

---

## **CLEAN, DRAIN AND DRY! WHAT ABOUT THE BIOLOGISTS?**

Erik Hanson, Invasive Species Coordinator, Montana Department of Agriculture, 303 North Roberts, Helena, Montana 59601 Ehanson2@mt.gov

One of the main ways invasive species are introduced to new habitats is through the movement of boats, field gear, and equipment from water body to water body. We ask the public to clean their gear and boats but are we leading by example? A field crew can enter multiple water bodies during a day without cleaning and disinfecting their gear. VHS, zebra mussels, chytrid fungus, New Zealand mudsnails, Eurasian watermilfoil and terrestrial weed seeds among others can be easily transported by field staff. How can we expect the public to be concerned about how their actions spread invasive species when natural resource agencies and workers aren't taking preventative steps? Agencies and biologists need to develop and follow guidelines to prevent the movement of invasive species. Contracts with private companies and consultants should contain clauses that require disinfection of gear. The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society has a role to play. As a society that represents aquatic resources and professionals, AFS can promote cleaning and disinfecting protocols and procedures and educate its members about the need. I suggest that the Montana Chapter of AFS develop a policy statement and guidelines to limit the spread of invasive species by field workers. Only by leading, will the public follow the necessary steps to prevent the introduction of new invasive species to Montana.