

Beltrami County Focused on Spiny Water Flea Awareness

Spiny Water Flea, the tiny, opaque zooplankton that is becoming more of an ominous threat to Minnesota's waters and its outdoor traditions, is the target of a new campaign by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC).

This invasive species disrupts the natural food chain by devouring the micro nutrients that sustain and grow native fish species, yet offer no nutrient value themselves. Once established in a lake there is no treatment, chemical or otherwise, that will eradicate them. So, the "Stop Spiny" campaign, according to MAISRC, is aimed at educating Minnesotans, especially the state's anglers, about spiny water fleas, their spread and how to stop them.

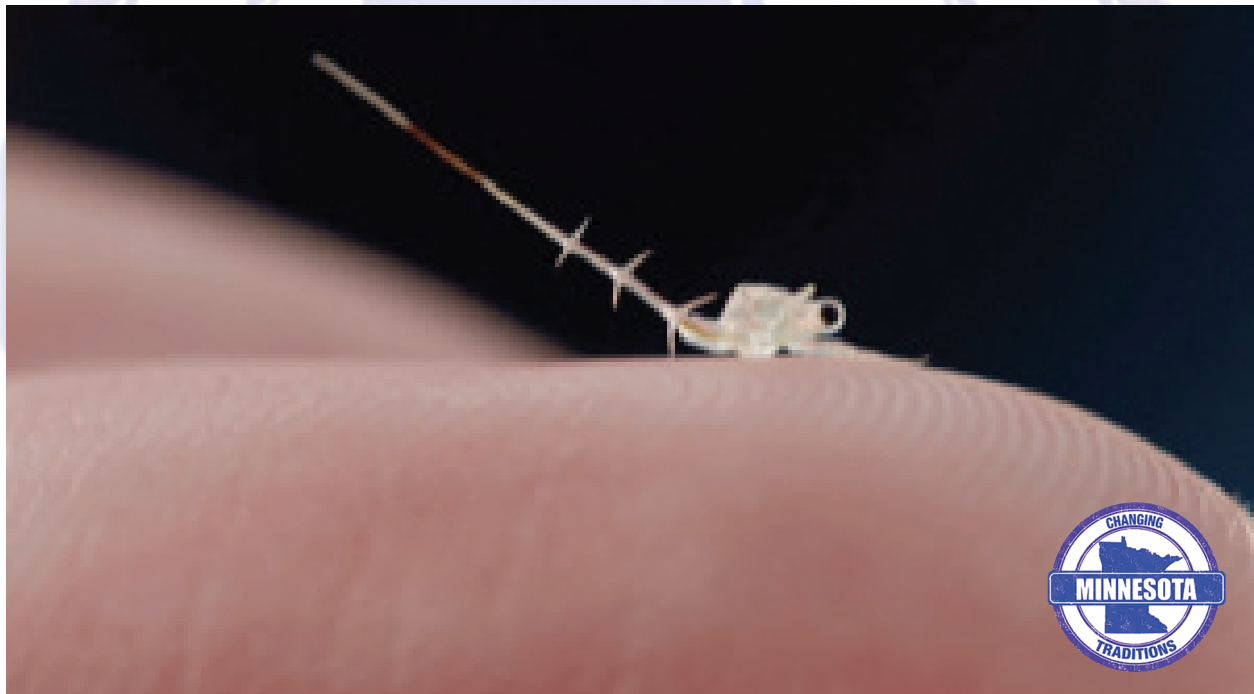


Photo Courtesy of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center

Beltrami County AIS Technician Bruce Anspach is among those on the front lines at the county level who've embraced the campaign and its objective.

"We're definitely behind the campaign," he said, "and are trying to raise awareness among anglers and boaters. All our boat inspectors have handouts and other materials to distribute to people using public access ramps, plus we're running a short, informative video from MAISRC as a commercial on local cable channels to try and reach even more people."



Photos Courtesy of Jeff Gunderson

The tendency for spiny water fleas to become entangled on fishing line means anglers must be extra alert for these harmful invasives.

Spiny water fleas tend to adhere to things that move through the water, such as fishing line, downrigger cables and the mesh bag of landing nets. An angler's first encounter with the invasive zooplankton is often seeing a shimmering cluster of the them at the rodtip after reeling line onto the spool. Thus, fishermen are obviously high on the list of people the campaign hopes to reach.

“Fishermen use the type of gear that can easily pick up and transport spiny water fleas,” he said. “So besides increasing awareness, we’re encouraging anglers to actively stem the spread by wiping down their gear after a day on the lake.”

The campaign urges anglers to wipe down their fishing line with a rag or towel as it goes onto the reel; then wipe off the reel itself before stowing a rod in the locker at the end of the day. At the ramp, after draining the bilge, livewells and baitwell or bait bucket, wipe down the wells or bucket to remove any hitchhikers.

“Be sure to check the landing net, too,” advises Anspach, “as well as any spot inside the boat that the net, or a fish, might have touched.”



Trained decontamination station operators at dozens of locations across Minnesota use a hot-water flush to remove spiny water fleas from boater's rigs free of charge.

Boaters and anglers, particularly those who are likely to launch on a different body of water within four days, are encouraged to make use of one of the many courtesy decontamination stations made available to them around the state. The system uses a hot (140 degrees) low pressure wash to clean the hull and the outboard's lower unit, and flush the livewells, baitwells and plumbing system, free of charge.

“Beltrami County’s permanent station is located at 2400 Middle School Dr. in Bemidji,” he said. “Ideally, we’d like boaters to give us a call (218-760-8519) as they approach the access ramp to let us know they’re on the way.”

Several counties operate permanent decontamination stations, and the MDNR has dozens of mobile units that are set up at various locations throughout the boating season. All of them can be found online, along with dates, locations and hours of operation. Visit www.mndnr.gov/decon and click on “View Courtesy Decontamination Map” to find the one nearest you.

This information is produced and distributed by the Mississippi Headwaters Board in an effort to motivate everyone to protect our natural resources. A recreation based lifestyle is part of our MN Traditions and is only preserved when we protect our aquatic resources from invaders such as zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil. To support Minnesota Traditions join us on social media here:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MNTraditions>

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaTraditions/>

Website: www.minnesotatraditions.com for more information



PROTECTING THE FIRST 400 MILES