

Guest Viewpoint: Boaters can help prevent spread of invasive species

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The 2013 boating season is underway, and with Memorial Day almost here, boaters, anglers and recreationalists will be flock to the fresh waters of Cayuga Lake and the Finger Lakes region to enjoy the outdoors.

The Hydrilla Task Force of Tompkins County wishes everyone a safe and enjoyable 2013 boating season, and in addition to standard safe boating practices, stresses that clean boating practices should be employed to prevent the spread of hydrilla and other invasives in the region. Boaters, recreationalists and the general public can assist in the fight against invasive threats.

Before entering and after leaving a water body:

- Check for and remove any visible plants or debris from your vessel and equipment, and dispose of it in the trash or plastic bag.
- Clean and drain your boat and equipment away from the water.
- Dry everything that came into contact with water.
- Avoid passing through any dense patches of vegetation in the inlet or shallow areas at the south end of the lake.
- Carry plastic trash bags. If you bring up any vegetation on the anchor, lines, fishing gear or propellers, bag it — do not return it to the lake.
- If you think you encountered hydrilla somewhere in the lake, take a picture and/or bag the plant, note the location and report it at stophydrilla.org.

Since 2011, the Hydrilla Task Force has implemented efforts to eradicate the highly invasive aquatic plant hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) from the Cayuga Inlet and prevent its spread to Cayuga Lake and beyond. The efforts in 2011 and 2012 were successful, significantly reducing the biomass of hydrilla by 90 to 95 percent (above the sediment), reducing the tuber population to a tenth of what it was in 2011 (below the sediment), and preventing the spread of hydrilla into Cayuga Lake. The success observed in 2011 and 2012 looks to be repeated in the 2013 treatment season.

Although the results of ongoing treatments have been successful, the fact remains that hydrilla tubers are still present in the sediment of the inlet, as indicated by ongoing sampling and monitoring. The hydrilla tuber is a specialized plant structure that lies below the sediment. This structure has the capability of remaining dormant and viable in the sediment for many years, only to sprout and give rise to new hydrilla plants down the line. The stems and leaves of the hydrilla plant are brittle, breaking and fragmenting easily, which makes transport by boats and equipment a major mode of its spread. These fragments can re-root and give rise to new hydrilla plants. Plant fragment transport and tubers are the greatest threats for the spread or re-infestation of hydrilla in the Cayuga Inlet, Cayuga Lake and beyond.

As in 2012, hydrilla treatments for the 2013 season (June through November) will involve utilizing both contact and systemic herbicides to target hydrilla, killing hydrilla above the sediment, causing the tuber to expend its energy and resources, and preventing the development of new tubers. While the Hydrilla Task Force is busy implementing eradication treatments this season, it is critical that boaters and recreationalists practice the steps listed above to prevent the transport of invasive species.

It is in everyone's best interest to ensure that invasive species are not introduced or spread to the waters of New York. The fresh water resources of the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes region offer enormous benefits, supplying drinking water to tens of thousands of residents, providing recreational enjoyment, increasing tourism and the economic viability of the community, and providing crucial habitat to diverse populations of plants and animals.

In the same way that we depend on these water bodies for the benefits they provide, they depend on us to be diligent environmental stewards. Combining the eradication efforts of the Hydrilla Task Force and the assistance of an engaged

and observant public, we can protect our water resources from an invasive takeover and the resulting environmental degradation, loss of recreational and economic viability, and the potential long-term costs and ramifications that would occur if hydrilla was allowed to spread unchecked.

If you would like more information about hydrilla and local eradication efforts, please visit our website at StopHydrilla.org, like us on Facebook at Stophydrilla.org or follow us on Twitter [@Stophydrilla](https://twitter.com/Stophydrilla).

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