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Glacier National Park retracts statement claiming full implementation of boat restrictions

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Glacier National Park Photo credit: Mikenzie Frost



UPDATE (July 11) – Glacier National Park has retracted the [statement made](#) on Monday regarding their full implementation of phase three of the aquatic invasive species response saying it was not directed by the Department of the Interior as some had previously reported.

Park officials are also refuting the announcement that they will release quarantine and inspection procedures for people living outside the park who would like to launch their boat on Lake McDonald was premature.

GNP did say they will allow private landowners living within the park boundary whose motorboats are only launched on Lake McDonald to access the lake. These boats have exceeded the thirty day quarantine requirement, and in addition, have undergone a rigorous aquatic invasive species boat inspection by NPS staff.

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KALISPELL, Mont. (AP July 10) — Glacier National Park officials, under pressure from U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, have loosened boating restrictions enacted when invasive mussels were found in Montana reservoir about 100 miles from the park, the Flathead Beacon reported.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift told the Beacon that Zinke spoke to park officials in March about allowing landowners within park boundaries — whose boats never leave the park — to be able to use park waters.

Zinke did not talk about allowing additional motorized boats, Swift said.

The Beacon learned about the pressure from Zinke after obtaining an internal memo circulated among National Park Service employees. Park officials had initially said they did not plan to allow any motorized watercraft access this summer.

In the memo, Zinke told park officials to “find ways for the taxpayers to be able to use their motorboats in our park waters” this summer, the newspaper reported.

Glacier closed park waters to all boating last November, when invasive mussel larvae were found in Tiber Reservoir on the Marias River southwest of Chester.

The tiny, striped shellfish multiply rapidly and can be spread to other bodies of water by latching onto boats, wading boots and other objects. Mussels can damage beaches, clog boat motors, harm fish and block irrigation equipment and water intakes.

As a result of the positive test, Montana added more boat inspection and contamination stations, and out-of-state watercraft will have to be inspected prior to launching in any Montana waterway.

With the inspection sites in place, some bodies of water that had been closed have re-opened.

In March, Glacier park opened its waters to non-motorized craft and later allowed rental or chartered motorized boats that had remained in the park.

The park said Monday it also had begun allowing landowners around Lake McDonald to launch motorized boats and that it would soon announce an inspection and 30-day quarantine procedure that would allow other motorized boats in the park.

“Our objective is to provide an appropriate level of user access to the extent that we can, and ensure that those motorboats do not pose a risk to park waters,” Superintendent Jeff Mow said Monday.

Swift called it “a common-sense measure that is consistent with Montana’s values of recreation and multiple use of public lands.”

Conservationists and former Glacier National Park Superintendent Chas Cartwright criticized the reversal.

“They had a plan to minimize the risk, and the plan was to close all park waters to all motorized craft for this field season,” Cartwright said. “This is not the plan. I am flabbergasted that we would consider opening park waters now.”

David Brooks, executive director of Montana Trout Unlimited, called the decision irresponsible.

“It’s an open door to the Columbia River Basin that shouldn’t be opened unless Glacier is fully staffed and has the resources necessary to inspect and decontaminate every boat,” Brooks said.

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