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## **AGENCIES INSPECTING BOATS FOR INVASIVE SPECIES**

SANTA FE -- The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish together with the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's State Parks Division, and several federal agencies are initiating Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) roadblock-style boat inspections during major holiday weekends at popular reservoirs during the 2010 boating season. The public is advised to come to the launch facility prepared to answer questions about your boat engine, sewage disposal, bilge cleaning and recent boating trips.

"Expect to be inspected," said Barbara Coulter, AIS Coordinator for the Department of Game and Fish. "If boaters make sure their boats and gear are clean and dry prior to launching, they will be doing their part to protect our most precious resource. So far we have not found any invasive mussels in our state's reservoirs."

Aquatic Invasive Species include zebra and quagga mussels, which occur in water bodies in states adjacent to New Mexico. Inspectors will be looking for these small mussels and standing water. These devastating invasive species are carried from place to place on boat trailers and boats. They are highly successful in part because they attach to any hard surface and can live out of water for weeks at a time. The mussels reproduce rapidly, causing irreversible environmental damage and can seriously damage boat engines by clogging engine cooling systems, causing motors to overheat. The costs of dealing with an infested water body can be significant.

"New Mexicans must work together to stop aquatic hitchhikers," said Toby Velasquez, Law Enforcement Bureau Chief for New Mexico State Parks Division. "Prevention is simple: CLEAN, DRAIN and DRY your boat."

Although inspections are performed regularly at lakes throughout the state, roadblock-style inspections add an additional level of scrutiny, which could delay boaters anxious to hit the water.

"Inspectors are trained to inspect boat hulls, live wells, motor ports, and other places where AIS are known to hide," said Dan Brooks, chief of Law Enforcement for Game and Fish. "Boaters are reminded that it is illegal to transport AIS into or within New Mexico, and the fines can be up to \$500."

Earlier this year a State Parks Division employee prevented a seismic oil-exploration barge from entering Navajo Lake when marine mussels were found onboard. During a subsequent inspection, the Department of Game and Fish and the State Parks Division found zebra mussels on equipment used in concert with the barge.

"The contractors were very cooperative," Coulter said. "They decontaminated their equipment and cooperated fully with our agencies."

This is the second consecutive year at Navajo Lake that contaminated vessels have come close to entering New Mexico's waters. Last May a houseboat previously moored in infested Lake Mojave in Nevada, was attempting to launch at the Sims Mesa marina at Navajo Lake when an observant marina operator stopped the launch.

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Boaters directly benefit from watercraft inspections because the waters they use will be kept clean and free from new invasive species. To stop aquatic hitchhikers, the best safety practice is: "Clean, Drain, Dry, Every time."

For information on aquatic invasive species please visit: [www.wildlife.state.nm.us/](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/) and look under the Issues and Answers section, and click on the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers stop-sign graphic.

*Short Trips, Long Memories: Your Best Recreation Value Close to Home*

***The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.***

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