



Bait Handling and Disposal Awareness Campaign

Wabasha County's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Aid Program

All terrestrial earthworms in Minnesota are non-native, invasive species from Europe and Asia. Ever since glaciers receded 11,000 years ago, Minnesota ecosystems have developed without earthworms. Since then, there have been at least 15 non-native earthworm species introduced to Minnesota; with a lot of these infestations originating near bodies of water and boat landings. This is a problem because the state's hardwood forests have evolved to function without earthworms. The fallen leaves decompose slower which creates an organic "duff" layer. This duff layer provides the type of environment needed for native woodland flowers to grow, provides habitat for ground-dwelling animals, and helps prevent soil erosion, which can degrade fish habitat. Worms remove this duff layer and can harm and change the hardwood forest ecosystems.

Releasing live bait and bait water in Minnesota lakes and rivers is illegal (MN Statutes Section 84D.10); before you leave an access you must drain all water from water-related equipment including bait containers. Live bait and bait water can also harbor fish diseases and AIS. Many different types of viruses, bacteria, and parasites are found in live baitfish. For instance, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHSV) can be found in live baitfish and can cause illness and mortality in many important Minnesota fish species. While it has not been found in Minnesota's bait supply yet, it was identified in the retail bait supply in Michigan. A disease outbreak can harm the health of wild fish populations and drastically impact the water bodies' ecology and the people who depend on it.



Izaak Walton Park



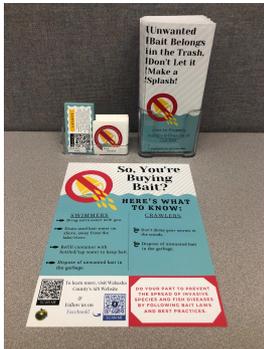
Wilcox Landing



Half-Moon Landing

Knowing all of this, how do you properly handle and dispose of bait to prevent the spread of invasive species?

To tackle this topic, Wabasha County has posted posters, brochures, and stickers at gas stations and bait shops throughout the county to inform anglers on the correct way to handle and dispose of live bait. Bait bins have also been placed at Izaak Walton Park, Wilcox Landing, and Half-Moon Landing water accesses to provide a place for anglers to properly dispose of any unused live bait.



To use these bait bins:

-  Dispose of any unwanted worms in the bin
-  Drain bait container on shore away from the water
-  Dispose of live bait in the bin

If you want to keep any unused live bait:

-  Bring extra water & store it in a cooler
-  Drain bait container on shore away from the water
-  Refill the container with the extra water

To learn more, visit our website: https://www.co.wabasha.mn.us/departments/planning_and_zoning/ais.php

