

Working together with boaters to protect our waters.

## CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS



### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

## 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 stationed at selected launch sites around the state sporting blue t-shirts.

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

“Boaters play a key role in stopping the spread of harmful species such as Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels by inspecting their equipment and taking some simple actions,” said Jo Latimore, who coordinates the program for Michigan Sea Grant.

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

Communities across Michigan have hosted training workshops where participants learn about the ecological damage caused by aquatic invasive species in Michigan — plants such as Eurasian watermilfoil, 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 that enables 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 watermilfoil is found tangled in a boat prop, program volunteers remove the plant, seal it in plastic and send it to Michigan Sea Grant Extension for identification and recording. They also encourage boaters to inspect their own equipment before leaving the area.

“Research shows 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,” said Latimore.

“Boaters will be given a Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers™ sticker reminding them of simple steps to take when leaving the water and a Clean Boats, Clean Waters sticker illustrating watercraft check points”

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

### 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, recently enacted Michigan laws prohibit placing a boat, trailer, or boating equipment in Michigan waters with plant material attached, or possessing or transporting, several live nonnative fish, and many nonnative aquatic plants, including entire plants, fragments and seeds.

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

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Michigan Sea Grant helps foster economic growth and protect Michigan's coastal Great Lakes resources through education, research and outreach. A collaborative effort of the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, Michigan Sea Grant is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-National Sea Grant network of more than 30 university-based programs.