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## **DEC Releases Draft Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan for Public Comment**

### **Public Comments Accepted Through December 15**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today released its Draft Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) strategy to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS in New York State for public comment. Comments will be accepted through December 15.

Aquatic Invasive Species threaten the ecology of New York's rich abundance of waters and can harm water-based recreational opportunities and economies. New York is particularly vulnerable to AIS due to its vast marine and fresh water resources, major commercial ports and the easy access that ocean-going vessels have to the Great Lakes via the State's canal system. Managing an infestation is extremely costly, so prevention is the most cost-effective strategy.

"Prevention of aquatic invasive species is critical to the long-term vitality of waterways across New York State," said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. "This strategic plan details proposals to further our efforts to help ensure AIS-free waters remain free and additional AIS are not introduced to other waters. We welcome the public's ideas and feedback on the draft strategy."

This action-based Strategic Plan updates DEC's "Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Management Plan," which was written in 1993. The draft plan includes more than 50 actions designed to address prevention, detection, and response to AIS. Proposed actions identified in the strategy include:

- Expand the boat launch steward program statewide;
- Develop an AIS response framework to guide decision making when AIS are detected, and communicate the reasoning for the response selected;
- Implement an AIS public awareness campaign and evaluate its effectiveness in reaching target audiences;
- Expand the use of AIS disposal stations at waterway access sites;
- Establish regional "first responder" AIS teams to incorporate local expertise in planning and implementing appropriate AIS responses; and
- Identify and evaluate risks associated with pathways for AIS introduction and movement within New York.

Aquatic invasive species arrive by many pathways including direct introduction, live animal trade, the nursery and landscape trade, recreational boating and cargo transportation. Northern Snakehead, Sea Lamprey, Round Goby, Hydrilla and the New Zealand Mudsail are examples of aquatic invasive species present in some New York waters, which can prey upon or displace native species, alter habitat or otherwise harm native species.

**(MORE)**

The Plan can be viewed on DEC's website at:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99053.html>. Public comment will be accepted from October 30 through December 15. You can send comments to the address below or email them to [fwfish@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwfish@dec.ny.gov) – enter “AIS Management Plan” in the subject line.

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To help slow the spread of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, DEC asks all citizens to clean, drain and dry watercraft and gear after boating and fishing; use non-invasive plants in gardens and landscaping; use local firewood; and learn about, look for and report invasive species. Invasive species can be reported to New York's Invasive Species Database, a partnership with the Natural Heritage Program and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, online at <http://www.nyimainvasives.org/> by clicking the link to “Report an Invasive.”

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