

# Getting Started:

## How to Start a Watercraft Inspection Program



Brittney Rogers

New York Sea Grant

Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Leaders Trainer

Blr93@cornell.edu



# PRESENTATION OUTLINE:

- Aquatic Invasive Species
  - Definition and Concerns
- Watercraft Inspection
  - What is it?
- Watercraft Inspection Programs
  - What and Why?
  - Standardization
- New York State Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Handbook
  - History
  - Steps for Starting a Program



# Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic organisms (plants, animals, and pathogens) that are not native to the aquatic ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

## Some reasons to be concerned:

- Ecology
- Economics
- Recreation
- Health

Recreational boating... a key pathway in the spread of AIS.





# What is Watercraft Inspection?



Watercraft inspection consists of visually inspecting all areas of boating and recreational equipment (i.e., boat, trailer, motor, livewell, anchor, swim fins, scuba gear, etc.) that come in contact with or hold water; removing all visible plants, animals, and mud; and draining water from all compartments and containers.

These practices reduce the risk of movement of all organisms from one body of water to another.



# The Goals of Watercraft Inspection Are:

- Reduce the impact of aquatic invasive species (AIS) on native aquatic organisms and ecosystems
- Limit or prevent the spread of AIS by containing infestations to current locations
- Increase boater awareness about ways they can help prevent the spread of AIS



# The Goals of Watercraft Inspection are Accomplished by Programs:

- ✓ Teaching boaters how to look for aquatic hitchhikers through the demonstration of watercraft inspection
- ✓ Informing boaters about boating related and other pertinent laws, AIS identification, common AIS spread vectors, and AIS prevention methods
- ✓ Providing boaters with watercraft inspection and AIS educational materials



# The Goals of Watercraft Inspection are Accomplished by Programs:

- ✓ Encouraging boaters to continue or adopt behaviors that support **Clean-Drain-Dry** practice with all boats, trailers, and other water recreation equipment.
- ✓ Collecting data on boater usage patterns and the presence of aquatic organisms
- ✓ Responding to boaters' questions







# The Value of Watercraft Inspections

Critical component in protecting the aquatic ecosystems and water quality by preventing and limiting the spread of AIS among waterbodies in NYS and neighboring states and provinces.





# Standardizing Watercraft Inspection



Achieving a greater level of consistency in protocols and standards employed by watercraft inspection programs across NYS benefits the area both environmentally and economically.



# Standardizing Watercraft Inspection:

- Limits variation among watercraft inspection programs.
- Provides guidance and start-up support for newly developed/young programs.
- Increases effectiveness by ensuring that programs use the best science and technology currently available.



# Standardizing Watercraft Inspection:



- Establishes consistency among programs that promotes credibility with boaters.
- Makes it easier for the boating public to recognize, understand, anticipate and comply with watercraft inspection and prevention programs.



# New York Sea Grant's Role in WCI

- New York State Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Handbook
- Training assistance for Watercraft Inspection Steward Programs
- Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Leaders Workshops
- Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Leaders Webinar Series
- Tool/Resource development





## SECTION #5 Getting Started: A Guide for Organizations Starting Watercraft Inspection Programs



Published in 2014

- PDF downloadable online

Goals:

- Guide for new programs
- Recommendations across the state
- Resource for program coordinators and stewards

- ☐ Collaborative effort
- ☐ Funding: NYS Environmental Protection Fund

Presentation focus: *Handbook Section 5*

*Successful Programs =  
Effective Leadership + Adaptability + PARTNERSHIPS*

*\*The steps in this presentation may occur simultaneously or in different order.*

# Step #1: Identify a Program Leader

- Roles of Program Leader:
  - Lead on developing program components
  - Typically recruits, trains and supervises the stewards





## Step #2: Develop & Nurture Partnerships



- Crucial in existing programs
- Help identify priorities
- Fill expertise gaps
- Ex: PRISM, lake/landowner associations, state agencies, municipalities, universities and cooperative extension

# Step #3: Determine Program Structure

- Staffing:
  - Paid
  - Volunteer
  - Both?
- Things to consider:
  - Be realistic
  - Funding availability/sustainability & resources
  - Recruitment pool
  - Coverage area (one launch, one lake, one county, etc.)
  - Time/level of commitment of the program coordinator and of potential recruits

EXPECTATIONS  
vs.  
REALITY

# Step #4: Build Your Budget

Budget Item*
Steward salary
Program leader salary
Fringe (on salary only)
Volunteer hour estimate (can be used as cost share)
Steward supplies
Travel
Program operating costs
SUBTOTAL
In-direct costs
TOTAL



*\* This budget chart is provided as a starting place and will likely need to be customized to fit the needs of your organization and program.*





# Step 5: Determine What Your Stewards Will Do & How They Will Be Recognized

- Steward Duties:
  - Recommendations for standardized duties listed in NYS Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Handbook
  - Customization to allow for additional duties



**STOP AQUATIC  
HITCHHIKERS!™**

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.  
[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

# Step 5: Determine What Your Stewards Will Do & How They Will Be Recognized



- How will your stewards be recognized?
  - Recommendations for standardization include incorporating the *Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!* logo





# Beyond the Inspections...





# Step #6a: Determine Coverage Area & Secure Property Owner Permission

- Mission of organization
- Needs of partners
- Funding & resources
- Coverage area gaps of nearby programs
- Requirements & liability issues?
- Permits?
- *This steps takes time!*
- See Handbook Appendix D





## Appendix D: Sample Launch Site Property Owner Permission Letter

DATE

Name of Property Owner  
Address of Property Owner  
Address of Property Owner

Dear **TITLE** (Mayor/Supervisor) **LAST NAME** of the City/Village/Town of \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing this letter to request permission to conduct educational activities, including voluntary watercraft inspections for boaters at the \_\_\_\_\_ (**Name**) boat launch at \_\_\_\_\_ (**Location**) and to provide you with the details of the (**YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NAME**) watercraft inspection steward program.

In an effort to slow and/or prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), boat launch stewards would work with you as site manager to select an inspection location for conducting educational and voluntary watercraft inspections from \_\_\_\_\_ (**PROGRAM ACTIVITY DATE**) to \_\_\_\_\_ (**DATE**). Days and times of duty at each site will change throughout the season but be limited to daylight hours. This effort is part of a statewide boat/launch steward program and one of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Aquatic Nuisance Species priorities.

The inspection process would not impede launch access/exit. Boater participation in this initiative is 100% voluntary; these are not regulatory inspections. The goal of the program is for the stewards to teach boaters how to look for and remove aquatic invasive species from their boats and to empower boaters with information so they can inspect their watercraft in the absence of stewards. With boaters, the launch stewards will:

- walk through inspection checkpoints using a standardized protocol;
- engage boaters in dialogue about AIS, their impacts on the environment, and the importance of taking measures to prevent their spread;
- provide AIS educational materials; and
- collect boater usage and aquatic invasive species data.

Launch stewards will have field supplies with them at the launch. These supplies may include: sandwich board, folding table, chair, umbrella, preserved specimens for educational purposes, and distribution materials. Stewards will bring supplies to the launch each day and will remove them from the launch at the end of each shift.

Please contact me **by DATE** with your decision about allowing these inspections at your location, or if you would like additional information. I look forward to working with the **City/Village/Town of NAME** to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species in New York's waters.

Respectfully Submitted,

Your Name and Title  
Contact information: address, telephone, email

# Step #6b: Determine Coverage Schedule

- Things to consider:
  - Funding & resources
  - Mandates of contacting
  - High traffic vs. low traffic
  - Target audience?
  - Volunteer vs. paid staff
- Tips:
  - Visit launch sites
  - Talk with others that work/play at launch sites
  - Flexibility





# Step 7: Develop Your Steward Training Program

- Goal: provide stewards (paid and volunteer) with the tools and resources to confidently and accurately complete their duties
- Training structure:
  - Startup orientation:
    - Organizational orientation
    - Introduction to the problem and region
    - AIS introduction
    - Data collection
    - Boater engagement
    - Launch site visits
  - On-going training
- Training considerations: data collection & aquatic species ID and collection



# Training Considerations: Data Collection

- Standardization of data collection recommendations are in the handbook
  - Example datasheets on pages 6:19 & 6:20
- Establish protocols for collection and review



# Training Considerations: Aquatic Organism Identification & Specimen Collection Protocol

- Species ID:
  - Timing: once or on-going?
  - Finding experts
  - Common AIS and natives, especially lookalikes
  - Watch species
  - Assess identification skills of your crew
- Collection protocol:
  - Confirms ID skills
  - Page 5:7 of handbook





# Step #8: Develop Quality Assurance Quality Control (QAQC) Plan

- Purpose:
  - Defines roles
  - Ensures consistency each year and between years
  - Helps your program maintain credibility and consistency in established protocol
- QAQC topics for consideration:
  - Responsibilities & expectations
  - Data
  - Equipment/supplies policies



# Step #9: Recruit & Hire Stewards

- Recruiting stewards:
  - Develop position description & advertisement materials
  - Identify the best places to advertise
  - Define your application process
- Hiring stewards:
  - Establish interview criteria
  - Interviewers
  - Stewards will be representing your organization and program partners

*Follow recommendations of Your Human Resources*



# Step #10: Implement Your Training Protocol

- Identify locations for steward stations at each launch site
- Coordinate startup orientation
- Package educational materials for the stewards to distribute







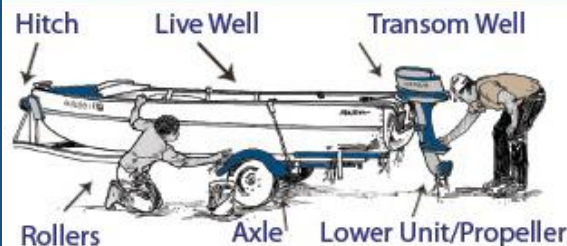
## CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS






Watch for unwanted aquatic hitchhikers when you move from one waterway to another!

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native plants and animals that threaten native plants, wildlife, and their habitat. AIS degrade boating and fishing areas, and can reduce lakeshore property values and tourism. Once AIS are established, containment is difficult. By practicing watercraft inspection, you can help *SLOW* the *SPREAD* of AIS.

## WATERCRAFT CHECK POINTS



### Before you leave a waterway:

-  **CLEAN & INSPECT:** Inspect, remove, and properly dispose of any visible mud, plants, fish or organisms from boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.
-  **DRAIN:** Before leaving the launch, empty all water from spaces (i.e., bilges, buckets, livewells, etc.) that can hold water. Dump live bait at bait disposal sites or in the trash. Never move live bait fish between bodies of water.
-  **DRY:** Dry anything that comes into contact with water.

**Never release plants, fish, or other animals into a waterway unless they came from that waterway.**



## STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

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

### Aquatic Invaders to Watch For:



R. Smith, NYSP

#### Water Chestnut

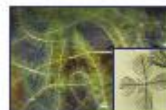
- Triangular leaves & toothed edges
- Forms dense floating mats
- Seeds & plants attach to trailers



J.E. Manday, USFWS & D. Jaki

#### Zebra & Quagga Mussels

- Tiny, "D" or oval shaped striped shells
- Cover hard surfaces; sharp shells cut feet
- Shells attach to plants & boat bottoms



A. Fox, Regeneration & Michigan DNR

#### Eurasian Watermilfoil

- Feathery leaves in whorls of 4
- Forms dense beds
- Plant fragments attach to boats & trailers



USFWS & J. Chaudron, NY Sea Grant

#### Spiny Waterflea

- Tiny, 1/2 " crustacean with long, barbed tail
- Competes with fish for food
- Masses collect on fishing line



D. Manday & S. Smith, Regeneration

#### Hydrilla

- Blade-like leaves in whorls of 4-8
- Forms dense beds
- Plant fragments attach to boats & trailers



J. Chaudron & D. Jaki, Regeneration

#### Live Bait

- Non-native crayfish and minnows
- Alters aquatic habitats & may carry pathogens
- Often released or illegally stocked

The Launch Steward Program is a collaborative education program offered at water access sites in New York's Lake Ontario and Oneida Lake regions to help slow the spread of aquatic invasive species and help preserve the integrity of water resources, recreational opportunities, and local economies.



Design courtesy of Adirondack PRISM. For more information go to: [www.sleloinvasives.org](http://www.sleloinvasives.org) or [www.nyis.info](http://www.nyis.info)

## Summary:

- Use handbook as a guide
- Standardize when possible
- Call on partners for guidance and topical expertise as needed



## Contact Information:

Brittney Rogers

Email: [Blr93@cornell.edu](mailto:Blr93@cornell.edu)

Office: (315)331-8415

# Questions?