



## Boat Landing Message

Getting out and speaking to the public can be intimidating. New inspectors can feel a little anxious and nervous. This prepared script will help inspectors practice and role-play before their first boater shows up at the landing. Practicing with other folks will give them the confidence it takes to greet a boater. If new inspectors really want to watch a “pro,” they just need to ask a few kids to get involved. Are kids intimidated? No way!

This prepared script is only one sample of the many methods of addressing boaters at the landings and performing watercraft inspections. Each inspector should develop his or her own style and learn how to adapt in a variety of boat landing experiences. Try to approach boaters before they are on the ramp, and use the Watercraft Inspection Report form to record the information about the boater (see Section 7). At times you may have only 30 seconds to talk to the boater; other times, long lines at the landings may provide you with lots of time to talk. Remember, if the boater is not interested, just hand out educational material and record whatever information you can.

No matter what style you use to approach boaters, any watercraft inspection process should include these points:

1. Tell them who you are, whom you represent, and why you are there.
2. Ask if they have a short time to answer some questions.
3. Collect information on the Watercraft Inspection Report form.
4. Ask if they are familiar with aquatic invasive species, such as Eurasian water-milfoil or zebra mussels. Briefly explain about these invasive species or other invasives found locally.
5. Ask if they will join you in an inspection of their boat and equipment.
6. Talk while inspecting, and point out watercraft checkpoints. If they do not want to assist you in the inspection, continue to talk about invasive species as you inspect.
7. Give your final message, the prevention steps:
  - ◆ Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and
  - ◆ Remove any attached aquatic plants, animals, and mud.
  - ◆ Drain all water from your boat, motor, bilge, live well, bait containers, and equipment.
  - ◆ Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash, not in the water or on the land.
  - ◆ Rinse your boat and recreational equipment with hot water OR dry for at least five days.
8. Give them the “Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers” decal and other educational materials.
9. Thank them for their time and cooperation!



## Sample Script

*As the boat approaches, write down the time of the boat inspection and if the boat is entering or leaving the water.*

### Introduce yourself:

Good Morning / Afternoon. I am from \_\_\_\_\_. We are working with state agencies and local groups to talk with boaters about invasive species and help them check their boats for Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM) and zebra mussels (ZM). We are trying to keep EWM/ZM and other harmful exotics from spreading from lake to lake. I have a few quick questions I would like to ask you, and then I would like to walk around your watercraft with you and point out a few places where these species can attach to boats and trailers.

### Ask the questions and record on the Watercraft Inspection Report:

1. In the past 30 days, how many times have you been contacted by a watercraft inspector?
2. Was boat used during the past 5 days on a different waterbody?  
  
(If the answer is yes) Where?
3. In a typical month of boating, about how many waterbodies do you visit?
4. Last time you went boating, please describe the steps you took when removing your boat from the water.

(Mark each step that is mentioned, “Took No Steps” if no steps were taken, or “I Did Not Ask Boater” if this question was not asked.)

5. In 2009, Wisconsin laws were passed that prevent the transport of aquatic plants, animals, and water from one waterbody to another. This includes draining water from containers holding your catch and livewells. Were you aware that this is the law?

(If the answer is no) As of 2009, Wisconsin laws prohibit the transport of plants, animals, or water from a boat landing. Fines for not complying with the rules can be upwards of \$300! I'm just here to share information with you on how to properly clean your boat so that you don't inadvertently transport aquatic invasive species from one lake to another. However, law enforcement officers will be out enforcing these AIS laws this summer, so I just wanted to let you know about the new rules.

### Perform a watercraft check:

If you would walk around your boat with me, I can show you some areas to look for invasive hitchhikers.

*Make sure you talk aloud as you inspect; it helps reinforce the “Clean, Boats, Clean Waters” behavior. Talk to boaters about inspecting and cleaning their watercraft and about draining the water from their boat—such as the bilge, bait buckets and live wells—before they leave the access.*

Water is another way invasives can move from lake to lake so it is always a good idea to drain your water. Vegetation can be found on motor boats, the motor/prop, anchors, bunks, rollers, the trailer axle, lights/wiring; for jet skis, it can be found in the intake grate and propeller; and for sailboats, it can be found in the centerboards. Check your anchor and anchor line to see if any plants are clinging to it.



## Section 6: What do watercraft inspections involve?

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Some aquatic invasives, such as zebra mussels, are also found on the motor/prop, on the sides and bottom of boat below the waterline, on the anchor, and clinging to vegetation. It is a good idea to drain water from the motor, live well, bait well, bait bucket, bilge, and transom wells. Always inspect the hull and sides of your boat for aquatic invasives; if it feels gritty or sandy, it may be that new zebra mussels are attached. An extra precaution that you can take to eliminate other aquatic invasives is to wash your boat with warm tap water or take your boat through a car wash or dry your boat and equipment in the sun for five days before entering another lake.

Leave boaters with a final message:  
“Clean Boats = Clean Waters”

Please make it a habit to:

- ◆ Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and
- ◆ Remove any attached aquatic plants, animals, and mud.
- ◆ Drain all water from boats, motors, live wells, bait containers, and equipment.
- ◆ Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash, not in the water or on the land.
- ◆ Rinse your boat and recreational equipment with hot water OR dry for at least five days.

*Offer boaters the “Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers” brochure and decal and help them place the decal on the handle side of the trailer winch post. Tell them that this decal will let other inspectors know that you have talked to the boater this summer. Remind boaters to follow the precautions listed on the “Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers” decal every time they leave a water body.*

**Thank the boaters for their time and cooperation!**



## Potential Scenarios/Questions from Boaters

**“Why are you out here wasting resources when the plant is going to come anyway?”**

*Even the most educated will ask this question. Just be prepared mentally for such viewpoints and think about why you are out here and what you will say in reply. Expect the unexpected. Here are some suggested responses:*

Even if we cannot keep the plants out completely, we can prevent a lot of widespread damage. Prevention also gives us time to adopt new control methods as they are developed in the future. The longer we keep invasives out of a lake, the longer we put off the enormous costs of management and property devaluation.

**“Aren’t all plants bad anyway?”**

*It is important to clear up this misconception! This is what you can say:*

Native plants are essential lifelines for an aquatic ecosystem, providing the basis for all life within. The problem lies with non-native, invasive plants that have no natural inhibitors and, therefore, outcompete native plants, lowering the water body’s aquatic diversity.

**“I don’t have time for this... I know all about it already!”**

*This remark is fairly common. If the boaters do not wish to help you with the survey, you must respect their rights and let them be. In such a situation, the suggested action would be to offer them a brochure and wish them a nice day.*

**“Why did it take Wisconsin so long to do something, when milfoil has been a national problem for over a decade?”**

*There is no good answer to this question because it’s a very good point. Here is how you can respond:*

Traditionally, environmental problems become established before we do anything about them. In this case, we have learned from other states, and are trying to take action well before these plants spread to many of our sensitive environments. Instead of focusing on what could have been done, we should focus energies on the present and future.

**“Why do I have to take these prevention steps when I only use my boat in one lake?”**

*This question gives you the opportunity to talk about the value of changing our behaviors and why it is important.*

That’s a great question! Although you always visit the same lake, it is still useful for you to take these prevention steps every time you boat. Repeating these steps helps the actions become a regular part of your boating behavior, so that if you do ever decide to take your boat to another lake, you will remember to take the prevention steps. Prevention is the key to stopping the spread of aquatic invasive species.