



Watercraft and angling closures in Kootenay and Yoho national parks



Whirling disease symptoms



Side by side comparison of a healthy Rainbow Trout fry vs Rainbow Trout with whirling disease.



Parks Canada staff test for whirling disease

What is happening?

- Whirling disease has been detected in Yoho National Park. To reduce the further spread of whirling disease, all waterbodies in Kootenay and Yoho national parks are closed to watercraft use and angling for the 2024 season.
- This closure is in place to protect vulnerable fish populations and sensitive aquatic ecosystems from whirling disease. **Parks Canada** continues to study the extent of the outbreak.
- The public is asked to respect these closures. Protecting lakes and rivers is a collective responsibility. We all have a role to play.

What is whirling disease?



Whirling disease is an infectious disease caused by a parasite that affects trout, salmon, and whitefish. In some cases, fish develop a black tail, skeletal deformities in the spine and head, and a whirling swimming behaviour.



Whirling disease mortality rates can reach 90 per cent in young fish. There is no treatment for whirling disease in fish. Once established, it is very difficult to eradicate.

What does this closure mean?

What is not permitted:

All waterbodies in Yoho and Kootenay national parks are closed to watercraft and angling until March 31, 2025. The closure applies to all lakes, streams and rivers in Yoho and Kootenay national parks.

Watercraft: The closure applies to watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, kiteboards, rowboats and inflatable boats and toys (e.g., donuts, unicorns, etc.). Motorized boats are not permitted in Kootenay and Yoho national parks.

Angling equipment: Angling equipment such as fishing rods, waders, boots, gloves, nets and other gear that comes into contact with the water.

What is permitted:

Visitors are asked to clean, drain and dry all other equipment that comes into contact with water.

Swimming includes the use of swimming aids and safety equipment, including personal flotation devices, water shoes, wetsuits, gloves, snorkel equipment, throw bags, water wings, and other equipment to assist with swimming.

Beach and shoreline access: includes beach toys and pets on leash.

Hiking and camping: such as designated trail crossings and fords, collecting water for treatment.

Rentals: rental boats are available at Emerald Lake, where watercraft are only used in Emerald Lake.

Respect park closures. Violators face fines of up to \$25,000 under the Canada National Parks Act.

AIS prevention requirements in the Mountain National Parks

Park	Motorized watercraft	Non-motorized watercraft	Gear and angling equipment
Banff	Inspection permit	Inspection or self-certification permit	Inspection or self-certification permit
Yoho and Kootenay	Prohibited	Closed to angling and watercraft until March 31, 2025	Closed to angling and watercraft until March 31, 2025
Jasper	Inspection permit (electric only)	Clean Drain Dry	Clean Drain Dry
Waterton Lakes	90-quarantine	Closed to personal non-motorized watercraft. Rentals available at select locations	Self-certification permit. Angling permitted in lakes but closed in rivers and streams.

Banff inspection stations

Lake Minnewanka Loop Road

May 1 – May 17 By appointment
 May 17 – June 6 8 am – 4 pm
 June 7 – Sept 2 7 am – 7 pm
 Sept 3 – Sept 30 8 am – 4 pm
 Oct 1 – Season end By appointment

Highway 1, 7km southeast of the Village of Lake Louise

May 1 – May 31 By appointment
 May 31 – Sept 30 9:30 am – 5 pm
 Oct 1 – Season end By appointment



Frequently Asked Questions

What's happening?

On October 27, 2023, Parks Canada closed all water access in Yoho and Kootenay national parks following the detection of the whirling disease parasite in Yoho National Park. This was the first detection of whirling disease in British Columbia. Whirling disease was also detected in Emerald Lake, the Kicking Horse River, Wapta Lake, Finn Creek, Monarch Creek and the confluence of Emerald and Kicking Horse Rivers.

To reduce the risk of further spread of whirling disease, all waterbodies in Yoho and Kootenay national parks are closed to watercraft and angling until March 31, 2025. The closures will help protect vulnerable fish species, including trout and kokanee populations.

What are the risks of AIS?

Aquatic invasive species pose a significant threat to aquatic ecosystems. These species disrupt and irreversibly damage aquatic ecosystems and affect vulnerable species at risk. They can also spread downstream beyond park boundaries through rivers and streams.

Does whirling disease affect humans or pets?

No. The disease does not pose a risk to humans or pets but can significantly affect fish.

Can I get a permit to paddle or fish in Yoho or Kootenay national parks?

No. AIS prevention permits and fishing permits are not valid in Kootenay and Yoho national parks.

What can visitors do to help?

The best way to stop the spread of AIS is prevention. Protecting lakes and rivers is a

collective responsibility. We all have an important role to play. Respect all park closures.

Are there options to recreate in the park?

Watercraft are available to rent at Emerald Lake. These watercraft are only permitted in Emerald Lake.

Do these changes affect Banff National Park?

There are no changes to AIS regulations in Banff National Park for the 2024 season.

An AIS inspection permit is required for all motorized watercraft launching on Lake Minnewanka.

Non-motorized watercraft, gear, and angling equipment requires a self-certification or inspection permit. To reduce further spread of AIS, visitors must "Clean, Drain, Dry & Certify" their gear and watercraft.

CLEAN all mud, sand, plant, and animal materials from watercraft, gear, and angling equipment.

DRAIN all water from watercraft, gear, and angling equipment.

DRY for 48 hours when last used within AB, BC, NWT, or YT; and 30 days when last used outside of AB, BC, NWT, or YT.

CERTIFY watercraft, gear, and angling equipment by visiting a Parks Canada inspection station or completing a self-certification permit.

For more information, visit:

<https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/mtn/eaux-eauers>

How do you report an aquatic invasive species sighting?

Email ReportAIS-SignalerEAE@pc.gc.ca with a description of the organism, photos if possible, and a precise location (GPS coordinates are ideal).