



Two objectives that the Lake Region Anglers Association was founded on were the Conservation and the Preservation of our natural resources so whenever possible we attempt to provide material that may help to educate our members on the potential negative cause and effect issues like Aquatic Nuisance Species could have on our watersheds, our lakes and our rivers.

The following is shared as a way to assist in educating our members and the public on Aquatic Nuisance Species and some of the frequently asked questions (FAQ) that have been presented to the North Dakota Game & Fish Department.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) - The following was taken from the Game and Fish website and has been modified to present the information in a manner that will hopefully be helpful to our members.

The information shared here is presented for informational purposes only. The information is not meant to be an interpretation of any North Dakota Law, of how the North Dakota Game & Fish Department (ND G&F) may administer any of their enforcement policies, nor is the information detailed here a stated position of the Lake Region Anglers Association.

If you have specific questions related to the information presented here we suggest you contact the North Dakota Game & Fish Department at 701-328-6300 or e-mail them at ndgf@nd.gov

Aquatic Nuisance Species

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) are animals, plants and diseases that are not native to North Dakota and have the likelihood to become well established if introduced. They can displace native plants, animals and cause serious economic and ecological damage. North Dakota has adopted a number of rules designed to minimize the threat of ANS some of which are;

- 1) All aquatic vegetation must be removed from boats, personal watercraft, trailers and associated equipment such as fishing rods / lures / duck decoys before leaving a body of water. This means equipment must be "vegetation free" when transporting any watercraft and equipment away from a boat ramp, a landing area or a shoreline.
- 2) All aquatic vegetation must be removed from bait buckets whenever leaving the water.

- 3) All water must be drained from boats and other watercraft, including bilges and motors, before leaving a water body (Note: effective October 1, 2010, this includes live-wells and bait-wells).
- 4) Live aquatic bait or aquatic vegetation may not be transported into North Dakota. Also, all water must be drained from any watercraft or equipment prior to entering the state.
- 5) It is in North Dakota's best interest that anglers, boaters and hunters understand and comply with these important regulations. The following questions and answers are intended to provide additional insight into Aquatic Nuisance Species and their cause and effect.

We also wanted to share a link to the 100th Meridian website <http://www.100thmeridian.org/> which is a site that provides a wealth of information on Aquatic Nuisance Species, what they are, how their spread can be mitigated, has training tools on ANS, along with other informational topics.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are ANS such a big deal?

ANS can degrade or ruin habitats and compete with native desirable species for food and space. Not only can recreational fisheries suffer but so can industries and communities that rely on lakes or rivers for their water supply. Once established, the cost of controlling ANS would far exceed the minimal costs required to keep ANS from spreading into and within North Dakota.

Can the spread of ANS be stopped?

Perhaps not stopped, but if precautions are taken and everyone is in compliance, the spread can be controlled but it requires everyone's participation.

How do I make sure I'm doing the right thing?

To comply with the regulations, you simply need to remove all aquatic vegetation from your boat, your trailer, your bait bucket, decoys, etc., when you leave any body of water. You will need to drain all of the water from your boat at the ramp site before you leave a body of water.

Remember that you cannot dump any bait into any body of water.

Do I have to run my motor dry also before I leave a lake?

No. The amount of water in the motor's cooling system is so minimal that it holds a small risk of containing ANS. As you exit a lake lower the motor to let gravity drain the lower unit, then raise to transport. The intake screen should also be inspected and free of aquatic vegetation.

Can I drain water from my boat anywhere?

No, you must drain the water (pull all plugs, etc.) back into the water (immediate area) from which it originated. This must be done at the ramp or parking lot before you leave.

Why can I no longer keep fish alive in water in my live-well when I trailer my boat home?

Aquatic Nuisance Species can include small plant fragments or seeds, microscopic animals and viruses or diseases. If ANS exists in a body of water, whether known or not (many are unseen to the naked eye) and water is pumped into a live-well, these problem species are then potentially present in the live-well water. If an angler fishes another body of water on the same trip, the ANS could be released into the new lake as water is pumped in and out of the boat.

While most individuals typically go straight home and do not fish in another lake or river the thought is that so long as water is allowed in a live-well the ANS can still be transported. For example, if the live-well is drained into the local storm sewer, which could in turn run into a river or holding pond the transported ANS could become a problem in a new body of water.

This concern is greatly elevated with the finding of zebra mussels in the Red River. The potential of the problem is compounded by the fact that there are approximately 10,000 boats licensed in Fargo, West Fargo and Grand Forks area and many of these anglers fish other areas outside of the Red River. Since it is a known that ANS is already present in the Red River those anglers who fish other North Dakota lakes such as Devils Lake, Lake Sakakawea, the Missouri River system, or any other North Dakota lake increases the chances that there could be a spread of ANS (zebra mussels) from the Red River to other North Dakota lakes.

I still don't fully understand the threat of retaining water in live-wells/bait-wells when I go directly home after fishing and clean my fish.

Although most people's intentions are to go straight home there are some boaters/anglers that fish more than one body of water on the same day. This is typically only a small percentage of anglers but even if it's only 1 percent of the total anglers who move from one body of water body to another body of water the threat for ANS movement increases dramatically as tens of thousands of gallons of water are transferred to new bodies of water via these anglers, hunter's live-wells and equipment.

When at a boat ramp, where do I put the aquatic weeds I pull off my trailer and/or boat?

Any weeds removed can be discarded along the shore and / or in trash receptacles (if available in parking lot). ANS regulations specify the removal of all aquatic weeds prior to leaving the immediate access area.

Why aren't these ANS regulations effective when you enter a body of water versus when you leave?

The goals of these rules are to greatly reduce the threat of ANS being transported from one body of water to another body of water. This potential pathway of transport has been identified as one of the highest risk areas by the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee. By eliminating this risky pathway at its source - i.e. the ramp site when a watercraft leaves a ramp - provides the most protection as it reduces transport risk.

If the removal of the weeds and water doesn't occur immediately at the exit ramp site and happens prior to one entering a new body of water the potential ANS would be still be present at the ramp or along the shoreline which increases the odds that the ANS could find itself washed into a "clean" body of water. Further, the transportation of weeds and water could infest other bodies of water as the vehicle, the boat and trailer travel across the state's roads where the ANS could blow into an uninfected body of water.

By not removing weeds and water upon exiting the ramp of an ANS infested water the result could be the unintentional introduction of ANS into a new body of water even though the angler, the a hunter has the best of intentions. While learning how to combat ANS is an ongoing learning process currently it has been determined by the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee that following

these methods the program has its best chance at successfully keeping ANS out of North Dakota water's.

If I can't use my live-well, how do I transport my fish home and keep them fresh?

For fish transport away from a body of water the Game and Fish Department suggests placing your fish on ice in a cooler. As an old-fashion alternative, some older generation anglers have recommended to the Department that fish could be placed in wetted gunny sacks where they will remain fresh long enough to a fish cleaning station or transported home.

When coming off the water, what is meant by "when out of water" as it applies to the ANS regulations that require all boats to drain water (including live-wells) and that all equipment be vegetation free?

Obviously some time is required to remove aquatic vegetation from equipment and to drain the water from a boat when it is out of the water. The pulling of the plugs and the removing of all vegetation should occur right on the boat ramp when these activities do not interfere with others who may be using the ramp. When there is other traffic the boater should pull into the immediate parking lot area and perform the mandated tasks while attempting to not interfere with others.

Some locations have an available fish cleaning station located immediate to the parking lot. In these situations the boater can pull up to the cleaning station and perform the mandated tasks so long as there are not signs prohibiting such. (Keep in mind that in some cases, the parking lots and fish cleaning areas will not be a paved, concrete area and water should not be discharged in areas that may become muddy). Legally only the ramp, the parking lot and immediate fish cleaning station are the areas allowable for vegetation removal and the draining of all water from the watercraft and equipment.

Do the same rules apply for tournaments?

Yes; if a tournament has an approved live-release format, the weigh-ins and fish releases will need to occur at the boat ramp site where the boats launch and exit the lake. Fish will not be allowed to be transported in live-wells to an off-site weigh-in station.

How then do I legally move my minnows from the bait shop to the lake and then back home?

Transporting bait in a live-well / bait-well when out of the water is illegal. However the transport of legal live baitfish and bait to or from a body of water is still allowed via a minnow bucket or any other containers as long as they are of a 5 gallon water capacity or less.

Why is it OK to transport minnows in containers with up to 5 gallons of water in a bait bucket and move from lake to lake but we can't use our live-wells for our bait when we are out of the water?

Allowing water transport in bait buckets remains a potential pathway of ANS between bodies of water but eliminating the transport of water in bait buckets would essentially prohibit the use of any live bait fish in North Dakota. Allowing 5 gallons of water in bait buckets is a compromise between reducing the risk of transporting ANS while allowing anglers to possess enough water to keep their bait alive.

A bait bucket has a smaller volume (5 gallon capacity or less), making it a less likely method to transport ANS to a new location versus a live-well (which commonly have a capacity of up to 30 gallons of water). Also the smaller volume of water makes it easier to visually inspect the water to comply with the rule that bait buckets must be weed-free. The allowance of the transport of minnows in bait buckets has been factored into a risk assessment and at this time there are no plans to prohibit the use of bait buckets of 5 gallon or less capacity.

Why does it need to be a bait bucket capable of holding 5 gallons of water (or less) and not a cooler or other container that has larger capacity but contains only 5 gallons of water (or less) when transporting bait fish?

A commercial bait bucket (which typically hold a gallon or two of water) or 5 gallon buckets are by far the two most commonly and widely used containers for transporting bait. Any type of a larger container even when only containing 5 gallons (or less) of water is unacceptable. One reason for this is to stay away from having to measure the volume of water in larger type of container which could be problematic for angler and the game warden while in the field. Only containers, coolers, bait buckets, containers capable of holding 5 gallons or less in volume of water are legal.

What if three people are fishing together for the weekend? Can they combine all their bait together in one 15-gallon or 60-quart cooler?

No. A container cannot exceed 5 gallons in volume no matter how many anglers. The three anglers however could have three separate containers, each holding 5 gallons or less of water in volume.

This bait provision only affects transport of bait, not keeping them alive at home, right? If a person keeps their bait alive at home can they do it in a larger container?

Yes. These rules apply to transport only.

Can I put game fish in a 5-gallon bucket with water and transport them live?

No; only legal bait and legal live baitfish can be transported.

What else can I do to help prevent the spread of ANS?

You can disinfect your boat by adding hot water (110° F or warmer) to the live-well along with enough household chlorine bleach to reach a solution of 1 part bleach to 20 parts water. Run the recirculation pumps and use a brush (a toilet brush works well) to scrub under the lid and in the corners. Drain the solution in an appropriate location, not into the lake. Air drying can also be effective in preventing ANS transfer.

The live-well, bilge pumps and other equipment must be allowed to dry completely which can take a few days. However some ANS produces hardy seeds and eggs which can withstand extended periods outside of the water, in these cases, air drying is not the answer. Power-washing can remove lake scum and unseen hitchhikers such as small plant fragments or egg masses from hard-to-reach places such as boat hulls, trailer frames and from within live-wells. The use of a commercial car wash that runs water through a sewage treatment system is a good cleaning source to help in preventing the spread of ANS. If clean-up, wash-downs are completed at home one must be careful that the wash water does not run down the street and into the storm sewer that could empty into a local river or lake.

What if I observe boats, trailers, jet skis, decoys, etc. that have weeds hanging from them away from a lake?

The best thing you can do if the boat owner / operator is present and approachable is to explain to them the concern North Dakota has on protecting its natural resources from the possible spread of ANS and ask them to follow the ANS mitigation procedures shared here. If the owner/operator is not cooperative call the Report All Poachers line (1-800-472-2121).