

INVASIVE SPECIES Q & A

With all the attention being paid to invasive plants like milfoil, people are asking a lot of questions. You can obtain additional information from the Dept. of Environmental Protection at 1-800-452-1942 or by visiting their website at <http://www.maine.gov/dep/>, or by calling the Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife at 287-8000.



- **What are invasive species?**

Invasive species are plants, animals, and even microbes that are introduced from other regions and aggressively out-compete native species.

- **How are invasive species spread?**

Invasive species are usually spread as a result of human activity. Examples include carp from illegal fish stocking, Eurasian water-milfoil from boat and gear transport, and zebra mussels from engine cooling water and live wells.

- **What harm do these critters do?**

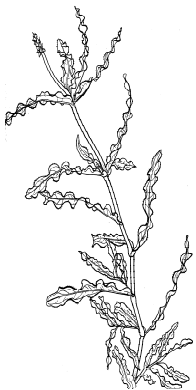
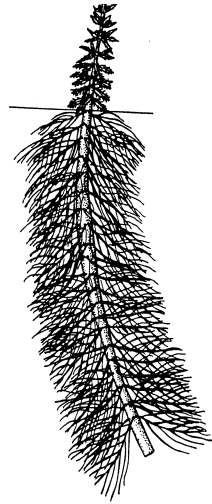
It varies with each species. For example, invasive aquatic plants can grow densely, crowd out native plants, reduce fish movement and stunt growth. In dense beds, invasive aquatic plants can shade out the bottom, reduce the number of snails and other useful animals, and change water chemistry.

- **What's at stake?**

Every year in the United States, government agencies and private citizens spend over \$100 million to combat invasive aquatic plants. Closer to home, Vermont has spent over six million dollars since 1980 to control these plants, and in 2009 received over \$1,080,000 in requests from municipalities for help in dealing with the problem. In addition, invasive species cost billions of dollars in lost recreation and property values, and ruin habitat for native species.

- **Does Maine have a lot of invasive species?**

There are at least 49 invasive aquatic species--ranging from green crab in ocean waters to white carp in a number of rivers--known to occur in Maine. Scores of other invasive species that have spread into other New England states in the last few decades will increasingly pose a threat to Maine waters. Currently thirty-one lakes and ponds, and fourteen stream or river segments are known to be infested with one or more invasive aquatic species. Variable water-milfoil is still the most widespread of the known invasive aquatic plants in Maine. Other invasive aquatic plants present in Maine include curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian water-milfoil, spiny (European) naiad, hydrilla and European frogbit. Five additional invasive aquatic plant species (not yet known to occur in Maine) have been listed by Maine law as imminent threats to our State.



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- **Aren't all plants good for fish like bass?**

Plant life in lakes and streams is essential for good fisheries. In moderate densities, aquatic plants provide just the right blend of cover and edge for successful fish growth as well as places to produce forage for smaller fish. The very dense plant growth often seen with invasive species like variable leaf milfoil and water chestnut has the opposite effect.

- **What is Maine doing about the problem?**

In 2000, Maine launched an effort to prevent the spread of invasive species, starting with aquatic plants, the most obvious problem. This includes educating people on how to recognize invasive aquatic plants, avoid spreading them, and what to do if they find them. The effort also includes thousands of voluntary boat inspections by wardens and volunteers, information given to incoming motorists, and projects to eradicate new infestations where possible. We are also cooperating with other states in our region along with federal agencies.

- **Why bother to do all this if the plants are going to get here anyway?**

We know from other states' experiences that we can slow down the spread (and even prevent introductions) in some instances. The longer we keep these pests out, the more time we have to develop better control methods and the more recreation people can enjoy without these species in their favorite lakes.

- **When is a sticker required?**

A Lake and River Protection Sticker is required to be posted on the bow of all motorized watercraft when operating on inland waters. This sticker requirement applies to both motorboats registered in Maine and motorboats from other states operating in Maine. For residents, the sticker has been combined with the registration sticker. No sticker is required for watercraft on tidal waters or for canoes and other boats not requiring registration. Contact your regional warden service headquarters for the exact boundary between tidal and inland waters on specific rivers.

- **Where do I get the sticker?**

The current cost is \$10 for Maine registered boats (which is included in the watercraft registration fee), and \$20 for those registered in other states while operating on Maine's inland waters. Nonresidents can purchase stickers wherever boats are registered, fishing licenses are sold, and through the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife online store. In May of 2019 a bill to increase the sticker fee for both residents and non-residents passed in both houses of the Maine Legislature. New stickers must be purchased annually.

- **What does this sticker pay for?**

100% of the funds raised go towards efforts to prevent spread of invasive aquatic species. None of this money is used for other DIFW or DEP work. Along with new warden staff and DEP specialists, much of the money is going to volunteer work and education efforts along with the boat inspections.