

New filter system to be installed at Whitefish City Beach

By Allie Friedman, KCFW Reporter, afriedman@kcfw.com

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Whitefish City Beach is a popular place to go boating and swimming in the summertime, but a recent study found increased levels of gasoline in the water near the boat ramp that could be harmful to swimmers.

A group called the Whitefish Lake Institute studied the water and found high concentrations of BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethyl-benzene and xylene). The institute says those levels could cause health issues.

"What's going on is people are pulling their boats up on the boat ramp and pulling their transom plug and when they do that all the gas that's been sloshing around in the boat gets discharged, with the bilge water, back down the boat ramp and goes right back into the lake next to where the kids are swimming," said Mike Koopal, executive director of the Whitefish Lake Institute.

In order to keep the water clean and keep swimmers safe, the city is installing trench grates. Boats will drive over the trench grate before they pull their transom plug. The grates will collect the oil that gets released from boats and the oil will be put through a hydrodynamic device for treatment.

Koopal said the trench grates will help minimize the transfer of invasive species.

"An ancillary but not perfect secondary benefit of the trench grate will be to intercept water from boaters with ballast tanks that sometimes drain their tanks prior to launching. These boats have a big potential to house aquatic invasive species and transfer them to new water bodies," Koopal added in a press release.

The boat ramp will be closed from April 4 to April 17 so the grates can be installed.