



Launch Steward Watercraft Inspection Program Adds Sodus Bay

by New York Sea Grant Launch Steward Sophia Oliveira

In 2013, the New York Sea Grant (NYSG) Launch Steward Program expanded to include Sodus Bay, the largest sheltered bay on Lake Ontario. A popular recreational and tourism area, Sodus Bay is an excellent place for the Launch Stewards to be educating the public about the importance of watercraft inspection for preventing and slowing the spread of harmful aquatic hitchhikers, also known as AIS/aquatic invasive species.



Sodus Bay. Photo: Great Lakes Seaway Trail, John Griebusch

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Sodus Bay covers a surface area of about 3,357 acres in the Towns of Sodus and Huron in Wayne County. With an average depth of 18 feet and a maximum depth of about 48 feet, Sodus Bay provides habitat for many fish and other freshwater aquatic organisms, and is a gem for year-round fishing and vacationing and a vital local economic driver.

While the bay provides suitable habitat for native fish and plants, a number of factors, including aquatic invasive species (AIS), are decreasing the water quality and suitability of the ecosystem for the natives. AIS such as Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed, and European water chestnut are becoming nuisances to native plant species by outcompeting for resources.

To educate the public about AIS and how boaters can help slow their spread, the Launch Stewards conducted voluntary watercraft inspections at Sodus Bay and Port Bay along with 13 other sites in the Central NY region. They educated motorized and non-motorized boaters on how to look for, remove and dispose of aquatic hitchhikers, using AIS, using Clean, Drain, Dry practices. **Empowering boaters with easy-to-use techniques for slowing the spread of AIS by inspecting their watercraft each time they enter and leave a body of water engages them in preserving the waters they enjoy.**



**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!**

Public education and citizen participation in AIS prevention and containment efforts are helping to maintain Sodus Bay, and Port Bay, also added as a New York Sea Grant Launch Steward site in 2013, as environmental jewels important to the quality of life and economy of New York's Lake Ontario region.

The statements and views expressed in this publication are those of the New York Sea Grant Launch Stewards who are student authors. 9/2013

The Impact of AIS

Environmental Impact

- Decline of overall water quality
- Impact on native species:
 - . Loss of habitat for native species
 - . Oxygen dead zones
 - . Food web disruption
 - . Loss of species diversity & abundance
- Nutrient imbalance and overloading
- Potential for human health impact
- Decline in shoreline aesthetics/value



Above: Sodus Bay boat launch;
photo: Mary Penney, NY Sea Grant;
below: NYSG Launch Steward Megan Pistoless
educates a boater on Clean, Drain, Dry practices;
photo: Brittney Rogers, NYSG Launch Steward

Economic Impact

- Decline or loss of recreational areas for swimmers, boaters, kayakers, anglers ...
- Negative impact on tourism
- Decline of lake property appeal/value
- Increased costs for AIS management: in excess of \$100 million/yr estimated aggregate cost of AIS to Great Lakes region (*Anderson Economic Group, 2012*)



What Can We Do?

- **Conduct watercraft inspection and properly dispose of aquatic hitchhikers**
 - **Clean, Drain, Dry** vessels of AIS before moving to new waters
- Clean:** Look for, remove & properly dispose of mud, plants, fish or organisms from boat, trailer, equipment, clothes, dog...

Drain: Before leaving the launch, empty all water from bilges, buckets, livewells, etc. Dump live bait at bait disposal sites or in the trash.

Dry: Dry anything in contact with the water. Recommended air dry time: 5 days.

- **Promote and support public education, outreach and wise stewardship**
- **Support environmental research**



FOR MORE INFORMATION

New York Sea Grant
Launch Steward Program
315-312-3042
www.nyseagrant.org



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