

## Whitefish Pilot

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### Beaver Lake users urged to clean boats

Whitefish Lake Institute

The Flathead Aquatic Invasive Species Workgroup is asking recreationists for their help. With the recent discovery of Eurasian watermilfoil — an aquatic invasive weed — at Beaver Lake near Whitefish, vigilance is of the utmost importance.

After a lengthy lake survey and positive identification by aquatic invasive species specialists, it was concluded that the lake boat ramp will be closed until the plants and floating fragments have been removed and there is no longer a risk of spreading the weed.

The plants-covering about a 12-by-12 foot area in the lake-were found by Department of Natural Resources and Conservation personnel during a field trip last week. The identification of the plants was confirmed by Montana FWP and the Montana Department of Agriculture. The Flathead County Weed District is responding rapidly to this new invader and plans to remove the invasive plants this month and eradicate the remaining plants next spring.

"We were very lucky to find this infestation early when management is feasible and cost effective," said Jed Fisher, Flathead County Weed Coordinator. "Once established, this plant is very expensive to control. Idaho has spent \$9 million dollars over the last several years controlling Eurasian watermilfoil in its waters."

The Flathead Aquatic Invasive Species Workgroup will be meeting this week to discuss eradication strategies to employ this fall and next spring. Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) was introduced to North America from Europe and Asia, and is found over much of the United States.

"The introduction of Eurasian watermilfoil can drastically alter the ecology and use of a water body," said Erik Hanson, AIS consultant.

It forms dense mats of vegetation on the surface of the water that interferes with recreational activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating. Lakes with Eurasian watermilfoil can experience steep declines in fisheries, dissolved oxygen depletion, decreases in property values and the loss of recreational use. Eurasian watermilfoil reproduces successfully and very rapidly, making it a threat to any water body it invades. In the fall and late summer, the plant becomes brittle and breaks into fragments, which float across lakes, sinking and starting new plants. Plant pieces are easily transported between water bodies by boats and fishing gear.

Anyone who has fished or boated in Beaver Lake must clean their boats, equipment and waders prior to entering another water body. Please contact Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in Kalispell at 444-2449 if non-decontaminated equipment was taken from Beaver Lake to any other lake so those locations can be monitored. FWP has a decontamination station and a brochure listing approved carwashes.

[http://www.flatheadnewsgroup.com/whitefishpilot/article\\_ec4b7c28-0572-11e1-b403-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.flatheadnewsgroup.com/whitefishpilot/article_ec4b7c28-0572-11e1-b403-001cc4c002e0.html)