

2020 UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION (UC³) ANNUAL REPORT

UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION



PARTNERS IN MANAGING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR, VICE CHAIR & STAFF

As 2020 comes to an end, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC³) commissioners, ex-officio members, committee participants, and the aquatic invasive species (AIS) community for conducting productive work during challenging times. When the UC³ was formed, we set ambitious goals to minimize the duplication of efforts among AIS partners, maximize partner productivity, expand the reach of limited funds, and connect disparate citizens and organizations to discuss and better understand AIS issues.

Since our inception, we have worked continuously to build a commission that acknowledges the tireless work of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and AIS program partners, while challenging ourselves to continuously adapt and improve our collective programs. We are pleased to have created an environment that encourages thoughtful and respectful AIS discourse that honors our natural resources and cultural histories and considers future generations.

This past year brought unprecedented challenges to all partners in response to a worldwide pandemic. We are proud of the many ways in which individuals and organizations not only met those challenges but exceeded expectations. We also expanded our industry outreach program, grew our education and outreach strategy in coordination with FWP, conducted a survey of partner outreach efforts, expanded citizen science programming, and developed a legislative committee to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

We look forward to working together with our partners to address the challenges of 2021.



Lori Curtis, Chair
Science & Education Director,
Whitefish Lake Institute
Vice Chair, Flathead
Conservation District



Tom Woolf, Vice Chair
AIS Bureau Chief,
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Co-Vice Chair, Montana
Invasive Species Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from Chair, Vice Chair & Staff	2	About the Upper Columbia Basin	7
Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Members.	4	Projects & Accomplishments	8
Committees	6	Activities/Meetings in Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1 – June 30)	20
About the Commission	6	Budget: Sources & Expenditures (FY2020)	22

Montana is known for her vast beauty, gorgeous public lands and water resources, as well as abundant recreation opportunities. But with these opportunities also come risks. More out-of-state traffic utilizing our lakes, rivers and reservoirs increases the risk of inadvertent “hitchhikers” being introduced to our waterbodies. Invasive species are one of the largest threats to biodiversity, cited as second only to habitat destruction as a result of development.



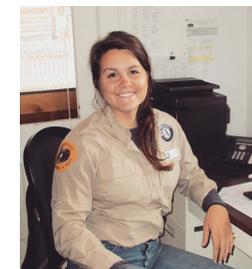
Aquatic invasive species can:

- Outcompete and displace native species
- Cause dramatic shifts in trophic dynamics, food web structure, and species abundance
- Cause local extinction of species
- Cause large-scale mortality of trees and shrubs
- Reduce the value of timber and agricultural crops and their associated products
- Alter ecosystem processes
- Modify the provision of ecosystem services
- Alter gene pools through hybridization with native species
- Alter carbon and nitrogen cycling, water use, and soil properties
- Reduce potential of recreationally hunted and fished species
- Diminish habitat aesthetics
- Alter water chemistry

In order to prevent these significant damages to Montana’s biodiversity, ecology, habitat, economies and way of life, management agencies, stakeholders and citizens must work together to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS into Montana’s waterways. These benefits are not limited to the state of Montana but extend to the downstream interests of the entire Columbia River Basin as well. This report provides highlights of our accomplishments, projects, sources of funding and expenditures for the fiscal year 2020 (July 1 – June 30). Together, we can effectively protect our waters, and we are honored to have the privilege to assist with these efforts.



Kate Wilson,
Commission Administrator



Cassidy Bender,
Commission Coordinator

UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS



Jeremy Anderson
President (Trout Unlimited Bitterroot Chapter)
Representing: Bitterroot River Basin
Voting Member (Corvallis)



Chris Downs
Fisheries Program Manager
(Glacier National Park)
Representing: National Park Service
Ex-Officio Member (West Glacier)



Joanne Grady
Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator -
Region 6
Representing: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ex-Officio Member (Denver, CO)



Heidi McMaster
Hazmat/Invasive Species and IPM Coordinator
(Pacific Northwest Office)
Representing: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ex-Officio Member (Boise, ID)



Paul Bradford
Libby Rod & Gun Club
Representing: Kootenai River Basin
Voting Member (Libby)



Brant Dupree
Big Sky Watershed Corps Member (2020/2021)
AmeriCorps (Missoula)



Brian 'BJ' Johnson
Citizen/owner (Sea Me Paddle Kayak Tours)
Representing: Flathead River Basin
Voting Member (Kalispell)



Chris Parrot
Jesco Marine
Representing: Private Industry
Voting Member (Kalispell)



Martin Charlo
Tribal Council Member
Representing: Confederated Salish
& Kootenai Tribes
Voting Member (Pablo)



Representative Neil Duram
House District 2 (Republican)
Ex-Officio Legislative Member (Eureka)



Mike Koopal
Citizen/Executive Director
(Whitefish Lake Institute)
Representing: Member-at-Large
Voting Member (Columbia Falls)



Monica Pokorny
Plant Materials Specialist
Representing: USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Ex-Officio Member (Bozeman)



Dennis Clairmont
Previous Tribal Council Member (2017 – 2019)
Representing: Confederated Salish
& Kootenai Tribes



Senator Janet Ellis
Senate District 41
Ex-Officio Legislative Member (Helena)



Paul Kusnierz
Fisheries Biologist (Avista)
Representing: Hydropower
Voting Member (Boise, ID)



Rob Rich
Conservation and Education Associate
(Swan Valley Connections)
Representing: Swan/Blackfoot River Basins
Voting Member (Ovando)



Michelle Cox
Invasive Species Coordinator - Region 1
Representing: U.S. Forest Service
Ex-Officio Member (Missoula)



Representative David Fern
House District 5 (Democrat)
Ex-Officio Legislative Member (Whitefish)



Larry Lack
Chair (Sanders County Aquatic Invasive
Plants Task Force)
Representing: Lower Clark Fork River Basin
Voting Member (Thompson Falls)



Stacey Schnebel
Flathead Electric Coop
Representing: Electric Cooperatives
Association of Montana
Voting Member (Coram)



Senator Mike Cuffe
Senate District 1
Ex-Officio Legislative Member (Eureka)



Andrew Gorder
Legal Director (Clark Fork Coalition)
Representing: Upper/Middle Clark Fork
River Basins
Voting Member (Missoula)



Phil Matson
Citizen/Research Technician (Flathead Lake
Biological Station)
Representing: private landowners
Voting Member (Columbia Falls)



Theresa Thom
Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator -
Pacific Region
Representing: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ex-Officio Member (Portland, OR)

COMMITTEES

EDUCATION & OUTREACH (STANDING)

CHAIR: Lori Curtis
COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Kate Wilson, Cassidy Bender, Liz Lodman, Chris Parrott, Rob Rich, Brant Dupree, Lindsey Bona-Eggeman

Development of three-year Education & Outreach Strategy; development and implementation of annual media plan and other outreach planning and coordination.

EARLY DETECTION & MONITORING (STANDING)

CHAIR: Chris Downs
COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Mike Koopal, Phil Matson, Paul Kusnierz, Tom Woolf, Craig McLane, Erik Hanson, Joann Wallenburn, Lindsey Bona-Eggeman

Sample data (eDNA and microscopy) spatially represented on GIS maps including data gaps and reducing sampling redundancy. Annual Upper Columbia River Basin Aquatic Invasive Species Early Detection and Monitoring Plan incorporating early detection sampling information, sample type and equipment decontamination protocols.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE (AD HOC)

CHAIR: Andrew Gorder
COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Rob Rich, Phil Matson, Tom Woolf, Rep. Duram, Rep. Fern, Sen. Cuffe, Sen. Ellis, Erik Hanson, Bryce Christiaens, FWP & DNRC legal & enforcement staff (as needed)

Assess and prioritize AIS gaps, challenges and issues. Identify and explore potential solutions and make recommendations to commission for action to strengthen AIS prevention and management activities.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The mission of the UC³ is to protect the aquatic environment in Montana tributaries to the Columbia River from the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in order to protect water resources, downstream interests, and the economic and ecological vitality of the region.

The commission was created in the 2017 legislative session by House Bill 622. The UC³ was established to foster close cooperation and coordination between international, federal, regional, state, tribal, and local water resource managers to develop and implement comprehensive Upper Columbia River Basin prevention and management measures to prevent the introduction and/or further establishment of AIS.

The UC³ is in a unique position to not only augment existing AIS prevention efforts in the state, but also to assist in the protection of all the bountiful downstream benefits. The management agencies, stakeholders and citizens of the entire Columbia River Basin are looking to Montana to help protect them from an introduction of zebra or quagga mussels, especially given the 2016 detection of larval mussels in two Montana reservoirs east of the Continental Divide. The longer an introduction can be curbed, the more protected the native species, the less funding spent on response efforts, and the longer we have to augment the science and develop control methods that are more likely to be effective. The commission continues to serve a vital role in the coordination of AIS partners, activities and prevention efforts.

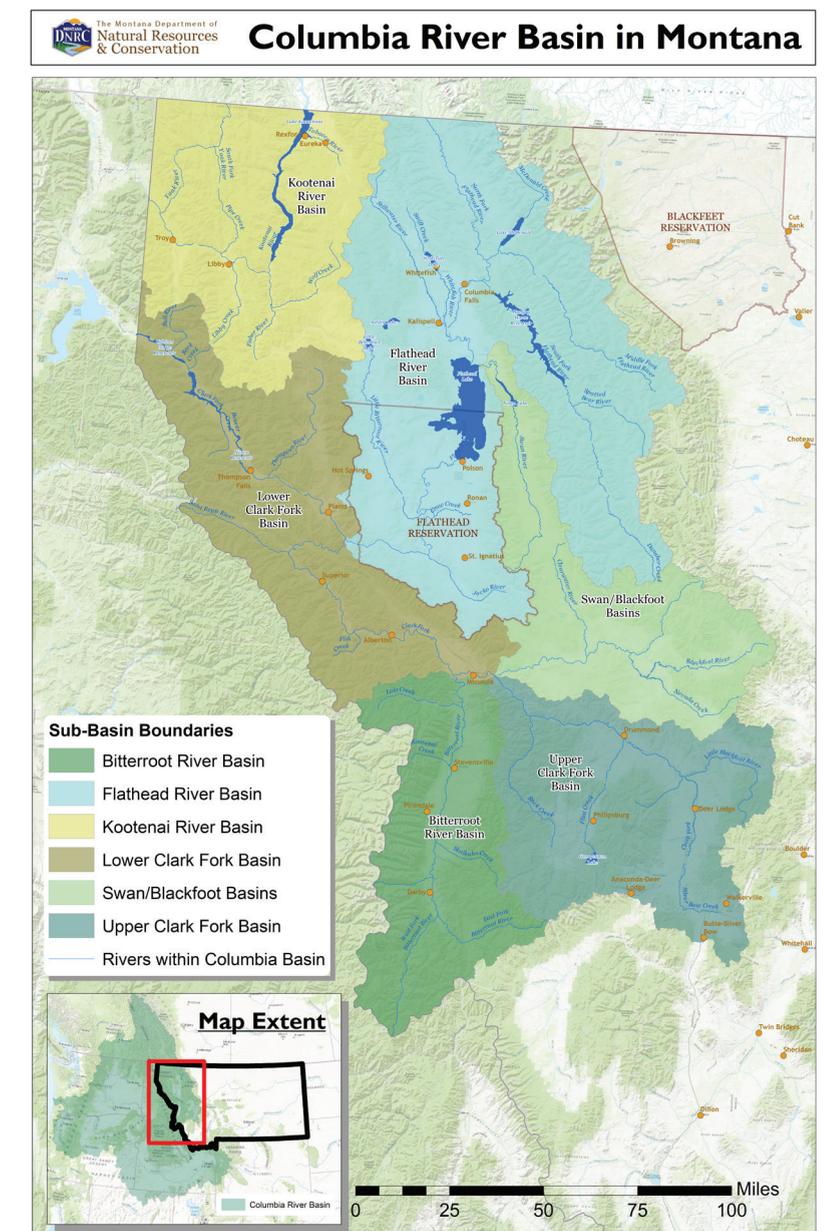
Currently the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission comprises 14 voting members appointed by the governor of Montana who serve four-year, staggered terms; four non-voting legislative members (two from the House, two from the Senate and representing both parties); and several ex-officio agency members. In 2019, the membership was expanded from its original roster to further engage key sub-basins within the larger basin as well as additional legislative members.

ABOUT THE UPPER COLUMBIA BASIN

The Columbia River Basin covers nearly 260,000 square miles. It includes the headwaters portion or “Upper Columbia,” which consists of western Montana and southeastern British Columbia. These headwaters move downstream into the states of Idaho, Washington and Oregon. The Columbia River contributes more water to the Pacific Ocean than any other river in North or South America; many states, communities, economies and industries rely on the river for benefits such as low cost and reliable hydroelectricity, flood control, irrigation, navigation, recreation and fisheries. All of these benefits are at risk due to the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS).



Seeley Lake. Visit Montana



PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In fiscal year 2020, the UC³ was very active and conducted several projects related to coordination, monitoring and outreach. We look forward to another year of working closely with our partners and raising awareness of AIS and the associated impacts, as well as the Montana AIS program among Upper Columbia Basin residents, visitors and businesses alike.

1 DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION, OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

This year staff developed an Education, Outreach and Communication Strategy that describes how the UC³ will prioritize and organize its education and outreach activities in the Upper Columbia Basin. The strategy describes the approach, objectives, strategies, collaborating partners and implementation tactics that are and/or will be used to support the Upper Columbia River Basin's prevention and management efforts of AIS. Each of the objectives listed below is a means of implementing an organized, comprehensive, and multidimensional partnership embodying a shared goal of managing Upper Columbia waterways for AIS. The overarching strategy will be reevaluated and updated every three years.



Flathead River. Glacier NPS

UC³ EDUCATION & OUTREACH OBJECTIVES

1

Develop, implement and maintain an Education, Outreach & Communication Strategy for AIS within the Upper Columbia River Basin.

2

Develop and implement an annual outreach and media plan to augment FWP AIS advertising and outreach efforts.

3

Work with stakeholders to document existing education, outreach and advertising efforts to assess coverage, address gaps, and enhance coordination in the Upper Columbia Basin.

4

Ensure continuance of the AIS industry outreach program in the Upper Columbia Basin.

2 An **annual outreach and media plan** is developed each year in coordination with FWP and other partners. In 2020 this included a *Clean.Drain.Dry.* billboard near Polson, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on popular TV networks and on gas station screens across the basin, advertisements, newspaper and magazine ads, radio PSAs, and digital advertisements for social media and online marketing (see figures 1 – 2). In addition, UC³ partnered with the Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC) and other organizations to run ads in Montana hunting and fishing guides (see figure 2).

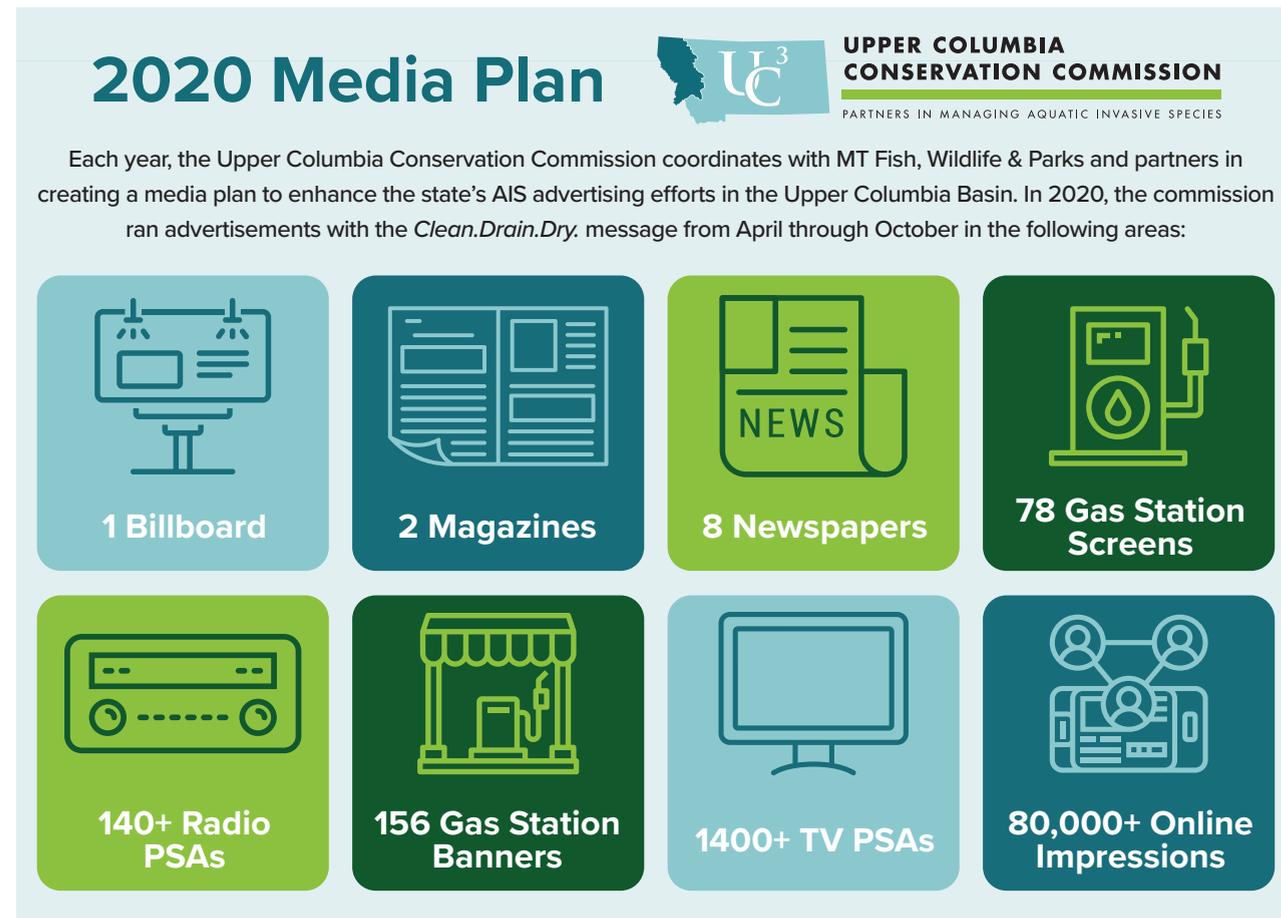


Figure 1: Infographic describing UC³ outreach efforts in 2020.



UC³ *Clean.Drain.Dry.* 2020 billboard outside of Polson, MT.



UC³ *Clean.Drain.Dry.* 2020 digital advertisement.



Figure 2: Montana Hunting/Fishing Regulation ad in partnership with MISC.

PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONTINUED

3 This year a **survey of partner AIS outreach efforts** was conducted to assess coverage of the basin and mediums used and to highlight the outstanding collaboration and interest of partners in this important issue. We are hoping to continue to refine and conduct some form of annual assessment, as the information compiled can aid in the development of our annual outreach and media plans to ensure coverage over a diversity of mediums across the Upper Columbia Basin to effectively prevent the introduction and spread of AIS. Most of the messaging focuses on the personal responsibility and *Clean.Drain.Dry.* behaviors needed to do so.

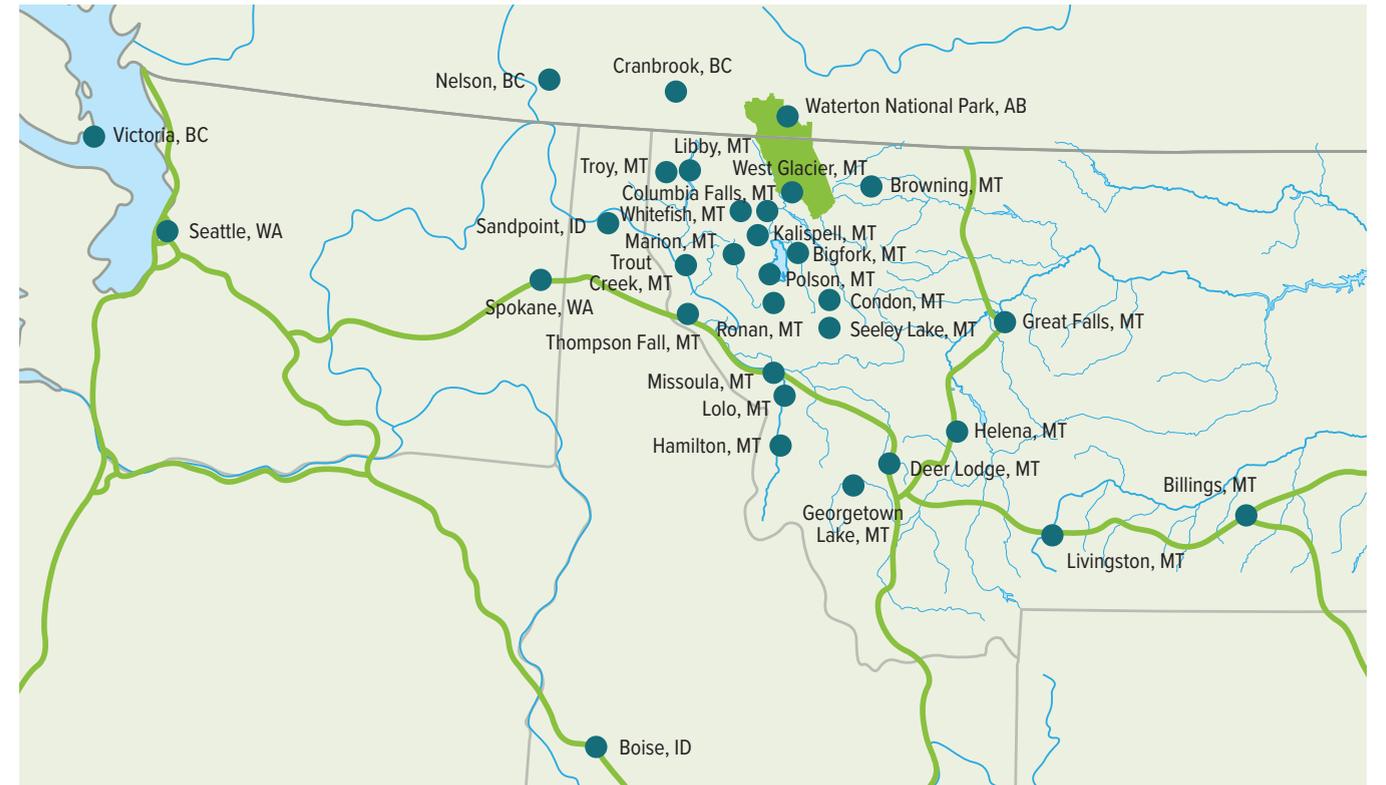
ORGANIZATION	PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	PLACEMENT	MONTHS
Blackfeet Nation	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	HWY 2 Cut Bank Creek	June - Dec
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	HWY 89 Birch Creek	June - Dec
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	HWY 89 Birch Creek	June - Dec
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	HWY 2 Del Bonita	June - Dec
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	HWY 89 Browning	June - Dec
Blackfeet Nation/Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	Central Kootenay	Year-round
Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society	AIS Website	ckiss.ca/about/protecting-our-lakes-and-rivers		Ongoing
Clark Fork Coalition	AIS Website	clarkfork.org/our-work/what-we-do/current-campaigns/aquatic-invasive-species	Ongoing	
Clearwater Resource Council	AIS Website Event	crcmt.org Fragrant Water Lily Pull	Placid and Salmon Lake	Ongoing 2020
Crown Managers Partnership	AIS Website Digital Ad	crownmanagers.org/aquatic-invasive-species Target anglers and boaters who will fish in Flathead area and and Crown area	Online	Ongoing July - Sept
	Digital Ad	Banner Ad on top of website with link to Crown Managers AIS Page	Online	July - Sept
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	AIS Website	csktnomussels.org		Ongoing
	Billboard	Don't Move a Mussel	Blue Bay	Year-round
	Billboard	Don't Move a Mussel	Ravalli	Year-round
	Newspaper	Don't Move a Mussel	Ravalli	Year-round
	Newspaper	Advertiser, Don't Move a Mussel	Polson	Year-round
Flathead Conservation District	Radio	Lake County Leader, Don't Move a Mussel	Flathead Area	Year-round
	Radio	Don't Move a Mussel Radio ads	Flathead Area	Feb - Jun
Flathead Conservation District	AIS Website	flatheadcd.org/living-by-water		Ongoing
	Social Media AIS Newspaper	Share FWP AIS posts 1/4 page ad	Kalispell	Ongoing June
Flathead Lake Biological Station	AIS Website	flbs.umt.edu/newflbs/flathead-lake/aisinvasive-mussels		Ongoing
	Other	Shared AIS materials with teachers	Statewide	Ongoing
	Other	Taught Homeschool classroom for 30 students in July	Basin	2020
	Other	Share AIS materials in person with 13 local teachers	Flathead Lake	Ongoing
	Event	Mussel Walk	Flathead Lake	2020
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks: Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau	AIS Website	cleandrainedrymt.com	Statewide	Ongoing
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	I-15 Idaho Falls ID	Mar - Sept
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	US 2 Macon MT	Mar - Sept
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	I-90 Beulah WY	Mar - Sept
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	I-94 Dickinson ND	May - Oct
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	I-94 Beach ND	May - Oct
	Billboard	Clean.Drain.Dry. Message	MT HWY 126 Sidney MT	May - Oct
	Magazine	Full page ad in Rediscover targeting summer recreators. 150,000 impressions. 63,000 circulation.	Statewide	May - Aug
	Magazine	1/2 page ad targeting Canadian boaters. 25,000 copies to Flathead & Tobacco Valleys	Canada	Mar - Aug

ORGANIZATION	PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	PLACEMENT	MONTHS
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks: Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau	Magazine	Full page ad targeting anglers. Distribute 7,500	Southwest MT	May - Aug
	Newspaper	Nine 1/4 page ads	Missoula	May - Sept
	Newspaper	Nine 1/4 page ads	Hamilton	May - Sept
	Newspaper	Nine 1/4 page ads	Butte	May - Sept
	Newspaper	Nine 1/4 page ads	Helena	May - Sept
	Newspaper	Nine 1/4 page ads	Billings	May - Sept
	Newspaper	Five 1/4 page ads	Bozeman	May - June
	Newspaper	Five 1/4 page ads	Great Falls	May - July
	Newspaper	Six 2x5 ads. Statewide in 64 newspapers	Statewide	May - Sept
	Social Media	Digital outreach native articles, and geotargeting statewide and border states	Statewide	May - Sept
	Social Media	Targeted Facebook/ Instagram posts and video, email match remarketing, YouTube videos	Statewide	May - Sept
	Radio	Statewide: 60 stations 40 :30second ads/month	Statewide	May - Aug
	Radio Radio Radio TV	6 spots per/week during morning and evening news shows Statewide: 26 stations Saturday morning 2-hour show Statewide: 6 markets 6x/week during news: Morning, Noon, 5:00-7:00, 10:00.	Central & Eastern MT Statewide Statewide: Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula	May - Aug May - Aug May - Aug May - Sept
Montana Trout Unlimited	Other	Clean.Drain.Dry. Stencil	All around basin	Ongoing
Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC)	Social Media AIS	Post about inspection station, share AIS newsletter		Ongoing
Northwest Montana Lakes Network	AIS Website	nwmtnlvmn.org		Ongoing
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	AIS Website	westernais.org		Ongoing
Swan Valley Connections	AIS Website	swanvalleyconnections.org/aquatic-invasive-species		Ongoing
Swan Lakers	AIS Website	swanlakers.org		Ongoing
	Event	Volunteer Boat Checks	Swan Lake	2020
	Event Other	Huckleberry Festival Mail AIS brochure	Swan Lake Swan Lake Area	2020 2020
Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC ³)	Billboard	HWY 93 Mud Lake	HWY 93 Mud Lake	Apr - May & July - Oct
	Magazine	18,000-26,000 Circulation magazine, 1/3 page ad in the summer edition	Kalispell	July
	Newspaper	1/4 page ad 4x a month	Kalispell	May - Aug
	Newspaper	6X4 ad	Kalispell	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Whitefish	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Hungry Horse	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Bigfork	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Polson	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Polson	May - June
	Newspaper	6x4 ad	Kalispell	May - June
Online	Online banners	Online	May - Aug	
Online	Online banners with 40,000 impressions	Online	May - Aug	
Radio	138, 15 sec announcements. 6 per week during morning, evening, and weekend news shows	Western MT	Apr - Sept	
TV	Flathead Valley, Phillipsburg, Missoula, and Butte (13 stations total)	Northwest Montana	Apr - Sept	
TV	Running on every loop at all stations, 4 different PSA videos. Missoula, Kalispell, Great Falls, Helena 707 total announcements. FOX and ABC news, Wake Up Montana, SWX. Five PSAs rotating.	Missoula, Kalispell, Great Falls, Helena	Apr - Sept	
Upper Columbia Lakes Network	AIS Website	ucln.net		Ongoing
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	AIS Website	usbr.gov/mussels		Ongoing
U.S. Forest Service	Event	AIS Talk	Eureka Middle School	2020
Watershed Education Network	AIS Website Event	montanawatershed.org/programs/Aquatic Invasive Species AIS Lesson	Columbia Headwaters Class	Ongoing 2020

3 UC³ AIS PARTNERS

ORGANIZATION	WEBSITE	CITY/STATE
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks: Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau	cleandraindry.mt.gov	Helena, MT
100 Meridian/Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	westernais.org/regional psmfc.org	Spokane, WA
Avista Corporation	myavista.com	Spokane, WA
British Columbia AIS Program	www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/ environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/ invasive-species/priority-species	Victoria BC
Central Kootenai Invasive Species Society	ckiss.ca	Nelson BC
Bitterroot Chapter of TU	bitterroottu.org	Hamilton, MT
Bitterroot Water Forum	brwaterforum.org	Hamilton, MT
Blackfeet Nation (adjacent)	blackfeetenvironmental.com	Browning, MT
Blackfoot Challenge	blackfootchallenge.org	Missoula, MT
Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins Council	cfkrbc.org	Missoula, MT
Clark Fork Coalition	clarkfork.org	Missoula, MT
Clark Fork Watershed Education Program	cfwep.org	Missoula, MT
Clearwater Resource Council	crcmt.org	Seeley Lake, MT
Columbia Basin Trust	ourtrust.org	Cranbrook, BC
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	csktnomussels.org	Polson, MT
Crown Managers Partnership	crownmanagers.org	West Glacier, MT
DNRC	dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/carrd/ montana-invasive-species-program	Helena, MT
Flathead Basin Commission	flatheadbasincommission.org	Kalispell, MT
Flathead County Conservation District	flatheadcd.org	Kalispell, MT
Flathead County Weed Control District	flathead.mt.gov/weeds	Kalispell, MT
Flathead Lake Biological Station	flbs.umt.edu/newflbs	Polson, MT
Flathead Lakers	flatheadlakers.org	Polson, MT
Flathead River Commission	flatheadcd.org/watershedgroups/ flathead-river-commission	Kalispell, MT

ORGANIZATION	WEBSITE	CITY/STATE
Georgetown Homeowners Association	gtl-hoa.com	Georgetown Lake, MT
Glacier Institute	glacierinstitute.org	Columbia Falls, MT
Glacier National Park	nps.gov/glac/ planyourvisit/ais.htm	West Glacier, MT
Granite Headwaters Watershed Group		Georgetown Lake, MT
Idaho AIS Program	invasivespecies.idaho.gov	Boise, ID
Kootenai River Network	kootenairivernetwork.org	Libby, MT
Lake County	lakemt.gov	Polson, MT
Lake County Conservation District	lakecountyconservationdistrict.org	Ronan, MT
Lake County Weed District	lakemt.gov/weed/weed.html	Polson, MT
Little Bitterroot Lake Association	littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org	Marion, MT
Lolo Watershed	lolowatershed.org	Lolo, MT
Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group	lowerclarkforkwatershedgroup.org	Trout Creek, MT
MCWD	missoulaeduplace.org	Missoula, MT
Missoula Water Quality Protection District	missoulacounty.us/government/ health/health-department/ missoula-valley-water-quality-district	Missoula, MT
Montana Trout Unlimited (state)	montanatu.org	Missoula, MT
MWCC	mtwatersheds.org	Helena, MT
Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER)	pnwer.org/invasive-species.html	Seattle, WA
Pend Oreille Basin Commission	lakescommission.wordpress.com	Sandpoint, ID
Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Group	rattlesnakecreekwatershed group.org/rattlesnake-creek-watershed	Missoula, MT
Sanders County	sanderscountyais.com	Thompson Falls, MT
State Parks in CR Basin		Polson, MT
Sun River Watershed Group (adjacent)	sunriverwatershed.org/app	Great Falls, MT
Swan Lakers	swanlakers.org	Bigfork, MT
Swan Valley Connections	swanvalleyconnections.org	Condon, MT
Upper Clark Fork Steering Committee	leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/85/2/85-2-338.htm	Missoula, MT



ORGANIZATION	WEBSITE	CITY/STATE
Upper Columbia Lakes Network	ucln.net	Whitefish, MT
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	nwo.usace.army.mil/Missions/ Regulatory-Program/Montana/	Helena, MT
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	usbr.gov/mussels/	Billings, MT
U.S. Fish & Wildlife	fws.gov/fisheries/ANS/index.html	Fairfax, VA
U.S. Forest Service	fs.usda.gov	Missoula, MT
Watershed Education Network	montanawatershed.org	Missoula, MT
Watershed Restoration Coalition	mt-wrc.org	Deer Lodge, MT
Waterton National Park	mywaterton.ca	Waterton Park, AB

ORGANIZATION	WEBSITE	CITY/STATE
Western Regional Panel	stopais.org	Livingston, MT
Westslope Chapter of TU	westslope-trout.org	Missoula, MT
Whitefish Lake Institute	whitefishlake.org	Whitefish, MT
Wyoming AIS Program	wgfd.wyo.gov/fishing-and- boating/aquatic-invasive- species-prevention	Cheyenne, WY
Yaak Valley Forest Council	yaakvalley.org	Troy, MT

4 In partnership with the Missoula County Weed District, the UC³ initiated an **industry outreach project** in 2019 to engage and connect with aquatic-based businesses throughout the Upper Columbia Basin. In 2020, we had the great opportunity to continue and improve that project with the assistance of a Big Sky Watershed Corps (AmeriCorps) member leading the work.

Brant Dupree did an exceptional job of creating and strengthening partnerships within the basin, and we are excited to welcome him back for a second term in 2021!

Brant met with over 80 businesses during his term, ranging from marinas and boat shops, angling shops and guiding services, to commercial outdoor retailers. The site visits start with providing information to management and staff on statewide AIS regulations, watercraft inspections, and local invasive species; then we disseminate AIS materials including brochures, inspection station maps, boating regulations and swag. The visits end with the opportunity to sign a *Clean.Drain.Dry.* pledge in which the business owners commit to sharing this information with their staff and customers. In 2020, Brant introduced over 80 *Clean.Drain.Dry.* partners to the statewide AIS prevention effort.



BSWC member, Brant Dupree at a site visit in Polson, MT.

An additional part of the industry outreach project is to conduct educational activities and outreach at public events. Though this year brought many complications due to COVID-19, Brant and UC³ staff were able to set up a table at a handful of events including two regional boat shows in the spring and the Northwest Montana Fair & Rodeo in the fall. We concluded the 2020 season by conducting two mock boat inspection activities for 15+ junior rangers at Lone Pine State Park, Foys Lake unit.



Clean.Drain.Dry. partner, Cabela's of Kalispell, MT.



Junior Ranger Day table and activity at Foys Lake, Lone Pine State Park.



Brant giving an AIS presentation to staff at Fast Toys Racing in Kalispell, MT.

MONITORING

One of the statutory duties of the Commission is to **develop an annual AIS Monitoring Plan for the Upper Columbia Basin**. This was completed prior to the 2020 season and describes all of the planned monitoring for 2020 as well as recommendations moving forward. The recommendations included:

1. Comment on FWP Field Sampling and Laboratory Standard Operating Procedures (as needed)
2. Annual Early Detection and Monitoring Coordination Meeting and Training (planning for mid-winter as part of development for 2021 plan)
3. Database Expansion & Use of Data Application (increase consistency and use across state/basin)
4. eDNA Sampling Protocols Refinement (ongoing)
5. Continue to Support the Establishment and Growth of the Upper Columbia Lakes Network (ongoing – see more information below)
6. Veliger Survivability in Ballast Water Study (FWP and other partners currently working on study)
7. Evaluate Risk and Prioritization Data (to be initiated)

The map in figure 3 depicts the AIS monitoring efforts statewide in 2020 by FWP crews and partners, which include organizations and citizen scientists. In addition, FWP and partners conducted additional survey and control work in specific areas in the basin where AIS were detected, such as Eurasian watermilfoil in Beaver Lake and in Noxon and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs (and flowering rush) on the Lower Clark Fork River, fragrant water lily in Holland Lake, and fish hatcheries after the detection of New Zealand Mudsnails. A 2021 AIS Monitoring Plan for the basin is now in the works.

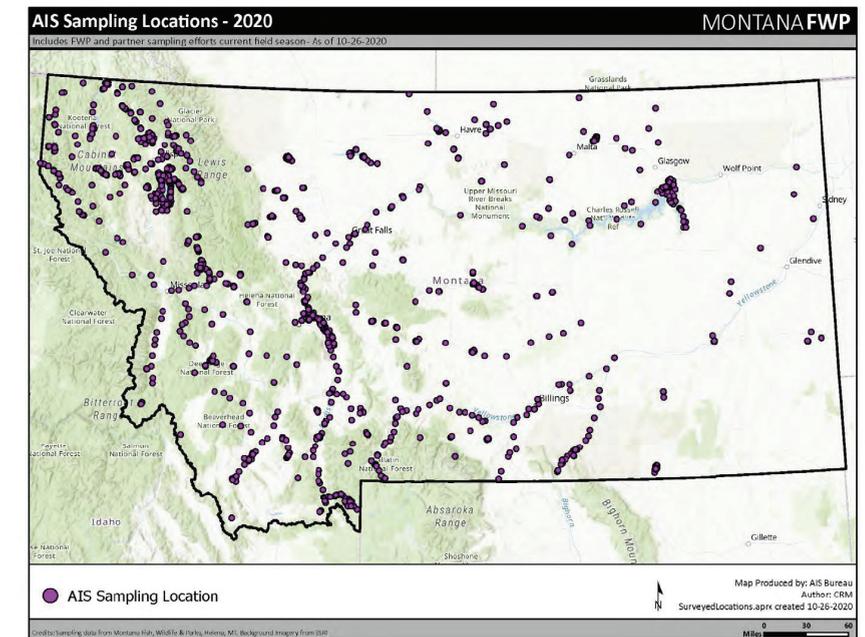


Figure 3: AIS Sampling Locations in 2020. Credit: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Continuation of the **Upper Columbia Lakes Network (UCLN) monitoring contract/partnership** with Whitefish Lake Institute (WLI) and the Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS). The UCLN provides an opportunity to engage lake groups and citizens in long-term, water-quality stewardship. Several lake monitoring groups exist in northwest Montana but the UCLN program aims to increase consistency in protocols, incorporate new partner groups, add to the volunteer base, and allow sampling of more high priority lakes that are not currently sampled. The UCLN identifies interested groups within the region, provides equipment, and offers training for AIS monitoring and decontamination protocols. The UCLN website, (ucln.net), serves as a clearinghouse for protocols and will highlight and track monitoring efforts. Since the contract was initiated, the UCLN has built new partnerships across the basin and held two AIS monitoring trainings.

In 2020, due to COVID-19 concerns, the contractors canceled the third AIS monitoring training, but were able to reach some new partner groups and schedule times to conduct in-person visits to distribute monitoring kits and provide one-on-one trainings using social distancing practices.

All UCLN volunteers are provided with website/reporting information, a fully stocked sampling kit, a binder with updated protocol documents, information on harmful algal blooms, Secchi Dip-In instructions, labels, sample submission forms, and an AIS identification guide. Additional kits and supplies were purchased with the last of the contract funds to ensure continuation of the network into future years.

Groups and/or individuals who have attended an AIS monitoring training or participated in UCLN to date include representatives from the following areas and organizations: Kootenai River Network, University of Montana, Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins Council, Swan Lakers, Flathead Lakers, Thompson Chain of Lakes, MT Department of Environmental Quality, Bitterroot Chapter - Trout Unlimited, Big Hole River Foundation, Georgetown Lake Association, Blackfoot Challenge, and the University of Montana Western's Ecology and Fisheries class. In addition, WLI and the UCLN coordinator partnered with Flathead National Forest in 2020 to increase eDNA monitoring on four lakes on National Forest lands in 2020: Hungry Horse Reservoir, Tally Lake, Ashley Lake, and Upper Stillwater Lake. The samples were analyzed for zebra mussels, quagga mussel, Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed. While the contract is now closed out, it was a very successful project and the UC³ intends to maintain and continue to develop the network.



AIS Training, UC³ Staff.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Also, in 2020, the UC³ created an ad hoc **Legislative Committee** to explore, prioritize and make recommendations related to policy, program and legislative actions. The committee initially focused on five findings that had come out of the Montana Invasive Species Council Law Review in 2018. These findings were also discussed at the 2019 Montana AIS Summit hosted by FWP and further at multiple UC³ meetings, hence the formation of the committee. The committee and staff held multiple meetings with FWP and DNRC directors and staff, explored options and potential unintended consequences of each potential recommendation, and landed on two that have been approved by the full commission and will be moving forward for the 2021 legislative session.

1. The **AIS List bill** is an agency bill that is intended to clean up the statutes related to the authorities provided to agencies for the management of all AIS and enable FWP to create an AIS list through rulemaking. Currently, listed (i.e., prohibited) aquatic invasive plants are located within the Noxious Weed list, which is managed by the Department of Agriculture (not FWP, the agency responsible for AIS prevention and management). Other non-plant AIS are located in one of three different FWP lists (controlled, non-controlled, prohibited). This bill would clarify the responsible state agency and enable the development of an AIS list that can aid in the prevention and awareness of the aquatic species of concern to the state of Montana. An easier to find list with a clear process will benefit the AIS program and stakeholders. This bill can be traced in the 2021 legislative session in the bill tracker function (search for House Bill 42).
2. The **Pull the Plug bill** is a private bill that is intended to raise awareness of the *Clean.Drain.Dry.* behaviors most effective at preventing the spread of AIS, which includes the draining of all standing water. This bill would take the current rule (to drain all standing water prior to leaving a waterbody) to requiring that drain plugs be pulled during transport. Any vessel with plugs that are not able to be pulled would be expected to take reasonable actions to ensure that the boat is cleaned, drained and dried prior to further use. The intended benefits of this bill are to increase consistency across western jurisdictions, raise boater awareness of behaviors that prevent AIS, decrease the amount of standing water at inspections, increase the ease of compliance and enforcement and enhance the boater experience at inspection stations (decreasing delays associated with standing water) (House Bill 152).



Example of Pull the Plug campaigns in other jurisdictions. Pulling the drain plug while in transport can help drain any standing water that may be harboring harmful AIS.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS IN FISCAL YEAR 2020

(JULY 1 – JUNE 30)

- Saskatoon, SK: Pacific NorthWest Economic Region annual summit (July 21 – 23)
- Kimberley, BC: International Columbia River Transboundary Conference (Sept. 12 – 14)
- Yellow Bay, MT: Flathead Lake Biological Station AIS Panel for teachers (Sept. 21)
- Libby, MT: Montana Environmental Quality Council meeting (Sept. 26)
- Saratoga Springs, NY: North American Invasive Species Management Association Conference (Sept. 29 – Oct 3)
- Georgetown Lake, MT: Upper Columbia Lakes Network AIS monitoring workshop (Oct. 4)
- **Missoula, MT: UC³ Meeting (Oct. 7)**
- Missoula, MT: Western Regional Panel annual meeting (Oct. 9 – 11)
- Helena, MT: Montana Invasive Species Council meeting (Oct. 17)
- Lethbridge, AB: Crown Managers Partnership meeting (Nov. 4 – 6)
- Kalispell, MT: Montana Association of Conservation Districts (Nov. 19 – 20)
- Virtual/call-in: Columbia River Basin AIS Steering Committee – British Columbia (Dec. 3)
- Helena, MT: FWP AIS Summit (Dec. 4 – 5)
- Virtual/call-in: Columbia River Basin Flowering Rush CWMA meeting (Dec. 10)
- Helena, MT: Montana Invasive Species Council meeting (Jan. 8)
- Helena, MT: Montana Environmental Quality Council meeting (Jan. 15)
- Portland, OR: Columbia River Basin AIS Group/100th Meridian (Jan. 21 – 24)
- **Kalispell, MT: UC³ Meeting (Jan. 29)**
- **Kalispell, MT: FWP/UC³ AIS Monitoring Workshop (Jan. 30)**
- Helena, MT: Montana Water Summit (March 2 – 4)
- Helena, MT: Big Sky Watershed Corps AIS Training (March 3 – 4)
- Helena, MT: Montana Environmental Quality Council meeting (May 28)
- **Virtual: UC³ Meeting (June 10)**
- Locations of Inspection Stations Within the Basin:
 - Ravalli, MT: CSKT Contracted Watercraft Inspection Station (March – Oct.)
 - Clearwater Junction, MT: Missoula County Weed District Contracted Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Kalispell, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Plains, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - St. Regis, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Anaconda, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Sula, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Troy, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Eureka, MT: FWP Watercraft Inspection Station (May – Oct.)
 - Whitefish, MT: Whitefish Watercraft Inspection Stations (May – Oct.)
 - West Glacier, MT: Glacier National Park Inspection Program (seasonal)



AIS Training, UC³ Staff.

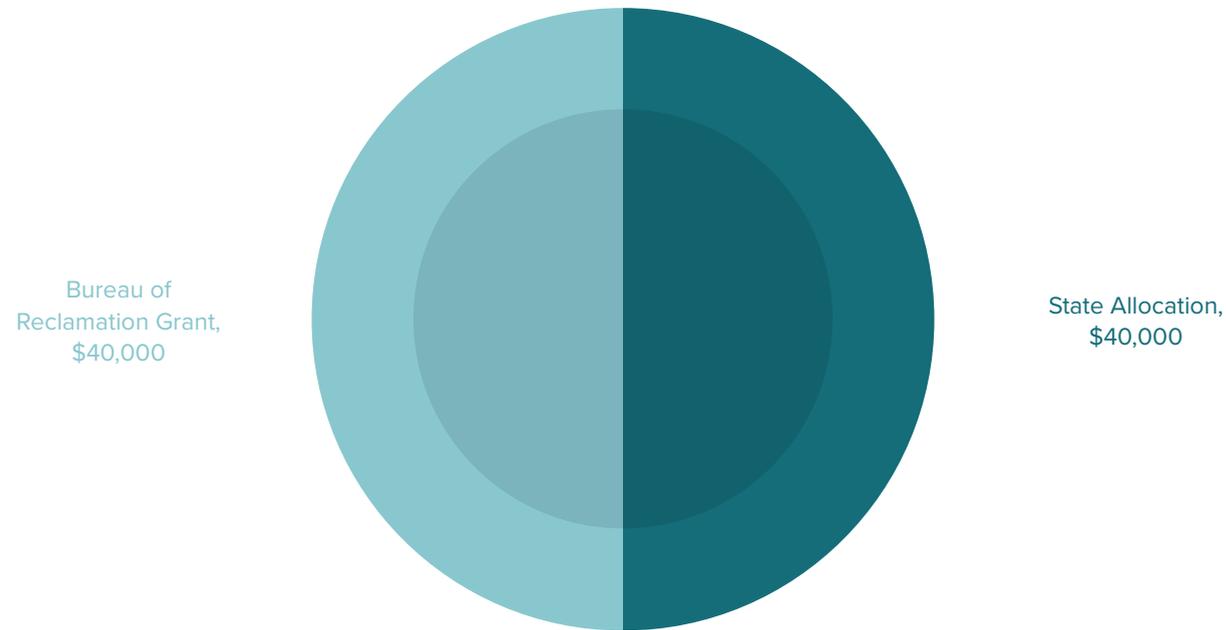


AIS Training, UC³ Staff.

BUDGET: SOURCES & EXPENDITURES (FY2020)

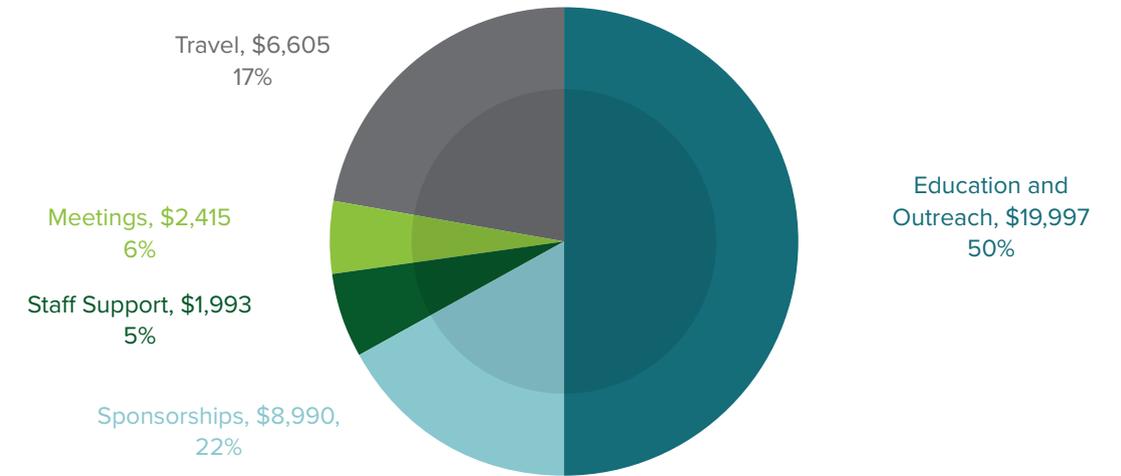
The UC³ was initially allocated \$10,000 for their first biennium (2018 – 2019) or \$5,000 for each fiscal year. This was increased to \$80,000 per biennium in the 2019 legislative session, or \$40,000 in operating funds per fiscal year. In late 2019 the UC³ was also awarded a multiyear federal Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) grant that included funding for three projects in the Upper Columbia Basin: 1) augmenting AIS education and outreach; 2) expanding AIS citizen science monitoring efforts; and 3) conducting an industry outreach project with marinas, boat shops and angling shops. A breakdown of the UC³ funding sources and expenditures for fiscal year 2020 (July 1 – June 30) appears below.

FUNDING SOURCES FY20

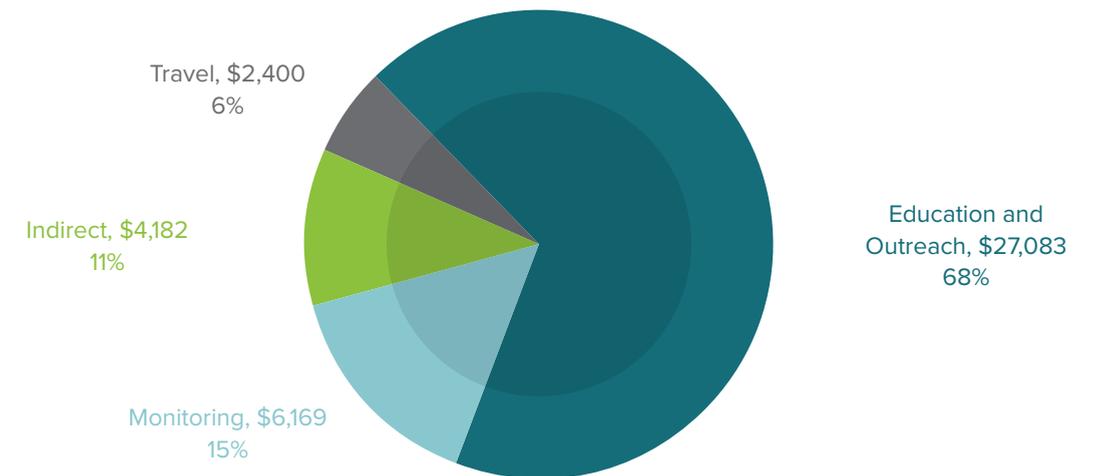


*Bureau of Reclamation Grant active 2019 – 2022.
Total value \$120,000 (not limited to FY20)

FY20 EXPENDITURES – STATE OPERATING FUNDS \$40,000



FY20 EXPENDITURES – FEDERAL FUNDS



*Total Expenditures FY2020 from all sources: \$79,834



UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION



PARTNERS IN MANAGING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES