

EXPANSION OF INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANT SPECIES FACT SHEET

Created by Progressive Companies / Water Resources Group

Aquatic invasive plant species pose a significant threat to the health and balance of aquatic ecosystems, as well as the economies that depend on them. These species, often non-native, can rapidly spread and outcompete beneficial native species, leading to disruptions in food webs and ecological processes. The introduction of invasive species can occur through various pathways, including ballast water discharge from ships, release by aquarium hobbyists, hitchhiking on waterfowl, and accidental transport on recreational boats and trailers. Once introduced to a new waterbody, these species can quickly overtake portions of a lake. The impact of aquatic invasive species extends beyond biological diversity; they can also cause economic losses by damaging fisheries and hindering recreational activities.

Most often, invasive species introductions are first documented at public boat launch sites. In July of 2019, the Michigan DNR – Parks and Recreation Division surveyed 157 state-owned boat launches for aquatic invasive species. Eurasian watermilfoil, starry stonewort, and curly-leaf pondweed were among the most common exotic plant species present in the areas immediately surrounding the launch sites. Eurasian watermilfoil was present at 34% of surveyed sites, while starry stonewort and curly-leaf pondweed were present at 19% and 17% of sites, respectively (MDNR 2020). In a survey conducted by Progressive AE in 2023, 32 public launch sites were inspected. 16% of sites contained Eurasian milfoil and 28% contained starry stonewort. While not all public access sites host invasive species, it is important to monitor and manage those high-risk areas.

In order to protect our water resources from exotic species, it is important to adhere to the following processes established by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE 2023):

Required actions – it's the law in Michigan

- Remove all aquatic organisms, including plants, from watercraft and trailers before launching or transporting.
- Remove all drain plugs and drain all water from bilges, ballast tanks and live wells before transporting a watercraft.
- Dispose of unused bait in the trash, not in the water.

Recommended additional actions – protect our waters by following these steps

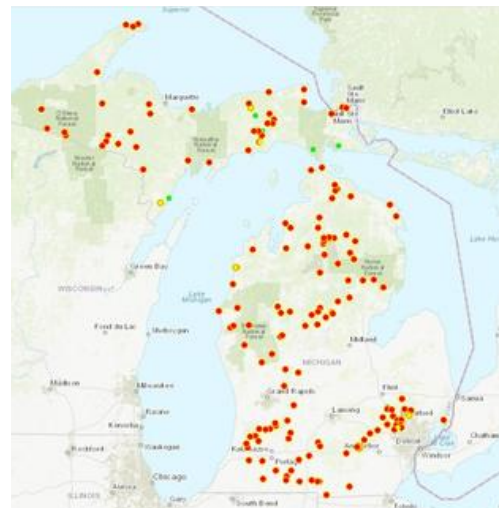
- Clean boats, trailers and equipment by removing plants, debris, and mud before leaving the access area. Dispose of the material in a trash receptacle or otherwise away from the water body, if possible.
- Wash boats and trailers before leaving the access area, if possible, or at a nearby car wash or at home.
- Dry boats and equipment for five days before launching into a different water body.
- Disinfect live wells and bilges with a bleach solution (1/2 cup bleach to 5 gallons water.)¹

References:

EGLE. 2023. 'Clean, Drain, Dry' is the message at boating, fishing outreach events marking Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week.
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division. 2020. Aquatic Invasive Species Sampling [Project Report].
<https://mymlsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019-PRD-BAS-AIS-Survey-Report.pdf>



It is important to clean your boat and trailer prior to launching into a new waterbody.



2019 Michigan DNR Survey Sites

For more information regarding Michigan's inland lakes, please visit michiganlakeinfo.com

