



## The City of Chestermere and Western Irrigation District partner to protect Chestermere Lake from aquatic invasive species

May 31, 2021

Chestermere, AB - The City of Chestermere and the Western Irrigation District (WID) have joined forces to keep Chestermere Lake and local waterbodies safe from aquatic invasive species by investing in a new boat cleaning system.

It is a free, waterless, user-operated boat cleaning system that will allow boaters to effectively clean, drain, and dry their watercrafts, an essential activity that helps stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. The system is made possible with funds from the City of Chestermere, WID and a grant awarded by the Alberta government, through the Canadian Agriculture Partnership.

“Chestermere Lake is the centerpiece of our community and we recognize the importance of preventing aquatic invasive species from taking over the lake,” says Mayor Marshall Chalmers. “We are pleased to collaborate with the WID to preserve and protect the lake for future generations; this is an excellent example of partnership in our region.”

Chestermere Lake, situated just east of the City of Calgary, is an irrigation reservoir that is part of an extensive system of reservoirs, pipelines and canals that serve farms within the Western Irrigation District. The efforts to protect this infrastructure will enhance water security for farmers, businesses, families, and many others who rely heavily on the irrigation network.

WID Board Chair Dan Shute says, “We are happy to partner with the City of Chestermere to offer this system to the public. This is a great way for citizens to do their part to protect both Chestermere Lake and our downstream infrastructure. We hope all boaters will take the opportunity to use the system this summer.”



[chestermere.ca/boats](http://chestermere.ca/boats)



*WID Board Chair Dan Shute and Chestermere Mayor Marshall Chalmers in front of the new boat cleaning system*

While they may be small, aquatic invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels pose a significant threat to Chestermere Lake and the entire irrigation network. They are extremely hard to detect, but if established, are almost impossible to remove. They can reproduce at a rate of up to 1,000,000 new mussels per year, infesting irrigation pipes, making swimming areas dangerous and unusable, and creating noxious odours.

“These invasive species are not supposed to be here, they can plug off infrastructure and choke off pipelines which would be devastating for the WID,” says Shute.

Boats, kayaks, canoes and paddle boards can carry the ‘aquatic hitchhikers’ which can change the ecology and have a serious impact on the ecosystem. To date, Alberta has successfully kept them out of our waterways and using this boat cleaning system will help keep it that way.

“We encourage boaters to take up the habit of cleaning their boats, trailers and gear before and after every use to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species,” says Calvin Jukich, Plant Health Care Coordinator. “This system provides an extra layer of protection for Chestermere Lake from the contamination of these destructive plant and animal species and we encourage all residents and visitors to use it whenever they visit the lake.”

The unit will be conveniently located in the municipal boat launch parking area near John Peake Park and will be free of charge. Boat launch staff will allow users into the area for public day use from 8 am to 8 pm. Residents registered for a seasonal pass will be able to access it from 8 am to 10 pm daily.

Boaters have been able to use the system since Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>.

To learn more about how to clean, drain and dry your boat properly, visit [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca). To learn more about the Boat Cleaning Unit visit: [www.chestermere.ca/boats](http://www.chestermere.ca/boats)

## **Media Contacts**

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## **Background:**

### **The new Boat Cleaning System has:**

- High pressure air to expel debris and water from hard-to-reach areas
- A grabber tool to pull weeds and organic material from hard to reach places
- A vacuum to suck up water and debris
- A brush tool to scrub surfaces

An organics bin will be placed next to the unit for disposal of weeds and organic material pulled from boats

### **Out of province boat entry requirements**

To enter Chestermere Lake, boaters will still be required to provide proof of inspection from an Alberta Environment inspection site if they have been out of province with their boat. This is because using this unit does not guarantee complete decontamination, as it only utilizes air pressure and a vacuum to clean. Alberta Environment recommends decontamination with high pressure hot water to kill aquatic invasive species, most specifically to eliminate quagga and zebra mussels and their eggs.

### **About aquatic invasive species**

There are fifty-two invasive species listed in the *Fisheries (Alberta) Act* that can cause harm to the environment as they establish residence outside of their natural range. Once in a new body of water, these invasive aquatic species can quickly overtake the delicate ecosystem and cause unintended results such as increased infestation. This infestation can interfere with future recreational use (such as boating and swimming) and displace wildlife.

Chestermere Lake already has evidence of Flowering Rush and the City of Chestermere is working proactively to prevent other aquatic invasive species from entering the lake.

The most important thing that should be done is to clean, drain and dry all equipment or vessels that have been in contact with any body of water.