



New York Sea Grant invasive species education reaches diverse audiences to engage public participation in prevention and restoration efforts

NYSG Aquatic Invasive Species Education: Reaching More than 335,000 New Yorkers, Restoring More than 335 Acres

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose a significant threat to New York's Great Lakes and other aquatic environments. Although many species were originally introduced through ballast water dumping, today's threat comes from movement of AIS from one body of water to another by boaters, anglers, and water sport enthusiasts.

NYSG Responds

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) is actively involved in educating the public about the threat of AIS, teaching people about steps that can be taken to reduce their spread, and working with other agencies, and organizations to remove invasive species from waters throughout the state.



NYSG Launch Steward Brittney Rogers shows two Lake Ontario boaters aquatic debris removed from their boat, photo: Megan Pistoese

In 2013, through public presentations, workshops, displays at boat shows and festivals, and other outreach activities, NYSG delivered important messages about aquatic invasive species to more than 335,000 stakeholders and citizens, and encouraged them to take steps to stop these aquatic hitchhikers.



*Silver carp,
art: Joseph Tomelleri Cimarron Trading Co.*

Building Asian Carp Awareness

To inform the public about Asian Carp, two devastating species that have not yet reached Lake Erie or Lake Ontario, NYSG joined forces with the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network to deliver presentations that informed the public about the threat that Asian Carp species, both the jumping silver carp and the larger big-head carp, pose to the Great Lakes and what is being done to keep these plankton-feeding fish from the environment.

NYSG specialists made presentations at scientific conferences and workshops, including the International Association of Great Lakes Research annual conference, on predicted Ponto-Caspian Fish Invaders and a special 3-day AIS session co-organized by NYSG, Buffalo State College and Notre Dame that involved 450 scientists and managers.

Standardizing NY Waterfront Steward Outreach

NYSG has been working with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Cornell University Extension's Invasive Species Program and other partners to standardize the training and implementation of boat launch steward programs. Boat launch stewards create an effective way to reach anglers, boaters and water craft enthusiasts before they enter local waters. Efforts include the standardization of data collection protocol and educational branding and messaging (Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! Campaign: www.protectyourwaters.net), as well as taking the lead to develop the NYS Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Training Handbook (2014 anticipated release).



NYSG Aquatic Invasive Species Education Engages Stakeholders, Protects Habitats

NYSG Discover Clean & Safe Boating Campaign Teaches AIS Prevention

To reach large numbers of people throughout the state, NYSG created an award-winning “Discover Clean & Safe Boat” display, using different styles of vessels provided each year by NY-based boat manufacturers. The boats are equipped with the required and recommended safe and clean marine equipment for boating on NY waters. Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers “Clean-Drain-Dry” materials, informational pamphlets, watch cards and preserved AIS specimens (e.g., Asian Carp, Sea Lamprey) help the public learn about invasive species and steps they can take to reduce their spread. In 2013, the display was stationed at 13 events, located along Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, the Fingers Lakes, Hudson River, and New York City. Since the Discover Clean & Safe campaign’s inception in 2008:



One of the 2013 Discover Clean and Safe Boating vessels was this fishing boat, photo: Brian P. Whattam

- More than 500,000 boaters have seen the exhibit at 50+ events and boaters have been educated at major events in all of NY’s coastal regions
- 60+ media interviews have featured the project
- Outreach was developed to include deaf boaters, and a 12’ canoe was added to include paddlesports
- Boating-related invasive species and watercraft inspection education was added
- In-water life jacket/safety demonstrations have educated 500+ people at four events
- Four international conferences presented the project as a model industry partnership.

Incorporating Clean-Drain-Dry in Vessel Exams

In an emerging pilot initiative in 2013, NYSG partnered with regional U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliaries and U.S. Power Squadron vessel examiners to include “Clean-Drain-Dry” educational efforts as part of their vessel exams. Traditionally, the exams have focused on safety, but this new NYSG-sponsored focus now includes invasive species control and prevention with region-wide implementation being developed with Flotillas and Squadrons across New York’s Great Lakes region.

Restoring Damaged Habitat

New York Sea Grant is not only involved with education and outreach on AIS, but staff also partner with others throughout the state to restore habitat damaged by invasive species. With the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) and other groups, restoration efforts took place on 335 acres to remove or reduce the spread of invasive species and mitigate their impacts. Efforts included the removal of invasive species and the planting of native species in aquatic habitats, or along the shoreline, to protect and restore important ecosystems throughout the state. In Western New York, college students conducted service projects at the Buffalo Museum of Science’s Tiff Nature Preserve to remove invasive species crowding out native plants, helping to protect this urban nature preserve.

E-Networking through Social Media

Social media efforts in 2013 helped deliver the AIS message to 10,000 people who did not engage staff through presentations or workshops. Messages (27) sent via Facebook or Twitter highlighted what can be done to reduce the spread of invasive species. These new e-networks allow NYSG to get its educational messages to a portion of the population that may not interact using traditional programming.

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems.

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

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