

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

EVERY WATER, EVERY TIME.

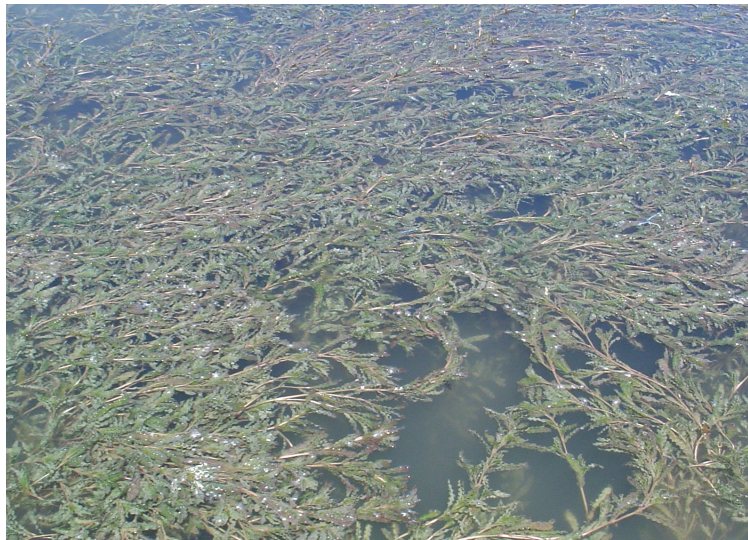
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IS NINE OUT OF TEN TIMES THE SAME AS TEN OUT OF TEN TIMES?

The simple answer is NO. The argument could be made that 90% is still pretty good, right? Usually gets you an A in the classroom! However, when it comes to helping slow the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) within South Dakota, the goal is that every user practices CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY every time they use any water in the state. That is why the primary goal of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) AIS program is to provide all surface water user with the information they need to implement best management practices every time to help lower the risk of spreading AIS. And... the message does appear to be working. Last year, over 18,600 watercraft inspections were performed across the state and during those inspections, boater plug compliance was 98%, which was up from 96% in 2022. While this is positive, there is still room for improvement, but it will take the efforts of all users. That's why the message continues to be CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY every water, every time.

WHY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION?

In many ways, it is very simple, GFP staff cannot be present every time a surface water is used in the state. Because of this, outreach and education is the most powerful tool when it comes to slowing the spread of AIS within South Dakota. Surface waters of the state are used for many different reasons by many different users. As such, we try and use a variety of different techniques to spread the message of CLEAN, DRAIN DRY. By



Curly-leaf pondweed

providing information, the goal is that best management practices can be implemented by users.

WHERE CAN THIS INFORMATION BE FOUND?

In many cases, it is provided through the form of emails and social media posts. Information on species biology, photos of AIS, as well as distribution maps can be found at SDLEASTWANTED.SD.GOV. Regulations related to AIS can also be found there, as well as in the 2024 South Dakota Fishing Handbook.

Information is also available in the field through site-specific signage, which can be one of the most effective ways to spread information on specific bodies of water. This signage may notify users that a specific AIS is present in that waterbody, such as zebra



mussels or Eurasian water milfoil. It also may just be reminder to pull a boat drain plug at a specific location.

GFP staff also directly engage with users. This can be through the watercraft inspections that occur across the state or through everyday interactions while performing other fisheries management activities.

REMEMBER, AIS IS MORE THAN JUST MUSSELS.

While zebra mussels grab a lot of attention, it's important to remember that other AIS exist in South Dakota or are in surrounding states. In fact, 13 fish species, 8 plants species and 8 species of invertebrates are classified as AIS in the state. However, the CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY method helps lower the risk of spreading all of these species, not just mussels. Regulations such as having boat plugs and valves pulled or open when not in the process of loading/launching a boat or not moving fish and bait in lake or stream water exist to help slow the spread of all AIS. For example, being diligent in removing all vegetation from boat trailers, regardless of if it is a native plant or not, helps reduce the likelihood of spreading AIS.

WHAT IF USING A WATERBODY THAT IS NOT POSITIVE FOR AIS?

The answer is still the same... CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY. Treating every waterbody as if it has AIS just helps users develop best management practices. That way, regardless of where someone uses a surface water of the state, if they implement best management practices, they reduce the risk of spreading AIS.

SO, HOW CAN USERS HELP?

It can be as simple as remembering to CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY after every use on a surface water of the state; regardless of if there is a known AIS to be present. By putting this practice into action, it ensures that you are ready to use the next waterbody. For example, Users should perform a self-inspection of their watercraft after every trip on the water using the acronym H.E.A.D.

SELF-INSPECTION

- » **Hull:** examine both sides of the hull below the waterline and the trailer.
- » **Engine:** inspect the engine, look for AIS in dark areas, right angles, and rough spots, and drain water from your lower unit.
- » **Anchor:** examine interior compartments, anchor, and ropes.
- » **Dry:** pull all plugs and leave them out until your next launch.

In the end, aquatic resources of the state are enjoyed by many different users for many different purposes. By practicing just a few simple actions, everyone can do their part to help slow the spread. Additional information can be found at SDLEASTWANTED.SD.GOV and the 2024 South Dakota Fishing Handbook. Please contact your local GFP office if you believe you have found an AIS.