



The New York Sea Grant waterfront steward program is expanding its educational impact and geographical outreach to help boaters slow the spread of aquatic invasive species.

NYSG Launch Stewards Educating Boaters, Public to Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers

Scientific-accurate educational outreach is needed to increase citizen awareness and knowledge of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and to engage and empower the boating public to help slow the spread of AIS. This type of public programming can also positively impact AIS management cost.

NYSG Responds

Due to the past success of New York Sea Grant-managed Waterfront Steward programs in Jefferson and Oswego counties, the Launch Steward program that began in 2012 expanded in 2013 to include Madison, Oneida, Onondaga and Wayne counties.

Seven college students conducted voluntary watercraft inspection training with motorized and non-motorized boaters at 15 sites on Lake Ontario and inland waters. Through the inspections, boaters learn how to look for, remove, and properly dispose of aquatic hitchhiking debris and organisms.

The student stewards also:

- conducted public education presentations
- wrote media articles about the need for, methods of, and cost of managing AIS
- started a NYSG Launch Steward Blog: <http://nysglaunchsteward.blogspot.com>), and
- taught waterfront users how to use iMapInvasives.org for reporting unusual sightings that may be unwanted species.

Boaters, Diverse Audiences Engaged

The 2013 NYSG Launch Stewards conducted 2,166 inspections and educated 5,178 boaters (85 percent NYS-registered). Seventy-four percent of the boaters reported the Steward interaction increased their AIS awareness by a moderate-to-large degree.

Visible debris was removed from 9 percent of inspected vessels. This impact is likely due to 92 percent of the boaters surveyed reporting the use of watercraft inspection on their own.



The New York Sea Grant Launch Steward program educates boaters about watercraft inspection to reduce the spread of AIS, photo: Megan Pistoiese

Additionally, the Stewards extended AIS awareness to diverse audiences, reaching more than 7,000 people, including:

- 100 7th graders at Dune Fest
- 40 Save Our Sodus Citizen Science Expo visitors
- 400 visitors to Empire Farm Days, the largest outdoor agricultural show in the Northeast
- 46 Oswego Triathlon athletes, and
- 75 citizens at water chestnut pulls (nearly 1,000 lbs. of plants removed).

Partners: City of Oswego, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, New York State Office of Parks, Onondaga County, Towns of Henderson, Sodus, and Scriba; funding: US Fish & Wildlife Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative monies to Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems.

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

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