



[www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)

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November 15, 2016

Superintendent Jeff Mow  
Glacier National Park  
PO Box 128  
West Glacier, MT 59936

Re: Invasive Species Related Boating Closure

Dear Superintendent Mow,

I am writing on behalf of American Whitewater, a national non-profit organization focused on river conservation, restoration, management, enjoyment and safety. We are strong advocates for public lands, Wild and Scenic River designations, and the restoration of dammed rivers. Our members are primarily conservation-oriented kayakers, canoeists, and rafters. Our membership cherishes the opportunity to experience Glacier National Park through paddling the incomparable rivers and streams within the Park. The scenery, water quality, colorful rocks, long season, excellent rapids, and wildlife viewing opportunities all make paddling throughout Glacier an experience that is unique to Glacier National Park and frankly sublime.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a great concern to our organization and membership as they threaten the many river values we directly enjoy, and impact the inherent values of wild functioning river ecosystems. We regularly remind paddlers to carefully clean, drain, and dry their gear and boats through social media and other means. When AIS are known to occur in a specific river we issue additional warnings on our popular online river database. We are supportive of the inspection stations and other programs designed to detect and stop the spread of AIS. We really like the AIS permit program employed by Glacier National Park, and I personally thanked the staff for their work and the program this year. We can and want to do more on this issue.

We are confident that paddling can be managed in ways that effectively prevents the spread of AIS over the long term and have several things going for us in that regard. Canoes, kayaks, and small inflatables are not left in the water for long periods of time like motorboats so AIS are less likely to attach or grow on them. Our boats have to be carried and hard boats must be lifted onto cars so they are diligently drained of heavy water at the end of each river trip. Car-top boats are

quickly air dried and heated during Montana's typically hot and dry paddling season. Our footwear and other gear are resistant to retaining sediment by design (unlike like felt for example). Since paddling is cold and wet enough without putting wet gear on, we routinely dry our gear whenever possible. Whitewater boats are slow and difficult craft on flat-water, so we seldom take them to calm water bodies where motorboats and AIS are more likely to exist. Instead we generally limit the use of whitewater equipment to rocky headwater rivers and streams.

All of these factors are causes for optimism and a measure of confidence, but we appreciate the added defensive screens provided by inspection stations, media alerts, and the permit programs like Glacier's that ramp up awareness and prevention of potential transportation of AIS. We are actively pursuing ways we can provide an even stronger leadership role in increasing awareness and stewardship among whitewater paddlers. We welcome any ideas you or your staff may have on how we can improve our efforts.

We have two requests of you and your team. First, please consider us a partner in your consideration and treatment of this important issue and let us know about opportunities to engage as an organization and for our membership to engage. Second, please strive to leave a path to river paddling throughout Glacier National Park, even if that path imposes new burdens on visitors. Paddlers will bend over backwards to enjoy the Park's front and backcountry streams without doing harm, and it is entirely possible for them to do so without introducing Aquatic Invasive Species.

Thank you for your excellent management of the rivers and streams of Glacier National Park.

Sincerely,



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