

Decontamination Frequently Asked Questions

Created by Burnett and Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Departments

What is decontamination?

It is the process of removing all aquatic plants and animals, including materials that may contain or transmit aquatic invasive species (AIS) beyond physical removal or other methods.

Why have a decontamination station?

Hand removal is effective at removing plants and small animals from watercraft equipment. Decontamination is another tool to help kill invasive species that are not visible or very difficult to see (zebra mussels and spiny water fleas).

Who maintains the decontamination station?

Citizen members of a lake association or lake district change the solution to the recommended mix of 2 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water. They are trained to properly mix the solution.

What is the concentration of bleach?

Standard bleach is 52,500 ppm chlorine, while the bleach concentration being used here is ~500 ppm. Reported in percentage, regular strength household bleach is 5.25% sodium hypochlorite while this solution is 0.05% sodium hypochlorite.

Are there runoff issues?

A fine mist of the bleach/water solution is applied using a hand-pump sprayer. The solution covers the boat and trailer and is thoroughly applied around its perimeter. It evaporates quickly and no runoff into the lake occurs. There is no harm to the lake once the boat/trailer goes into the water.



Will the bleach solution in my live-well harm the fish I keep in there?

Between the low initial concentration of the applied solution, the off-gassing of the chlorine while sitting, and then the dilution of any residual chlorine, the likelihood that fish would be impacted by the bleach is very low. An alternative would be to use ice to keep fish fresh until you get home.

Will decontamination make a difference?

The vast majority of invasions are human mediated and theoretically preventable. Each prevention action we take, reduces the probability of a new invasion by a boat moving aquatic invasive species.

Recreational boating is a way AIS move around and once they are here, we all share a responsibility to be doing everything we can to prevent their spread.

Will this harm my boat or equipment?

There are no known cases of damage from properly using any decontamination method. An even higher solution than the one provided is recommended to clean vinyl siding on a house. The WI DNR uses this solution on all of their boating equipment every day, and tournament fishing boats have been sprayed down and have shown no harmful effects (see below).

Ranger Boats: *"At any rate – household bleach at full concentration is not going to harm the gel coat when used during washing and rinsed off."*

Tuffy Boats: *"The described bleach solution is 100% safe on all gelcoat applications."*