



Recreational boating is one way that aquatic invasive species (AIS) are spread. Boats, motors, and trailers have ideal hiding spots where species may attach and be transported to new locations. Many of these species can survive out of water for five days or more.

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 these species disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and cost communities time, money, resources, and lost revenue once introduced.

AIS can be especially troublesome to boaters because they negatively impact the rivers, ponds, lakes, and activities that boaters enjoy. Aquatic invasive plants, such as Hydrilla, water chestnut, Eurasian watermilfoil, and curly-leaf pondweed form thick mats of vegetation that clog water bodies, impede navigation, and get tangled around boat propellers and other equipment. Invasive mussels like zebra and quagga mussels impact boating by clogging steering equipment and causing damage to boat engines.



Check all areas and remove vegetation.

While many species are large enough to see with the naked eye, others are too small to be readily noticed, and can easily hitchhike to new locations on boats, trailers, motors, and in livewells, bilges, or bait buckets. By following a few simple steps, boaters can play an active role in preventing the spread of AIS:

**Clean** off visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from watercraft, motor, trailer, and equipment before leaving water access. Additionally, boaters should scrub their watercraft's hull using a stiff brush, rinse their watercraft, trailer, and equipment with high-pressure hot water when possible, and flush the motor according to the owner's manual. Jet boat and personal watercraft users should also inspect and clean off visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from the hull, trailer, intake grate, and steering nozzle. They should also run the engine for 5-10 seconds to blow out excess water and vegetation from the internal drive before leaving water access. Sailors should also inspect and clean off visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from the centerboard, bilge board wells, rudderpost, and other equipment before leaving water access.

**Check** the hitch, dock lines, trailer, hull, anchor, axle, livewell, rollers and bunks, bilge, motor, and gimble area.

**Drain** water from watercraft, motor, bilge, bladder tanks, livewell, and portable bait containers before leaving water access.

**Dry** everything five days or more, unless otherwise required by local or state laws, when moving between waters to kill small species not easily seen, or if drying is not possible, wipe with a towel before reuse.



Hydrilla clogging a boat propeller. Credit Jeff Schardt, University of Florida.

**Follow PA Regulations (58 Pa. Code Chapter 71a):**

Upon leaving a waterbody, boaters must check their boat and remove any plant fragments or prohibited aquatic invasive species on their boat or trailer. Boaters must also drain all water from their boat and remove drain/bilge plugs before leaving.

**Scan Now! To access AIS fact sheets, resources, and reporting methods. Or visit us online at <https://seagrant.psu.edu/aquatic-invasive-species/>**



**Reference:**

Recreational user guidelines:  
<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Voluntary-Guidelines-Preventing-Spread-ANS-Recreational.pdf>

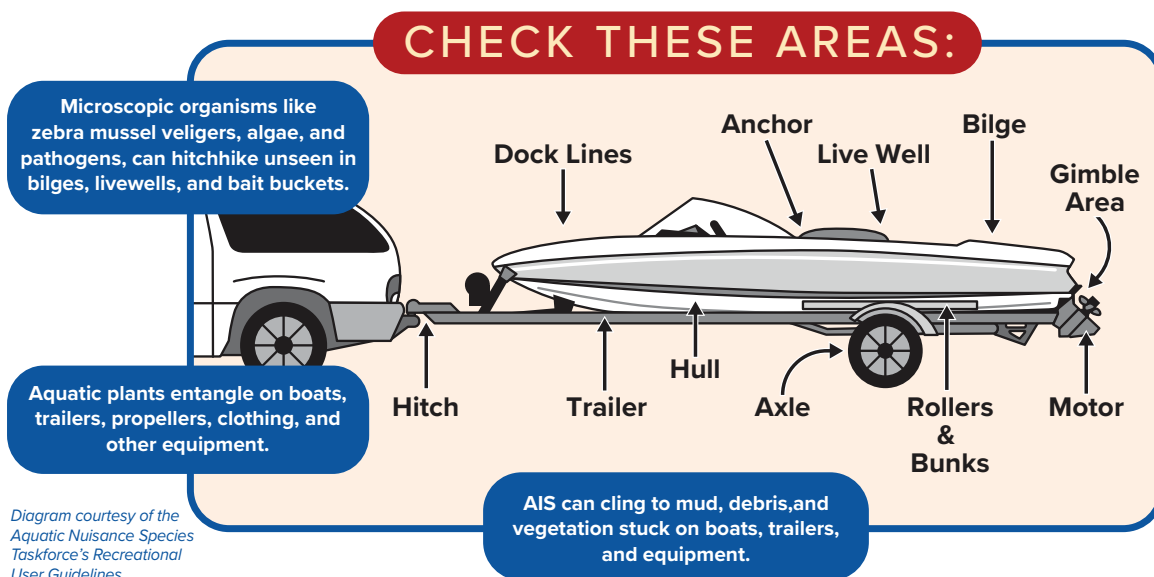


Diagram courtesy of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Taskforce's Recreational User Guidelines.

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