

INVASIVE HITCHHIKERS

Fact Sheet # 6

What Boaters Need To Know!



Invasive species are taking over lakes, streams, and other natural areas throughout Pennsylvania, making boating, canoeing and kayaking difficult, and also damaging valuable habitat. Luckily boaters can play a critical role in slowing the spread of invasive species.

“Invasive species” are non-native plants, animals and pathogens that can cause harm to the economy, environment and human health. Invasives can make it difficult and

dangerous for people to boat and enjoy other recreational opportunities.

For instance, invasive plants like *Hydrilla* tend to grow quickly and thickly, blocking waterways and access trails. Invasive animals like zebra mussels (*see photo below*) can build-up on boat hulls and clog motors, making them overheat.

Invasive species are also a concern to boaters because they can ruin the beauty of Pennsylvania landscapes and

lower biodiversity (the variety of living things in an area). We need biodiversity to maintain healthy habitats.

Plus it's simply more interesting to boat in a water-body surrounded by different vegetation, rather than one with the same invasive plant everywhere. But that is exactly what could happen if an invasive species appears: all other species, including fish and waterfowl, may be chased out!



USGS, www.invasive.org

Make A Difference!

Now that you know why invasive species are a concern, what can you do to help minimize their spread? Luckily there are many small steps you can take to keep invasive hitchhikers in check.

- Know how to identify some of the more common invasive plant species in your area, so you can avoid walking and boating through them. To learn more, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm
- Don't transfer bilge water to other water-bodies.
- Remove any visible plant parts, mud, and animals from boats and equipment and leave them at the site.
- You can't always see aquatic invasives, but they might be there. And some can survive for days out of water. So always wash boats with a high-pressure spray or hot water, and dry them off, before going to a new water body.
- Don't dump leftover bait into or near the water. It might survive and take over.
- Volunteer to help prevent and control invasive species. Contact your local state park or forest office, conservation district, watershed group, or boating club to get involved.

