

June 6, 2017

Mr. Ronald Smith  
President  
Whiteshell Cottagers Association  
[ronaldssmith@hotmail.com](mailto:ronaldssmith@hotmail.com)

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for your letter sent via email dated May 23, 2017, to the Honourable Brian Pallister, Premier of Manitoba supporting our Department's efforts at addressing aquatic invasive species (AIS) and identifying further measures to consider. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the Premier and the Honourable Cathy Cox, Minister of Sustainable Development.

I understand the concern you have raised regarding the need to prevent the introduction into and spread of AIS within Manitoba. We have been operating a Watercraft Inspection Program and providing AIS awareness and outreach for 17 years. When the program started, we focused on boats entering Manitoba and directed education efforts at cottagers and campers in provincial parks including within Whiteshell Provincial Park.

With the introduction of zebra mussels in Lake Winnipeg, the department's main focus is to minimize the spread of zebra mussels from Lake Winnipeg. We have increased the number of watercraft inspection stations from two to six and these stations now operate at strategic locations along highways to increase the number of watercraft that we intercept. The stations are also in locations that for the most part intercept traffic heading west. This is due to the fact that calcium concentrations in waterbodies on the western side of the province are more favorable for supporting nuisance levels of zebra mussels. Thankfully, calcium concentrations are too low in many of the water bodies in eastern Manitoba for zebra mussels to establish to nuisance levels. While provincial watercraft inspection stations will continue to be deployed at high risk areas, your association could consider purchasing and operating inspection stations within the park to provide volunteer inspection and decontamination services to the boating public. However, please note that an association would not have the legal authority to require boats to be inspected and/or decontaminated.

As you know given the proactive and collaborative role the Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners and your association have played regarding AIS, slowing the introduction and spread is a collective responsibility. Manitoba's AIS laws were developed as a tool to assist in combating the introduction and spread of AIS. The greatest benefit of the Watercraft Inspection program is the awareness it provides through our interaction with inspectors and boaters. This is our best opportunity to explain to people why AIS are a concern, inform them of the legal requirements, demonstrate how to look and feel for AIS, and how to appropriately implement the AIS clean, drain, dry and dispose methods.

As you also suggested, other communication efforts, like boat launch signs are also useful tools. The Department does have AIS boat launch signs at many launches. It is my understanding that either the sign or the waterproof STOP AIS poster, have been put up at a number of locations and venues throughout the Whiteshell Provincial Park. We also have one large billboard sign along Highway 1 heading west near West Hawk Lake.

Staff continue to pursue opportunities for public engagement and Manitoba has recently unveiled its new Spot the Stripes/Stop the Spread campaign to further increase awareness of zebra mussels and what to do to slow the spread. We would be happy to contribute articles or information for articles to the Whiteshell Echo. Previous collaborations have provided an opportunity to work collaboratively on disseminating AIS information.

Thank you again for your continued support and effort to educate cottagers and the general public on zebra mussels and AIS in general. We continue to look forward to working with MACO and the Whiteshell Cottagers Association Inc. on communication efforts. Please follow up with Candace Parks at [Candace.Parks@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Candace.Parks@gov.mb.ca) or 204 232-8683, if you have any questions or there are opportunities to collaborate.

Sincerely yours,



James Duncan  
Director

cc. The Honourable Premier Brian Pallister  
Honourable Cathy Cox  
Candace Parks