

Invasive Species Program



There are an estimated 6,300 plants and animals in the United States that should not be here, and while most of these nonindigenous invaders are benign, a small percentage leaves a \$100 million trail of damage every year.

Some wreak havoc by damaging water intake equipment for cities, boat engines and more. Others, like the sea lamprey, inflict serious damage on fish and other native aquatic life; some, like the large rodent nutria, can strip wetlands of vital plants. Some species are particularly concerning, like snakeheads, highly predatory, air-breathing fishes, or the Formosa termite, a voracious breed that continues to cause extensive damage in New Orleans.

The Fisheries Program leads the effort within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement aquatic nuisance species control and prevention activities authorized under the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990.

Through the cooperative activities of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries serve as co-chairs and coordinate the activities of seven Federal agencies and 11 ex-officio



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members to prevent and control aquatic nuisance species. Service program staff at the Washington Office, Regional Offices and Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices work with State and private partners to coordinate and conduct activities carried out under the Task Force to implement a variety of the Act's provisions.

Some efforts include:

- Conducting detection and monitoring activities, including establishing surveys and supporting the Nonindigenous Aquatic Species database.
- Conducting a variety of prevention programs aimed at keeping invasive species out the United States and working to prevent the spread of those already established.
- Support for development of new technology to combat the entry of invasive species through freighters' ballast water.
- The campaign against invasive species is not something that is exclusive to government agencies.
- Anglers discovered the snakehead fish in a pond in Maryland, and it is anglers who have led the way in helping educate the public about the importance of not dumping bait buckets in open waterways, and about cleaning boats or personal watercraft before moving them from one body of water to another. Building upon this, the Service through the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, has led the development of a national public awareness and partnership campaign that targets recreational users and empowers them to become part of the solution in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Known as Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!, the campaign provides the entire conservation community with a vehicle to speak with one voice about this issue.

Using the prevention procedures that are the basis of the campaign, here's what you can do **to help**: If you find a strange fish or other aquatic species that seems out of place, do not throw it back — keep it, and notify your state fish and wildlife agency or the nearest office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Moving your boat or personal watercraft from one body of water to another? Examine it to make sure you're not carrying unwanted hitchhikers, either on the boat, trailer, or in live wells or on boat motors. Check those tiny hiding places.

If you have live bait left over from a fishing trip, do not dump it where you are fishing. Some bait is not native to the U.S., and once introduced into the wild, it's difficult to eradicate.

If you buy an exotic fish in a pet store and decide later you no longer want it, do not release the animal into the wild. Many see this as a humane way to dispose of it, but it can be the least humane to the native species that are already there. Go to the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! campaign web site for more information: www.protectyourwaters.net.



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