

# General Prevention Procedures for Stopping Aquatic Hitchhikers: A must read for all recreational lake users



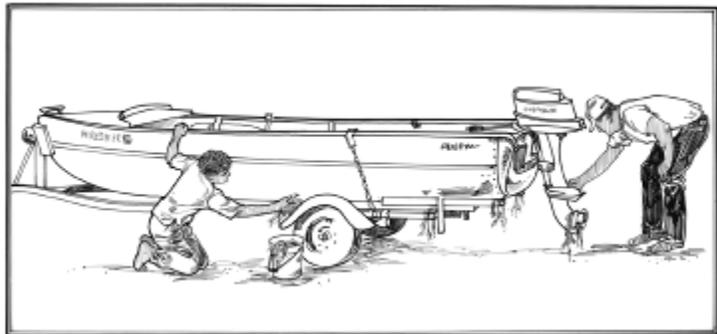
Follow a general set of procedures every time you come in contact with any body of water. By doing so, you can protect your waters from harmful aquatic hitchhikers - because you never know where an invasive species has been introduced, but has yet to be discovered.

There are hundreds of different harmful species ranging from plants, fish, amphibians, crustaceans, mollusks, diseases or pathogens. Some organisms are so small that you may not even realize they are hitching a ride with you. So, it is important to follow these prevention steps every time you leave any body of water.

## **Remove all visible mud, plants, fish/animals.**

Before leaving any body of water, it is important to examine all your equipment, boats, trailers, clothing, boots, buckets etc. and:

- ◆ Remove any visible plants, fish or animals.
- ◆ Remove mud and dirt since it too may contain a hitchhiker.\*
- ◆ Remove even plant fragments as they may contain a hitchhiker.\*
- ◆ Do not transport any potential hitchhiker, even back to your home. Remove and leave them at the site you visited.



\*The larvae (immature form) of an animal can be so tiny that you cannot see it. However, it can live in mud, dirt, sand, and on plant fragments.

## **Drain water from boat and all equipment before transporting anywhere.**

Much of the recreational equipment used in water contains many spots where water can collect and potentially harbor these aquatic hitchhikers. Thus, make sure that you:

- ◆ Eliminate all water from every conceivable item before you leave the area you are visiting.
- ◆ Remove water from motors, jet drives, live wells, boat hulls, scuba tanks and regulators, boots, waders, bait buckets, seaplane floats, swimming floats.
- ◆ Once water is eliminated, follow the cleaning instructions listed on the back.

**Don't move live fish away from a waterbody.** Some aquatic invasive species, like diseases or pathogens, can be spread through animals. Ensuring that all water had been drained from your boat and equipment and not transporting fish from one lake to another prevents invasives, like the VHSv fish disease, from being spread.

**Buy minnows from a WI bait dealer and dispose of unwanted bait in trash.** Diseases and pathogens can also be transferred through bait fish, which is why bait can't be used on one waterbody and re-used on another waterbody. Use your bait to fish on one lake and then dispose of it in the trash (not in the water or on shore) when you're ready to move on to another lake. Minnows purchased from a licensed Wisconsin bait dealer have been certified to be free of AIS and are therefore safe for use.

**Clean and dry anything that came in contact with the water.**

(boats, trailers, equipment, dogs, boots, clothing, etc.)

Basic procedures include:

- ◆ Wash with ~212° F water (steam clean) to clean your equipment, OR
- ◆ Dry thoroughly for 5 days after cleaning with soap and water and/or high pressure water, OR
- ◆ Disinfecting with chlorine bleach (1 tablespoon/gallon of water) for 10 minutes. Disinfection measures must be taken prior to moving boats, equipment and other gear from one waterbody to another. They are not needed daily when using the same waterbody.\*

\*Disinfection should be done in a location away from waterbodies to prevent disinfectant from entering water. Every effort should be made to keep the disinfection solution and rinse water out of surface waters.

**DRY Equipment.** If possible, allow for 5 days of drying time before entering new waters.

**Do not release or put plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.**

Also, do not release them into storm drains, because most storm drains lead to water bodies or wetlands. This is an important prevention step because many plants and animals can survive even when they appear to be dead. The two categories below describe some common situations where people may feel compelled to release aquatic plants or animals.

- **Aquarium and Aquatic Pets:** If your family gets tired of its aquarium or aquatic pets, do not release anything from the aquarium (water, plants, fish or animals) into or near a body of water or storm drain. Explain to your children how you could be hurting all of the streams and lakes around the country and killing other fish and animals that already live in the water. If you cannot find a home for the critters in your aquarium, bury them. Dump the water into the toilet or yard, far away from storm drains.
- **Bait:** Whether you have obtained bait at a store or from another body of water, do not release unused bait into the waters you are fishing. If you do not plan to use the bait in the future, dump the bait in a trashcan or on the land, far enough away from the water that it cannot impact this resource. Also, be aware of any bait regulations, because in some waters, it is illegal to use live bait.



**STOP AQUATIC  
HITCHHIKERS!™**