Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

**Clean Boats, Clean Waters Summer 2020 Campaigns**

The annual AIS Drain Campaign, normally held in early June, will be merged with the annual Fourth-of-July Landing Blitz. The combined campaigns will run from June 28 – July 5.

During the week, the Clean Boats, Clean Waters watercraft inspectors throughout Forest County will be joining forces with AIS partners from around the state to give away over 5,500 hard-sided ice packs to anglers. Each ice pack is stamped with the reminder to Drain Your Catch. Draining includes the water in fishing buckets and livewells. Any lake water added to your catch or water that comes in contact with the fish potentially carries diseases or microscopic invasive animals, such as the larvae of zebra
mussels. Draining your catch as well as your boat and any other gear that takes on water is important for keeping our waters healthy.

In addition, watercraft inspectors will also be giving away over 10,000 of the ever popular “Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker” free microfiber boat towels as a thank you to boaters they observe practicing the important prevention steps of “Inspect, Remove, Drain, and Never Move.” The towels serve as a reminder to act to prevent the spread of AIS and are perfect for soaking up water in live wells and for wiping down boats, jet skis, anchors and other equipment before leaving the launch. One ice pack or towel is given to each boat owner while supplies last.

These campaigns are a great opportunity to remind everyone that the power to protect our water resources is shared by all of us who love Wisconsin’s waters. Wisconsin has approximately 300 launches participating. No matter where you launch, always remember before you leave the launch to:
• **Inspect** boats, trailers and equipment for attached aquatic plants or animals.
• **Remove** all attached plants or animals
• **Drain** all water from boats, motors, live wells and other equipment
• **Never move** live fish away from a waterbody
• **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash
• **Buy** minnows from a Wisconsin bait dealer
• Only use leftover minnows when either 1) fishing with them on the same body of water or 2) on other waters if no lake/river water or other fish have been added to the container.

Following these steps also helps boaters comply with Wisconsin state law, which prohibits the transport of aquatic invasive species. To learn more about invasive species and their impacts to Wisconsin’s waters and economy, visit DNR.wi.gov andsearch “Invasive Species.”