

Summer is the time to think about Aquatic Invasive Species ...and Sea Grant has new resources to help you!

by Nancy C. Balcom

It's the season for pleasure boating and fishing – and an opportune time to issue a reminder that these same activities are pathways by which organisms can be moved around and introduced into new waters. It's also a good time to unveil a few new resources to help address the problem of aquatic invasive species, specifically coastal and marine species. These organisms foul your boat hull, lines and dock pilings, compete with native species for important resources such as food and space, and cause major

What is an Invasive Species?

Invasive species are "species that are non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health."

–Invasive Species Advisory Committee 2006

changes to local ecosystems. Whatever can be done to keep new introductions from occurring—or existing ones from spreading—should be done, right?

So...what can we do?

One new source of information on introduced marine

species of concern in the Northeast U.S. and the pathways by which they move is an educational web site, <http://nemis.mit.edu>. This site describes ways to minimize or prevent the movement of organisms and explains how to get involved in volunteer monitoring. The site was developed collaboratively by the seven NOAA Northeast Sea Grant programs, and supported by NOAA National Sea Grant.

Know a middle or high school student who is curious about aquatic invasive species? Check out the Nab the Aquatic Invader! web site, www.sgnis.org/kids. This interactive educational site was created by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, along with Sea Grant programs in Connecticut, New York, Oregon, and Louisiana. It uses col-

orful detectives and “suspects” to creatively teach about aquatic invasive species, has resources and activities for teachers and ideas for environmental stewardship projects. From the Atlantic

coast, check out Gracie “The Blade” Red Algae, Leo “The Venom” Lionfish, and Asa “The Displacer” Asian Shore Crab! This web site will be featured at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History as part of the Ocean Today Kiosk in the Ocean Hall later this year, and via Ocean Today kiosks located in public aquariums.

Here's another new resource: marine anglers will soon see multi-lingual signs posted at coastal boat ramps throughout the Northeast promoting the message: “Please Don't Dump Bait”. Specifically—don't dump unused marine bait worms or the seaweed they are packed in, into the water. Studies show that the seaweed harbors other living organisms, which may survive a “trip over the side,” and may become problematic (see

<http://web2.uconn.edu/seagrant/whatwedo/ais/btwrms.pdf>).

During summer 2008, Connecticut Sea Grant and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Marine Fisheries Division, worked with several volunteer bait retailers to apply a “Don't Dump Bait” sticker to bait worm boxes at point-of-sale. The plan is to expand the program once additional resources are secured.

Finally, a message for boat owners: Keeping your boat “ship-shape” includes maintaining a hull free of marine hitchhikers, especially if the boat is moved between winter and summer ports. Failure to remove fouling organisms before making a long trip will not only increase the drag on the vessel, reducing fuel efficiency and speed, but could facilitate the introduction of organisms into the different ports visited. (For best management practices, see <http://nemis.mit.edu>.)

While enjoying summertime recreational pleasures, anglers and boaters can take these simple steps to make it that much harder for introductions of new species to occur...making all our lives easier.



Asa “the Displacer”

