

# CLEAN YOUR GEAR!

## Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in Pennsylvania



### STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

Prevent the transport of aquatic invasive species. Clean all recreational equipment.

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

Photo courtesy of Ed Lewandowski, Delaware Sea Grant.

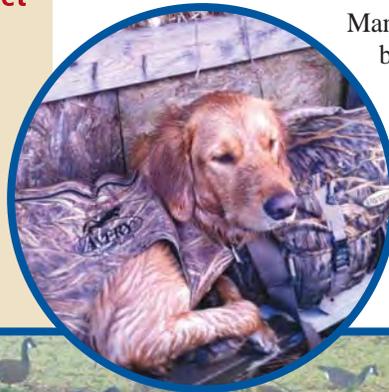
Photo courtesy of William Stanell, Ducks Unlimited website.

## TIPS FOR WATERFOWL HUNTERS

*Waterfowl hunting is a popular pastime for many Pennsylvanians, and hunting activities contribute significantly to the recreational economy. However, aquatic invasive species (AIS) like Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels can threaten habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. Hunters should take precautions to ensure they don't spread plants and animals that can be accidentally transported on duck boats, blind material, and hunting gear.*

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native plants, animals, or pathogens that cause harm to the environment, the economy, and human or animal health. Preventing the spread of AIS is important because once introduced, these species disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and cost communities huge amounts of time, money, resources, and lost revenue.

Photo courtesy of Ed Lewandowski, Delaware Sea Grant.



Many people associate the threat of spreading AIS with activities such as boating and fishing; however, hunters are also at risk of moving aquatic invaders from one water body to another. Once introduced, AIS can negatively impact waterfowl habitat by degrading water quality, replacing native plants that waterfowl use for food and breeding sites, and disturbing the food chain. AIS have also been blamed for severe die-offs of fish-eating waterfowl in Lake Erie because invasive mussels and round gobies may move the Type E botulism toxin up the food chain to birds where it can cause death.

Hunters often travel to multiple swamps, creeks, and rivers each season and from day to day. AIS can hitchhike in the mud, water, and plant debris that can collect on boats, decoys, waders, boots, clothing, and even hunting dogs. When not in blinds, hunters often brush themselves in and hide gear in the surrounding vegetation. Even a single fragment of some kinds of vegetation could start a new population if spread to a different water body. By following a few simple steps, waterfowl hunters can play an active role in preventing the spread of AIS (see other side).



Photo courtesy of Jerry Leisle, Ducks Unlimited website.



Photo courtesy of Ed Lewandowski, Delaware Sea Grant.

## CLEAN

*Inspect and clean off* visible plants, animals and mud from waders, hip boots, watercraft, motor, trailer, ATV's, push poles, decoys, decoy lines and anchors *before leaving area.*

*Brush* hunting dogs and rinse kennels with tap water.

## DRAIN

*Drain* water from watercraft, motor, bilge and other water containing devices *before leaving water access.*

## DRY

*Dry* everything *five days* or more, unless otherwise required by local or state laws, **OR wipe** with a towel *before reuse.*

## CHECK THESE AREAS:



Diagram courtesy of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Taskforce's Recreational User Guidelines.

### References and links to more information:

#### Prevention steps for waterfowl hunters:

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers:  
[www.Protectyourwaters.net](http://www.Protectyourwaters.net)

#### Additional recreational user guidelines:

[www.anstaskforce.gov/Meetings/2013\\_June/Recreational\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.anstaskforce.gov/Meetings/2013_June/Recreational_Guidelines.pdf)

#### Where to report new invasive species

Sea Grant online reporting form:  
[www.paseagrant.org/report-invasive-species/](http://www.paseagrant.org/report-invasive-species/)

#### Aquatic invasive species in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Sea Grant AIS fact sheets:  
[www.paseagrant.org/fact\\_sheet\\_group/invasive-species/](http://www.paseagrant.org/fact_sheet_group/invasive-species/)

#### Aquatic Invasive species mapping in Pennsylvania:

iMap Invasives: [www.imapinvasives.org/](http://www.imapinvasives.org/)

#### Additional AIS information:

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission: [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)

Wildlife Forever: [www.wildlifeforever.org/](http://www.wildlifeforever.org/)

#### In addition to the steps above, hunters should:

- **Use** non-felt soled boots to further reduce the risk of spreading AIS.
- **Cut** emergent vegetation above waterline for blinds or camouflage in accordance with regulations.
- **Use** elliptical and bulb-shaped anchors to help avoid snagging aquatic plants.
- **Pick up** shotgun hulls after shooting and dispose of them properly. Spent hulls can transport AIS if left to float around aquatic ecosystems.



Photo courtesy of J. Rawlings, Ducks Unlimited website.

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