

# Aquatic Invasives

## FACT SHEET

### WHAT ARE AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES?

- **Non-native** plants, animals, and pathogens
- Live primarily in **water**
- Can rapidly thrive in a **new environment**
- Cause economic **loss**, environmental **damage**, or **harm** to human health

*(Note that not all non-native species are invasive.)*

### WHERE ARE THEY FOUND?

Aquatic invasive species can be found in oceans, lakes, streams, and wetlands. There are many ways that aquatic invasive species are transported including:

- Ballast water operations
- Biofouling of ship hulls
- Fishing bait release
- Carried on watercraft and fishing gear
- Escape from nurseries and water gardens
- Intentional release of unwanted aquatic pets
- Release of classroom and laboratory animals

### WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL OR ECONOMIC DAMAGE DO THEY CAUSE?

#### Reductions in food sources

Zebra mussels disrupt the food chain by removing significant amounts of food from the water, called plankton, upon which larval and juvenile fish feed. As larger gamefish feed on juvenile fish, this can adversely impact sport and commercial fisheries.



#### Changes to fish habitat

Invasive plants such as water chestnut, Eurasian water milfoil and hydrilla grow to the surface, blocking sunlight and choking waterways. This changes the habitat, which in turn may cause shifts in the types of fish present.

#### Reductions in property value

Properties adjacent to streams, lakes, ponds, and coastal areas are valued significantly higher than those located away from the water. However, water quality problems can cause waterfront values to decline rapidly. The value of homes located on an uninfested lake can be higher than homes on a lake so choked with weeds that no recreation can occur.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES?

- To prevent the spread of hitchhiking species, thoroughly clean, drain and dry all boats, kayaks, canoes, and recreational gear after use.
- Do not release live bait or live fish into a new body of water.
- Buy pets from reputable dealers whose non-native animals are imported legally, properly labeled, and don't include invasive pests and diseases.
- Do not release an unwanted pet into the environment. Try returning it to a local pet shop, giving it to another hobbyist, or donating it to a school, nursing home, or nature center.
- Do not dump aquatic plants or aquarium water into any water bodies. Many plants for aquaria and water gardens are extremely invasive.
- Take action! Join a volunteer invasive species monitoring or eradication group. Meet new friends, get outdoors, and help to protect our environment.
- If you see an unfamiliar aquatic plant or animal, contact CT DEEP (860-424-3589).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Protect your waters: [www.protectyourwaters.net](http://www.protectyourwaters.net)

ANS taskforce: [www.anstaskforce.gov](http://www.anstaskforce.gov)

For Kids: [www.iiseagrant.org/nabinvader](http://www.iiseagrant.org/nabinvader)

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