Dreissenid mussels (e.g., quagga and zebra mussels) (Figure 1). Unintentionally introduced into the Great Lakes through ballast and recreational equipment in the 1980's, Dreissenid mussels attach and grow on infrastructure clogging water supply pipes and dramatically changing native aquatic environments. The regional cost of these mussels in the Midwest to industry and the public is estimated at \$500 million annually. Currently, Alaska is not infested by invasive mussels, but an invasion could have significant economic and ecological impacts.

Recognizing the threat, state and federal agencies, tribes, and partners have made unprecedented efforts to contain the spread of invasive mussels in the West (Figure 2). Collaborative efforts have been in place since 2016 to understand and minimize the risk of introduction into Alaska through critical control points such as the Alcan Port of Entry. The objectives of the ongoing project are to:

- 1) **COLLABORATE:** across jurisdictions to maintain a WID station at the Alcan Port of Entry each year from May to August,
- 2) **COLLECT:** data on incoming watercraft; and,
- 3) **DISTRIBUTE:** educational materials to incoming recreationists.

Figure 2: Current distribution of WID stations across the West. Each point is a WID station. Image courtesy of Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission website.

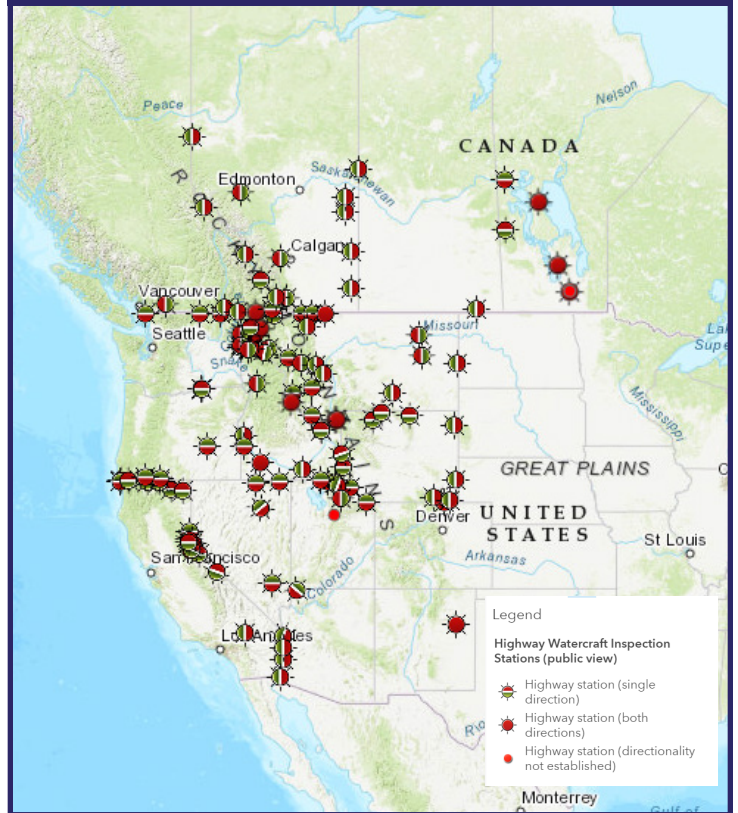


Figure 1: Comparison of zebra (top) and quagga (bottom) mussels. Photo credit to John Karl.

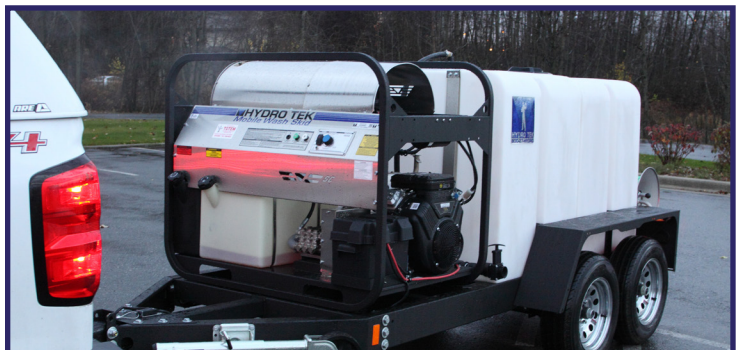
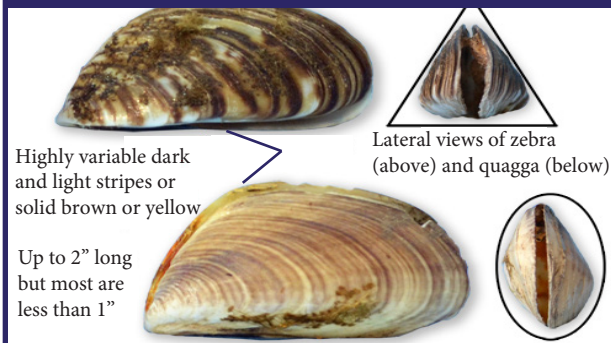


Figure 3: An example of Alaska's portable decontamination pressure washer unit. Photo credit to USFWS.

Summer of 2021, the WID station at the Alcan inspected 292 watercraft coming from across North America. The following numbers are based on these watercraft. Additional information on the origin points of watercraft was assessed on data collected between 2017-2019 and can be viewed on the back (Figure 4).



61% of watercraft were NOT inspected en route to Alaska

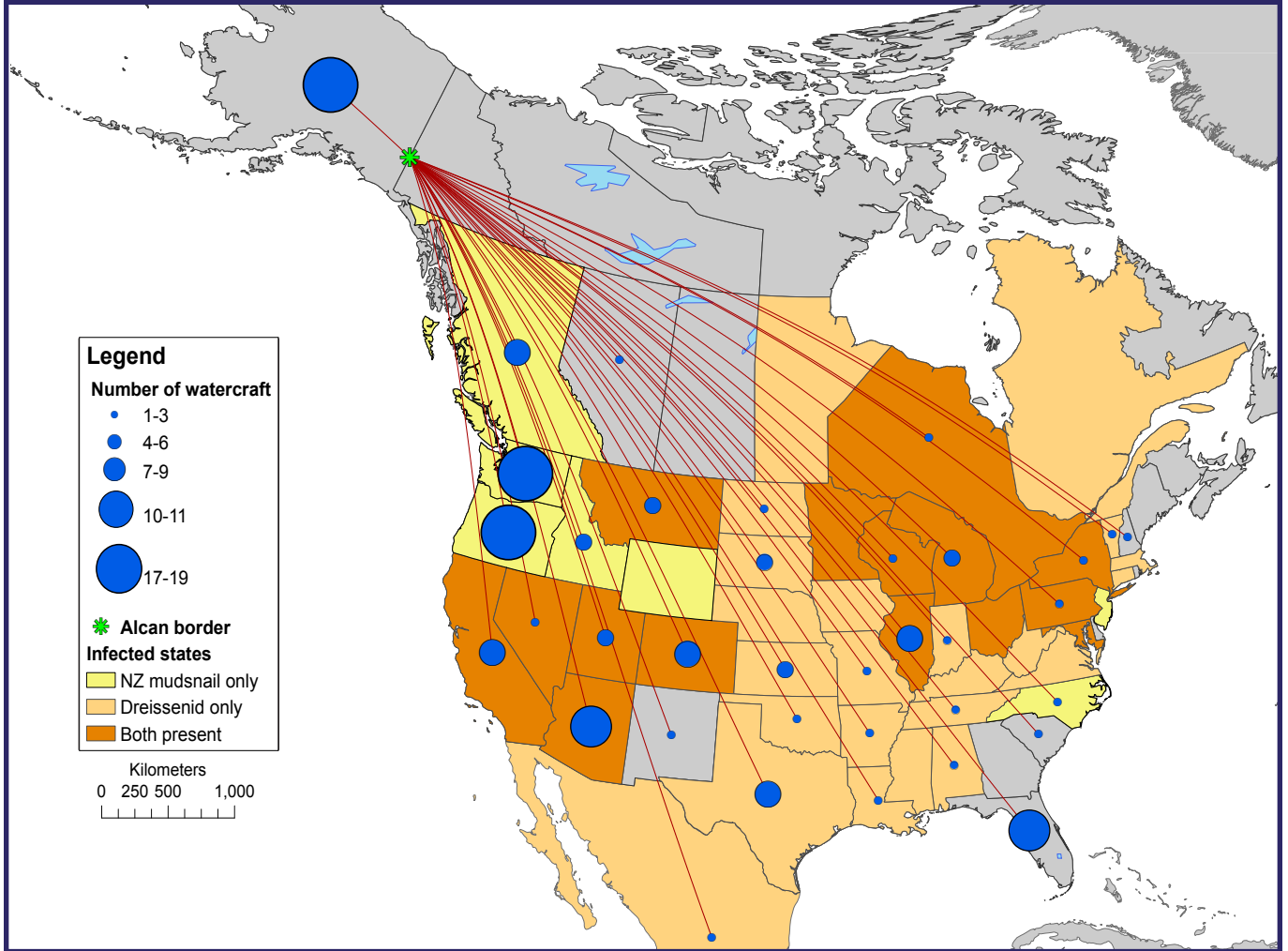


52% of watercraft were coming from States/Provinces with known zebra or quagga mussel infestations



15% of watercraft were last used in a body of water infested with aquatic invasive species like Dreissenid mussels

Figure 4: Origins of watercraft crossing into AK between the summers of 2017-2019. Credit to R. Kelty and A. Droghini at the Alaska Center for Conservation Science.



# Keep Alaska wild and free of aquatic invasive species

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