

Dealing With Invasive Aquatic Species

Invasive species are animals, plants and disease organisms that are not native (and not wanted) in Idaho. Some invasive species pose a risk to fish and wildlife by taking over habitats, crowding out native species, competing for food or making them sick. Do your part to stop the introduction and spread of these organisms – your future fishing may depend on it.

Several invasive aquatic species have already found their way to Idaho. A European import, whirling disease is a microscopic parasite that has had a major impact on some western wild trout populations. Because the parasite clings to waders, boots and other fishing equipment, anglers – without even knowing it – can spread the disease to new waters.

Eurasian water-milfoil is a non-native aquatic plant that arrived in the U.S. in the 1940s and has now spread across the country, including Idaho. This nuisance plant grows fast and can quickly cover the entire surface of smaller lakes and ponds, making fishing and boating impossible. A single piece of milfoil can start a new infestation, so it is easily spread by boat trailers, float tubes or wading boots.



U. of Idaho

Eurasian water-milfoil

New Zealand mudsnails are now dispersed across southern and central Idaho. These invaders crowd out native snails, consume algae and reduce aquatic insects. Their effects on fish populations remain unknown.



D. L. Gustafson

New Zealand Mudsnails

Mudsnails can survive for hours or even days out of water. They can cling to

waders, boots or other equipment and go along on your next fishing trip.

Stopping new introductions...

The best defense against invasive species is to keep them from getting here in the first place. **Zebra mussels and quagga mussels** are the newest threat. First seen in the Great Lakes in the 1980s, both species quickly expanded through much



100th Meridian.org

Zebra Mussel

of the Midwest and more recently to the western U.S. They thrive in reservoirs, lakes and larger rivers, attaching to rocks, ropes, chains, docks, dams, irrigation pipes and even boat hulls and motors. Filtering algae from the water, they can disrupt the food chain which then impacts fish populations. Spreading can occur when an infested boat is moved from one water to another.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Quagga mussels

Neither mussel has been found in Idaho, and efforts focus on keeping them out. Special boat inspection stations along major highways and boat cleaning stations near some boat ramps are intended to detect mussels and other invasive species and decontaminate infected boats. This program is funded through a state invasive species sticker which must be attached to most watercraft.



Help Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species!

Inspect fishing and boating equipment and remove all obvious debris.

Clean items by spraying them with a two percent solution of household bleach or allow the items to dry thoroughly (at least 48 hours) before using them at another water body.

Never release fish or any other living creature into any water where it did not originate.

For more information on aquatic nuisance species, visit these websites:

- <http://www.protectyourwaters.net>
- <http://www.100thmeridian.org>
- <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu>
- <http://www.invasive.org>
- <http://www.agri.state.id.us>
- <http://www.esg.montana.edu/aim/mollusca/nzms/id.html>
- <http://nas3.er.usgs.gov>

