

## WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES

By: Jay Rendall, Minnesota DNR and Ron Martin, Wisconsin DNR

Recreational boating has been documented as a significant pathway for the spread of nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species (ANS) between water bodies in the Great Lakes region. This pathway is a priority concern in Minnesota and Wisconsin, given the high volume of boat traffic, totaling 1.3 million registered watercraft from both states, and the frequent movement of boaters between infested waters. Inspecting watercraft for ANS at public boat landings is an innovative strategy used by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in each state to prevent ANS spread via water recreation. Significant resources are committed in these states to support seasonal watercraft inspections in efforts to raise boater awareness about ANS impacts and to encourage boaters to take steps to avoid spreading species such as Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels.

Along with visually checking to ensure that boats and equipment are ANS free, inspectors demonstrate how to properly clean boats, trailers and equipment. The inspections also provide an opportunity to disseminate information to anglers and recreational boaters to address: *why* ANS are problematic, *why* inspecting for and removing aquatic plants and animals from watercraft is important, *how* to identify ANS, and other prevention measures. In both states, stickers are provided to attach to trailers, reminding boaters to take action at boat landings.

In 1992, the Minnesota DNR (MNDNR), Minnesota Lakes Association, Minnesota Sportfishing Congress, and state legislators sought a mutually acceptable way to minimize the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels by boaters. The group chose an option requiring the MNDNR to annually conduct 10,000 hours of watercraft inspections, later raised to 20,000 hours. In recent years, the program has contacted more than 40,000 boaters per year, primarily at infested waters, with about 10 percent at awareness events on the shores of uninfested waters.

In 2002, Wisconsin DNR (WIDNR)

began a watercraft inspection program modeled after Minnesota's program. Eleven watercraft inspectors around the state made contact with nearly 3,000 boaters at boat landings in summer 2002. These watercraft inspectors also installed nearly 2,300 signs at public boat landings about the impacts of invasive species. WIDNR plans to build on initial efforts and expand the watercraft inspection program in the future.

In Minnesota and Wisconsin, a special effort is being made to reach boaters during times of peak boat usage, such as holiday weekends and the beginning of the fishing season. Fishing tournaments and sailing regattas provide educational opportunities for inspectors to reach large numbers of boaters from many locations. Signs are posted at public boat landings informing boaters about ANS established in the water body and listing the measures for boaters to follow to prevent ANS spread to other waters. It is the goal of both states to post ANS signs at all public boat landings.

Surveys conducted by MNDNR and Minnesota Sea Grant indicate that boaters have a high level of awareness of ANS, as 99 percent of those surveyed indicated that they were "very to somewhat" likely to take precautions when trailering their boats. The use of watercraft inspections, signs at boat landings, and radio and TV spots have contributed to this heightened awareness. MNDNR believes that the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels have been significantly reduced due to the use of watercraft inspections. In fall 2003, WIDNR will survey boaters to gather baseline information on boater attitudes and behavior with respect to ANS. The survey results will provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the WIDNR watercraft inspection program and aid future efforts to improve delivery of ANS related messages within the state.

Findings in Minnesota and Wisconsin indicate that watercraft inspection programs are an effective, worthwhile investment for

slowing the spread of aquatic nuisance species – an opportunity other states and provinces may want to consider. **Contacts:** Jay Rendall, MNDNR, 651-297-1464, jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us; and Ron Martin, WIDNR, 608-266-9270, martir@dnr.state.wi.us.

### Great Lakes Panel Update

The Great Lakes Commission, with guidance from the Great Lakes Panel, has played an active role in promoting congressional support for passage of the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act of 2003 (NAISA), introduced in the U.S. House and Senate on March 5. Instrumental in this effort was a congressional mailing, featuring a new Panel publication on NAISA, available online at [www.glc.org/ans/pubs.html](http://www.glc.org/ans/pubs.html). The next meeting of the Great Lakes Panel is scheduled for July 22-23, 2003, in Ann Arbor, Mich. Progress continues on the project, *Rapid Response Plan for Great Lakes Aquatic Invasions*. The mid-project workshop, to be held in conjunction with the Great Lakes Panel meeting, is scheduled for July 23-24 in Ann Arbor. The workshop will provide an opportunity for stakeholders across the Great Lakes region to participate in further development of the rapid response plan. **Contact:** Kathe Glassner-Shwayder, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ext. 108, [shwayder@glc.org](mailto:shwayder@glc.org).

### Washington Watch

The President's budget for FY 2004 provides \$250 million for ANS prevention and control, including \$500,000 for operation of the dispersal barrier in the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal, and funding to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey for ballast water treatment technologies. Sens. Carl Levin (MI) and Susan Collins (ME) along with Reps. Wayne Gilchrest (MD), Vernon Ehlers (MI), Brian Baird (WA) and Peter Hoekstra (MI) introduced the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act

of 2003, legislation to slow the onslaught of aquatic organisms invading U.S. waterways. Also introduced in the House is the National Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act of 2003. The bills represent a coordinated bipartisan, bicameral effort among lawmakers to address the ANS threats. In addition to reauthorizing the *National Invasive Species Act of 1996*, the legislation contains provisions to regulate ballast discharge from commercial vessels and regulate planned importations of live organisms. It also allows for development of a national monitoring network, provides rapid response funds and state and regional grants, and authorizes research to ensure that proper methods are used to prevent, control, and eradicate aquatic invasive species. Additional information may be found at [www.nemw.org/biopollute.htm#laws](http://www.nemw.org/biopollute.htm#laws). Reps. Ehlers (MI) and Sen. Mike DeWine (OH) also introduced the National Invasive Species Council Act to permanently establish the Council, first created by Executive Order in 1999. **Contact:** Joy Mulinex, Senate Great Lakes Task Force, Northeast-Midwest Institute, 202-224-1211, [joy\\_mulinex@levin.senate.gov](mailto:joy_mulinex@levin.senate.gov).

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## Around the Basin

**ILLINOIS:** The DNR has designated \$2 million to match federal funding to develop and build a second electrical barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. By this commitment, Illinois accepts responsibility as the local project sponsor, allowing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to erect a second, permanent barrier. The total project cost is estimated at \$7 million with construction beginning in spring, lasting six to eight months. The city of Chicago is drafting language to restrict the sale of live Asian carp within the city. In early April, the Illinois State Academy of Sciences sponsored a symposium on Illinois invasive species at Illinois State University in Normal, Ill. Issues examined included effects of invasive species on human health and natural systems, economic costs resulting from invasive organisms, characteristics of invasive species, biological control and invasive species legislation. **Contact:** Pat Charlebois, IL-IN Sea Grant, 847-872-0140, [charlebo@uiuc.edu](mailto:charlebo@uiuc.edu).

**INDIANA:** The DNR has contracted a private natural resource communications firm, D.J. Case and Associates of Mishawaka, Ind., to facilitate development of the state ANS Management Plan. The first stakeholder meeting was held April 15 in Indianapolis. To follow the process, visit [www.fishing.in.gov](http://www.fishing.in.gov) or contact Phil Seng, 574-258-0100, [phil@djcase.com](mailto:phil@djcase.com). **Contact:** Gwen White, INDNR, 317-232-4093, [gwhite@dnr.state.in.us](mailto:gwhite@dnr.state.in.us).

**MICHIGAN:** The state has passed an emergency ban on the possession and transport of live Asian carp and all members of the snakehead family Channidae, genus *Channa*. The order also prohibits, by previ-

ous action, possession and transportation of ruffe, and round and tubenose goby. The Office of the Great Lakes has awarded administration of the ANS Information and Education Small Grants Program to the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The program goal is to help implement the Michigan ANS State Management Plan Update through financial assistance to local groups for ANS prevention and control initiatives. The Ballast Water Reporting Program had its second successful year of reporting ballast water management practices by shippers. **Contact:** Emily Finnell, MIDEQ, 517-241-7927, [finnelle@michigan.gov](mailto:finnelle@michigan.gov).

**MINNESOTA:** The DNR conducted a risk assessment on non-native earthworms and subsequently distributed a new invasive earthworm poster, *Contain Those Crawlers*, to all bait dealers in the state. The poster conveys the message that earthworms harm forests and anglers should dispose of unwanted earthworms in the trash. **Contact:** Jay Rendall, MNDNR, 651-297-1464, [jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us).

**NEW YORK:** DEC's annual proposal to the ANS Task Force requests funding for continued support of dreissenid mussel impacts in the Finger Lakes region, part of the Lake Ontario watershed. The state also has requested funds for further research projects under the auspices of Cornell University to study the ecological impacts of mussels in other large freshwater lakes. **Contact:** Timothy Sinnott, NYSDEC, 518-402-8970, [txsinnot@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:txsinnot@gw.dec.state.ny.us).

**PENNSYLVANIA:** A statewide survey is being conducted by the DEP, Sea Grant and the Fish and Boat Commission to assess recreational boater awareness about invasive species. The survey was mailed to 800 registered boaters in February and results will be available this summer. In October 2002, an interagency workgroup convened to discuss development of a statewide invasive species management plan. Efforts continue to define committee structure, develop planning goals, enhance coordination, and engage participants from private industry and non-profit organizations. **Contact:** Kirsten Wakefield, PA Coastal Zone Management Program, 717-783-6395, [c-kwakefie@state.pa.us](mailto:c-kwakefie@state.pa.us).

**WISCONSIN:** Monitoring data from the 2002 sampling season for Eurasian water milfoil and zebra mussels indicate that both species continue to spread to new water bodies. Middle school students from northern Wisconsin will work with citizen volunteers at boat launches to educate boaters on how they can avoid introducing Eurasian watermilfoil into lakes. The students have partnered with UW-Extension and WIDNR to train volunteers through a workshop series offered this spring. **Contact:** Ron Martin, WIDNR, 608-266-9270, [martir@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:martir@dnr.state.wi.us).

**OTHER WATERSHEDS:** The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resources Association (MICRA) met in Arkansas in

February to discuss convening the new Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species. Panel officers selected by MICRA for the first year of leadership are Jay Rendall, MNDNR, as Panel chair and Mike Hoff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as vice-chair. **Contact:** Jay Rendall, MNDNR, 651-297-1464, [jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us).

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## National ANS Task Force

See below for details on the upcoming ANS Task Force spring meeting.

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## Upcoming Events

- *National ANS Task Force Meeting*, May 13-14, 2003, New Orleans, La. **Contact:** Sharon Gross, ANS Task Force, 703-358-2308, [sharon\\_gross@fws.gov](mailto:sharon_gross@fws.gov).
- *International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species*, June 9-12, 2003, Windsor, Ontario. **Contact:** [www.aquatic-invasive-species-conference.org](http://www.aquatic-invasive-species-conference.org).
- *Great Lakes Experiences and Global Applications*, June 24, 2003, part of the IAGLR/ILEC *World Conference on Large Lakes*, June 22-26, 2003, DePaul University, Chicago, Ill. **Contact:** Sarah Whitney, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ext. 128, [swhitney@glc.org](mailto:swhitney@glc.org).
- *Biological Invasions: How Media Communications Can Impact Policy and Research Agendas*, June 25, 2003, part of the IAGLR Conference, Chicago, Ill. **Contact:** Christine Manninen, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ext. 112, [manninen@glc.org](mailto:manninen@glc.org).
- *Meeting of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species*, July 22-23, 2003, Ann Arbor, Mich. **Contact:** Kathe Glassner-Shwayder, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ext. 108, [shwayder@glc.org](mailto:shwayder@glc.org).
- *Rapid Response Plan for Great Lakes Aquatic Invasions*, July 23-24, 2003, Ann Arbor, Mich. **Contact:** Kevin Walters, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ext. 136, [kwalters@glc.org](mailto:kwalters@glc.org).

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## On the Bookshelf

- *Harmful Exotic Species of Aquatic Plants and Wild Animals in Minnesota: Annual Report for 2002*. Available online at: [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological\\_services/exotics/annualreport.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological_services/exotics/annualreport.pdf). **Contact:** Jay Rendall, MNDNR, 651-297-1464, [jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us).
- *Contain Those Crawlers*, a new poster about harmful impacts of exotic earthworms on Minnesota forests. **Contact:** Jay Rendall, MNDNR, 651-297-1464, [jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us).
- *Protect Our Waters*, a pamphlet on ANS issues in the Midwest. **Contact:** Stephen Wittman, WI Sea Grant, 608-263-5371, [swittman@aqua.wisc.edu](mailto:swittman@aqua.wisc.edu).