

Whitefish Pilot

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City invests in aquatic invasive efforts

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Whitefish Pilot

Whitefish will invest \$35,000 in efforts to keep aquatic invasive species out of Whitefish Lake and other area water bodies.

City Council on May 18 approved the spending toward several programs that deal with management and prevention efforts for AIS.

Aquatic invasive species, including non-native plant, fish, mussels and clams, have become an increasing concern for the negative impacts they can have on lakes and rivers.

In both 2013 and 2014 the city spent \$40,000 on AIS programs. The Whitefish Lake Institute has asked the city to support management plan, which looks at addressing the AIS threat on multiple fronts.

This year's plan distributes funds in six different areas.

In the past the city partnered with the Flathead Basin Commission, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Trout Unlimited and the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to operate a watercraft inspection station on U.S. Highway 2 at Coram.

This year the inspection station was relocated to Browning. Earlier this month the station stopped a boat from Minnesota with adult zebra mussels headed for Whitefish.

The city is contributing \$5,000 toward the check station.

The institute and the city's Parks and Recreation department staff have worked to create a partnership to create a boat inspection station at City Beach.

The city will fund the station

again with \$5,000 distributed to the parks department and \$5,000 for the institute to supervise the program.

Parks staff provide a visual inspection of the boats before launching into Whitefish Lake. They also gather information from boat owners including the state of origin and the last water body the boat was launched into.

This year, the operating dates of the inspection station will be expanded from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The city is looking to implement a commercial boat launch permit program at City Beach. To alleviate congestion at the boat launch, commercial users whose primary use area is Whitefish Lake would have the opportunity to acquire a commercial launch permit from the city through a self-

certification program.

To obtain a permit, a commercial user would have to complete online training and pass a brief test. The user would be issued a permit that would eliminate the need for inspection each time they visit City Beach.

To start the program, an institute staff member would need to obtain training at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission at Lake Mead, Nev. The training will allow certification for the staff member to train other inspectors.

To pay for the training and create web page information, the city will spend \$5,000.

The city will continue to fund efforts to monitor and control Eurasian watermilfoil in Beaver Lake at an amount of \$5,000. In 2011, a 25-by-25 foot patch of Eurasian watermilfoil was found

near the boat ramp at Beaver Lake.

Funds will be distributed to the institute to contract and administer. The plan involves a diver dredge operation to suction up individual plants from the lake and also deploy a sediment curtain near the outlet to Beaver Creek, which flows to Whitefish Lake.

Two areas will each receive \$5,000 for monitoring of lakes with a close proximity to Whitefish.

The Northwest Montana Lake Volunteer Monitoring Network will coordinate efforts to survey lakes for invasive species plant detection.

The institute will also collect samples from nine area lakes for environmental DNA analysis, which looks at genetic information to detect the presence AIS.