

Gov. Dave Heineman earlier this month signed LB 391 into law, giving the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission a tool to help control the spread of invasive species in the state.

According to Dave Tunink, Game and Parks fisheries division assistant administrator, the legislation introduced by state Sen. Ken Schilz of Ogallala prohibits the possession, import, export, purchase, sale or transport of aquatic invasive species. It also allows Game and Parks to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations governing the inspection, decontamination, and treatment of watercraft capable of containing or transporting aquatic invasive species.

Rules and regulations are being drafted and will be available for public review later this year, including a listing of aquatic invasive species. The bill outlines penalties for boaters who refuse to submit to a boat inspection by an authorized inspector or refuses to allow watercraft decontamination.

This summer, the Nebraska Invasive Species Project and Game and Parks will have authorized inspectors providing information at reservoirs across the state.

Karie Decker, Nebraska Invasive Species Project coordinator, said the new law also created the Nebraska Invasive Species Council, which will serve as an advisory council for state invasive species policy. It also will coordinate invasive species management and research across the state for the prevention and detection of invasive plant and animal species.