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## How To Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers

Invasive plants, animals, and other organisms have made their way into waters across the United States. These non-natives can dominate aquatic ecosystems, wiping out native plants and wildlife, because they have no native predators. They can also damage boat engines and steering equipment, make lakes and rivers unusable by boaters and swimmers, and dramatically increase the operating costs of drinking water plants and power plants.

You can help. Thoroughly cleaning boats and equipment after a day on the water will prevent aquatic invaders from hitching a ride with you to a new waterway. It's one of the most important things you can do to protect America's wildlife and great outdoor recreation.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard recommend the following steps to protect your favorite fishing and boating spots from an unwanted invasion. **The three key steps are: Clean. Drain. Dry.** It is important to follow these procedures *every time* you come into contact with any body of water. Even if the waters look pristine, invasive species may be lurking under the surface — some so small that you cannot see them without a microscope.

- Remove any visible plant matter, animals, mud, and dirt from your boat, trailer, boots, fishing tackle, and all equipment that has been in the water. Even plant fragments and dirt may contain tiny hitchhikers.
- Empty water from motors, jet drives, live wells, boat hulls, canoes and kayaks, and bait buckets. *Do this onsite.* If you wait until you get home to empty water, it can run into a storm drain and contaminate local waters.
- Clean your equipment, including your boat's engine cooling system, live wells, and bilge with hot tap water. If hot water is not available, spray equipment such as boats, motors, trailers, anchors, decoys, floats, and nets with high-pressure water.
- Equipment that cannot be exposed to hot water should be dipped in vinegar for 20 minutes or a one-percent saltwater solution for 24 hours. This table provides mixtures for the one-percent saltwater solution:

Gallons of Water	Cups of Salt
5	2/3
10	1 1/4
25	3
50	6 1/4
100	12 2/3

- Allow boats and other equipment to dry for at least 5 days before using them in other waters.

- If your dog gets into the water, wash him or her with warm tap water as soon as possible, brushing the coat thoroughly to remove any clinging invasives.
- Do not release unused bait into the waters you are fishing, whether the bait was bought at a store or caught in local waters. Dump unused bait into a trash can.

Every boater and angler can make a difference in keeping America's waterways safe for swimming, boating, fishing, and more. For more information about aquatic invasives and how to prevent their spread, visit the League's Clean Boats Web page at [www.iwla.org/cleanboats](http://www.iwla.org/cleanboats).

