

Echo Lakes and Fallen Leaf Lakes Revision to Inspection Protocols

May 27, 2023

Revised June 9, 2023

Purpose:

Refine watercraft inspection protocols to be consistent across all boatable waters in the Tahoe Region.

Background:

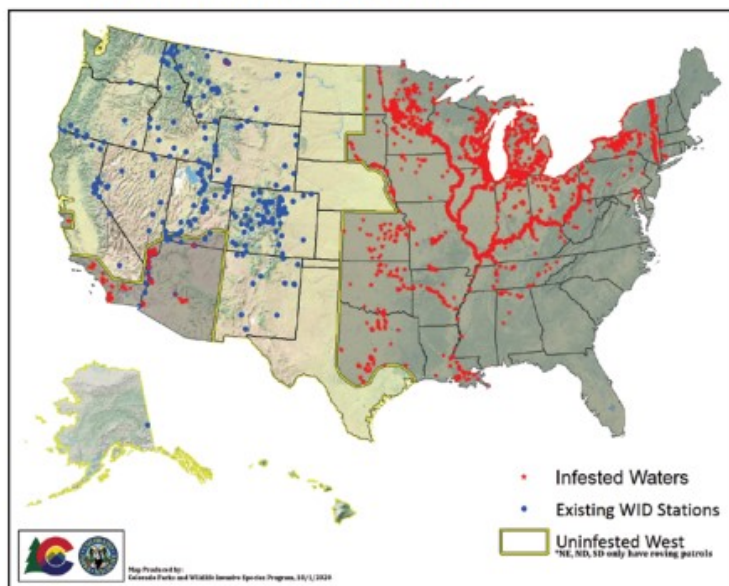
The protocols for Echo and Fallen Leaf lakes have historically differed from the protocols implemented for Lake Tahoe in that every boat was decontaminated prior to launching. The rationale being these lakes did not have any known AIS and extra precautions were warranted. In the program's infancy, this was a strict approach based on limited knowledge and experience to limit risk at the highest level. Given the 15 years of experience and the current standing of the program as the "Gold Standard" for inspection programs in the US, the conservative nature of these protocols should be reexamined. The previous protocols have made it difficult for boaters and inspection staff to interpret the protocols, requirements, and fees in a consistent manner, and made navigating the program more difficult.

The main purpose of the Watercraft Inspection Program is to assess and eliminate the risk of a new AIS introduction by means of watercraft inspection and decontamination. Based on the vessels launch history or by the presence of mud, water, plants or animals, a decontamination is made available to eliminate the risk. Those that opt not to be decontaminated are not provided a seal, and are not able to launch, and in some cases, may be reported to authorities. The program utilizes science-based uniform standards and protocols developed by the 19 western states.

Watercraft that are inspected and are Clean, Drained and Dry, pose no threat of harboring and introducing AIS into a waterbody. This is illustrated with the following graphic, which provides zebra and quagga mussel infestation locations and where the watercraft inspection stations are located. This is evidence that the watercraft inspection protocols utilized in the west prevent the introduction of AIS.

Figure 2. The Uninfested West

related research projects.



When quagga mussels were found in Lake Mead in 2007, the West united and mobilized to prevent the introduction and spread of ZQM to additional waters. This unification of effort has been beneficial and continues to be relevant for successful management. ZQM has yet to be detected in the vast majority of western waters, which presents important opportunities to prevent significant damage if greater coordinated action is taken immediately. Without a coordinated multi-jurisdictional strategy, ZQM will cause

The Uninfested West describes efforts to prevent spread of ZQM from infested waters (marked in red) with the use of coordinated prevention and containment WID programs (marked in blue).

Routine monitoring for AIS in Lake Tahoe has proven that the Watercraft Inspection Program protocols are effective, and that no new introductions of any species have been identified since the program began. Therefore, the protocols that are being implemented for Lake Tahoe are appropriate to eliminate the risk for Fallen Leaf and Echo lakes as well. Applying consistent protocols throughout the Region makes sound operational sense and meets the high standards of protection Lake Tahoe deserves.

The Watercraft Inspection Program would like to proceed with the following internal protocols which are in addition to and complement the Lake Tahoe protocols.

Proposed and Existing Protocols for Motorized Watercraft:

1. Treat all motorized watercraft going to Echo Lakes (EL) and Fallen Leaf Lake (FLL) as those going to Lake Tahoe regarding decontamination requirements. If a boat arrives at the inspection and is Clean, Drained and Dry, there is no threat of harboring and introducing AIS into a waterbody, and therefore does not need decontamination.
2. The inspection, which includes assessing risk based on the launch history of the watercraft determines if a decontamination is required to eliminate the threat of spreading AIS.
3. No change proposed- A Lake Tahoe Watercraft Inspection Program sticker (Tahoe Only, Tahoe In/Out) will be required to launch in any or all of these waterbodies. A Tahoe Only sticker will allow the vessel to launch in all regional waters, providing they receive an inspection, decontamination if needed, and the appropriate seal in order to launch at their desired location.
4. No change proposed- For watercraft leaving Lake Tahoe and going to these lakes, a mandatory inspection is required. Separate seals for each regional waterbody will be maintained to help enforce this. The same requirements for Clean, Drained, and Dry will be applied to these boats to pass inspection without a decontamination requirement.