



# Clean Boats CLEAN WATERS

As boating season begins, newly trained volunteers are gearing up to help boaters inspect equipment for aquatic invasive species. They'll be sporting blue t-shirts and stationed at selected launch sites around the state.

The activities are part of the pilot program, Clean Boats, Clean Waters, being conducted this year by Michigan Sea Grant with support from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Specifically, volunteers will talk with boaters about the importance of preventing the spread of invasive plants and animals from one body of water to another.

"Boaters really play a key role in stopping the spread of harmful species such as Eurasian water-milfoil and zebra mussels by inspecting their equipment and taking some simple actions," says Carol Swinehart, who coordinates the program for Michigan Sea Grant.

If boaters are receptive, the Clean Boats, Clean Waters volunteers will conduct a quick demonstration showing how to inspect boat hulls, live wells, props and other equipment for invasive species and describing what to do if any are found.

The program kicked off in April with workshops in Pontiac and Big Rapids. About 30 participants learned about the ecological damage caused by aquatic invasive species in Michigan—plants such as Eurasian water-milfoil, fish such as round gobies, animals such as zebra mussels and microscopic zooplankton such as water fleas—all of which can disrupt aquatic ecosystems.

## Boaters Play Key Role

Michigan has nearly 39,000 square miles of Great Lakes waters and more than 11,000 inland lakes larger than five acres. Boating is one of the most popular recreational activities in the state, with more than 900,000 watercraft registered.

As popular as boating is, the activity is a major avenue enabling invasive species to travel from one water body to another. Plants and animals can easily hitch a ride on hulls, props and other boating and angling equipment.

If a plant such as Eurasian water-milfoil is found tangled in a boat prop, volunteers with the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program will remove the plant, seal it in plastic and send it to Michigan Sea Grant Extension for identification and recording. They'll also encourage boaters to inspect their own equipment before leaving the area.

"Research has found that many Michigan boaters are aware of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels, and that some are already taking action. Others have said they weren't sure what to do," says Swinehart.

"We expect that boaters will do their best to act once they receive the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!™ sticker about the four simple steps to take and the Clean Boats, Clean Waters card that illustrates checkpoints on a boat and trailer."

"Michigan has been known for years as a water wonderland," Swinehart adds, "and we think boaters will want to keep it that way."

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CLEAN BOATS  
CLEAN WATERS



Working together with boaters  
to protect our waters

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

When you leave a body of water:

- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting recreational equipment.
- Drain water from equipment (boat, motor, trailer, live wells) before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.

See: [www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

## KNOW THE LAW

In addition to federal law, Michigan laws enacted in 2005 prohibit possessing or transporting any live transgenic (genetically engineered) organisms, several live nonnative fish, and many nonnative aquatic plants, including entire plants, fragments and seeds, as well as hybrids and genetically engineered variants.

For more information, see:  
[www.miseagrant.umich.edu/cbcw](http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/cbcw)



Michigan Sea Grant College Program  
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