

# FACT SHEET



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## STOPPING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES

In recent years, invasive species such as zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil have infested America's waterways, crowding out native species and causing billions of dollars in damage to marinas, recreational fisheries, and other facilities. Many of these species arrive in the ballast water of ships, particularly in the Great Lakes, and then are accidentally transported to other waterways on the equipment of recreational boaters, anglers, and other outdoor users. Stopping their spread requires both better regulation of ballast water and better education of recreationists.

### BALLAST WATER

Scores of exotics plants and animals have entered the United States in the ballast water of ocean-going ships, and new ones are arriving each year. Safe from the predators and diseases of their native habitat, they reproduce exponentially, out-competing native species for food. Consider the effect zebra mussels have had on Great Lakes fish populations. The University of Wisconsin's Sea Grant Institute has found that since 1990, when zebra mussels really began to take hold, Lake Michigan's yellow perch population has decreased by about 80 percent.

At the national level, the League is working to improve the regulation of ballast water to prevent the introduction of new invasives. We are calling on the Coast Guard to better enforce the ballast water regulations it is responsible for under the National Invasives Species Act, and urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to aggressively regulate ballast water discharge under the Clean Water Act. We are also working to pass legislation in Congress requiring cargo ships to chemically treat all ballast water to kill any living organisms it might contain.

### CLEAN BOATS CAMPAIGN

Although ballast water is a major source of invasive species, recreational boaters and anglers have unknowingly contributed to the spread of aquatic invaders by not properly inspecting and cleaning their equipment. More than 230 small lakes in the Great Lakes region have thriving populations of zebra mussels that were unintentionally introduced by people on a recreational boat ride or fishing trip.

To address this problem, the League has organized the Clean Boats Campaign. Through public service announcements, articles, contests, and a Web site, [www.cleanboats.org](http://www.cleanboats.org), we teach boaters and anglers how to clean their equipment to remove any unwanted hitchhikers. Working with partners such as the BoatUS Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Healing Our Waters Coalition, we have reached more than 2 million boaters and anglers.

### LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

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