

DNR: Attention Anglers And Boaters: Keep Wisconsin's Waters Healthy And The Fish Biting By Draining Your Livewells And Fish Buckets

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Attention Anglers And Boaters: Keep Wisconsin's Waters Healthy And The Fish Biting By Draining Your Livewells And Fish Buckets



The DNR urges boaters and anglers to drain their livewells and fish buckets before leaving boat launches. / Photo Credit: National Safe Boating Council

MADISON, Wis. – As Wisconsinites head out to find their adventure during the upcoming Free Fun Weekend, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is urging boaters and anglers to drain their livewells and fish buckets before leaving boat launches.

During Wisconsin's annual Drain Campaign June 4-6, boat inspectors from the [Clean Boats Clean Waters \(CBCW\) program](#) will visit boat landings across the state reminding those coming out of the water to drain their boats of any water to stop aquatic hitchhikers. These efforts help keep Wisconsin's lakes and rivers healthy and the fish biting.

Draining all water helps prevent the spread of numerous invasive species that you can't easily see, including diseases such as Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) and microscopic larvae of zebra mussels. Draining efforts help contribute to Invasive Species Action Month, which is a time to learn, identify, report and control invasive species in Wisconsin.

Additionally, draining and rinsing your engine – especially if you don't use your boat frequently – reduces the chance of mussel's larvae plugging your engine intake.

When it comes to moving your catch, ice will keep the fish fresher than water as you move them from the lake to the plate, too.

Taking a minute or two to remove all the plants, animals, mud and debris from your boat and trailer while draining water from the bilge and livewell can prevent a new invasive species from establishing in your favorite lake or river.

Every boater and angler has a role to play in protecting Wisconsin's lakes and rivers. Start your day with a clean, dry boat. Later, when you leave the launch, following these prevention steps will comply with Wisconsin state law and help to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in our waters:

- **Inspect** boats, trailers and equipment for attached aquatic plants or animals
- **Remove** all attached plants or animals
- **Drain** all water from boats, motors, livewells and other equipment
- **Never move** live fish away from a waterbody
- **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash
- **Buy** minnows from a Wisconsin bait dealer
- **Only** use leftover minnows when either fishing with them on the same body of water or on other waters if no lake/river water or other fish have been added to the container.

Lake and river organizations can apply for [annual grants](#) to help fund their work at the launches. The [Lakes Monitoring and Protection Network Surface Water Grants](#) provide non-competitive funds to counties to hire aquatic invasive species (AIS) staff who also support the CBCW program with training and often make launch visits themselves.

[To learn more about invasive species and their impacts on Wisconsin's waters and economy, visit the DNR's invasive species webpage.](#)