

National Voluntary ANS Guidelines: A Strategy to Interrupt Recreational Pathways of Spread

By: William J. Rendall, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Recognizing the threat from biological invaders and the need for prevention guidelines, Congress passed the National Invasive Species Act of 1996. The act called for national voluntary guidelines to prevent the spread of zebra mussels and additional nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species (ANS) through boating, fishing and other recreational activities — all of which pose a significant risk.

There are several reasons why national guidelines are necessary. As the spread of aquatic nuisance species has become an increasing concern across the continent, a recognized problem has been the lack of comprehensive (multi-species) guidelines that state and federal agencies recommend to the public to reduce ANS spread. An informal survey in the Great Lakes region revealed another problem. State and local guidelines were developed independently, so they vary considerably. A third problem, revealed by past surveys of recreational boaters, is that people don't take precautions to prevent ANS spread unless they are educated about the precautions.

The federal ANS Task Force established a Recreational Activities Committee to draft voluntary guidelines. The committee was chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and included numerous agencies and organizations representing interests of boaters, anglers and marine retailers.

Before the national effort was instituted to develop recreational guidelines, the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species developed several guidelines for the Great Lakes region. Panel guidelines, along with additional information provided by the Recreational Activities Committee members, were the starting point for drafting national voluntary guidelines.

The committee developed "generic" guidelines that apply to most water-related activities at coastal and inland waters and "pathway specific" guidelines that apply to a variety of recreational activities ranging

from boating to seaplanes. Last April (1999), the voluntary guidelines were approved by the ANS Task Force.

Generic Guidelines

- Inspect equipment (in the broadest sense, e.g., boats, planes, trailers, decoy anchors, SCUBA gear, lures) before transporting.
- Remove visible plants and animals from equipment (expel plants, animals and water in internal parts).
- Drain water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean equipment that has been in infested waters before placing it in other waters.
- Report questionable species to your state resource agency and, if possible, bring a sample of suspected new species to your resource agency for identification.
- Never transport plants, animals, mud or water from lakes, rivers, wetlands or coastal waters.
- Never release animals or plants (e.g., aquarium species, bait, pets and water garden plants) into the wild unless it is the same water body where the species originated.

Pathway Specific Guidelines

In addition to the overland transport of boats, which has long been identified as a key pathway of spread, angling, scuba diving, seaplanes and waterfowl hunting are among the many other potential ways facilitating ANS transport. The voluntary guidelines include effective and reasonable precautions targeting these specific pathways, based on the set of generic guidelines and practices unique to the recreational activity.

The following are examples of pathway specific guidelines.

- Angling: Dispose of unwanted bait on land before leaving the water body.
- Boating: Before transporting your boat to another water body, choose one of the following options: 1) rinse your boat and equipment with hot tap water (104° F); 2) spray your boat and trailer with high pressure water; or 3) dry

your boat and equipment for at least five days.

- Sail boating: Check centerboard wells of sailboats for zebra mussels and aquatic plants.
- Personal watercraft: After the watercraft has been removed from the water, start the engine for five to ten seconds to blow out any excess water and vegetation.
- Seaplanes: Raise and lower water rudders several times to free aquatic plants (both before and after takeoff).
- Waterfowl hunting: Remove aquatic plants, animals and mud that are attached to decoy lines or anchors.

Establishing these guidelines is an essential step in promoting new practices to avoid spread of nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species associated with recreational activities. The national guidelines now need to be incorporated into ANS outreach products (such as articles, brochures and signs) targeting those involved in recreational activities. Public and private sector partners are being sought to help communicate these new voluntary guidelines through assorted local, state, provincial, tribal and regional educational products, policies and programs. **Contact:** Pat Carter, USFWS, Chair, Recreational Activities Committee, ANS Task Force, 404-679-7108, pat_carter@fws.gov.

Great Lakes Panel Update

The Panel met Oct. 19-20, 1999 in Chicago, Ill. The meeting featured discussions on the Great Lakes Action Plan, draft recommendations from the Panel's workshop on ballast water management, and an update on federal legislation and appropriations. The three Panel committees reviewed a draft Panel workplan for FY2000 and associated issues.

The Panel's business meeting was followed on Oct. 20-21 by the *Great Lakes Nonindigenous Invasive Species Workshop*, sponsored by the U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office with assistance

from the Great Lakes Commission. The goal of the workshop, one of a series of regional initiatives that U.S. EPA is holding around the nation, is to raise awareness and understanding within U.S. EPA of the problems and potential solutions regarding aquatic and terrestrial nonindigenous species in the Great Lakes and its watershed. A briefing paper on the scope of invasive species in the region, prepared by Great Lakes Commission staff, was distributed to all participants to generate dialogue and information exchange on prevention, control, detection/monitoring and outreach/education concerning nonindigenous species. **Contact:** Kathe Glassner-Shwayder, Great Lakes Commission, 734-665-9135, shwayder@glc.org.

Washington Watch

Both the House and Senate this year made ANS control a priority within serious budget constraints. All NISA authorized programs are slated for funding at or above the FY1999 level; most programs are slated for funding at or above the president's requested level. Report language accompanying the bills further emphasizes the importance Congress places on ANS control efforts. Language accompanying the Energy and Water Development Appropriates Act highlights the need for investigations of zebra mussel dispersion via small boat portages and the public health risks posed by pathogens released in ballast water discharges; it also call for incorporating the objectives of the President's Executive Order on Alien Invasive Species. The House directed the Sea Grant program to conduct research related to public health risks posed by pathogens released in ballast water discharges in ports around the country. House, Senate and conference report language accompanying the Transportation Appropriations bill all reflect a need for increased emphasis on U.S. Coast Guard research efforts addressing ballast water issues, including technology development for compliance monitoring. **Contact:** Rochelle Sturtevant, Senate Great Lakes Task Force, Northeast Midwest Institute, 202-224-1211, rochelle_sturtevant@levin.senate.gov.

News from Around the Basin

ILLINOIS: The state ANS management plan is now ready to be submitted to the ANS Task Force. In a survey conducted in October, DNR and USFWS biologists found live specimens of ruffe in the Sanitary and Ship Channel in locations as far as eleven miles downstream from the proposed electrical barrier site to be constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) by May of 2000. **Contact:** Rod Horner, IL DNR, 309-968-6837, RHORNER@dnrmail.state.il.us.

INDIANA: A zebra mussel page is being designed for the IN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife's web site. This site will include a list of locations where zebra mussels have been observed in Indiana,

regulations, policy statements and links to other web sites. **Contact:** Randy Lang, IN DNR, 317-232-4094, lang@fw.dnr.in.us.

MINNESOTA: The DNR has focused recent efforts on increasing public awareness of the ANS issue. Almost 250 copies of the TV special "Aquatic Invaders: The Cutting Edge Technology Report" have been distributed. To enhance boater contact, DNR watercraft inspectors began visiting high-use, non-infested lakes to raise awareness of ANS laws. Sea Grant and the DNR staff assisted with the production of a national ANS video for boaters. The video, starring John Ratzemberger (Cliff Claven from "Cheers"), is expected to be released this winter. **Contact:** Jay Rendall, MN DNR, jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us.

NEW YORK: Earlier this year, New York submitted a proposal to the ANS Task Force requesting federal funding for FY1999. Two of the three proposed projects received funding: continuation of the Finger Lakes zebra mussel monitoring project, and rewriting New York's state ANS management plan. New York's original management plan was written prior to March 1998 (before model state guidance was developed by the ANS Task Force). New York will revise the existing plan to be consistent with the new federal guidance.

Contact: Bill Culligan, NYS DEC, 716-366-0228, nysdec@netsync.net.

OHIO: Ohio has received a third year of funding from the USFWS for its state ANS management plan. The funding will be used for the implementation of the following initiatives: national and regional coordination; interagency and constituent coordination; information assessment and development; and ANS research, monitoring and control. The ANS Advisory Team and Steering Committee are in the process of completing a review of Ohio's existing ANS laws, along with the Panel's model guidance. Based on their reviews and input, appropriate changes may be recommended to state agencies. **Contact:** Randy Sanders, OH DNR, 614-265-6344, randy.sanders@dnr.state.oh.us.

ONTARIO: The MNR is working in partnership with the Canadian Aquarium Clubs Association to create a fish rescue program to reduce the release of aquarium pets. Efforts are underway to establish a toll-free hotline and a network of aquarium clubs and retailers that will take unwanted aquarium pets. **Contact:** Ed Paleczny, ON MNR, 705-755-1890, ed.paleczny@mnr.gov.on.ca.

PENNSYLVANIA: Sea Grant instituted a new system for anglers to report goby catches to the Sea Grant office. Round gobies have been tracked from the Ohio/Pennsylvania state line to the Presque Isle Bay channel. Reports from anglers confirm their spread from the Ohio to the New York state line. The Fish and Boat Commission have detailed trawl assessments of gobies collected in state waters. Goby populations have literally exploded in Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie in 1999. **Contact:** Kelly Burch, PA DEP, 814-332-6816, burch.kelly@dep.state.pa.us.

WISCONSIN: Data collected in July 1999 on the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien by the USACE indicates greater than 90% mortality of native mussels and no recruitment due to zebra mussel infestation. Monitoring results from DNR staff and volunteers confirm zebra mussels in six additional lakes, including Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin's largest inland lake. Next spring, the DNR will begin posting signs on uninfested waters to alert boaters of the precautions they should take to avoid ANS spread. **Contact:** Ron Martin, WI DNR, 608-266-9270, martir@dnr.state.wi.us.

National ANS Task Force

The most recent ANS Task Force meeting was held in August in Olympia, Wash. The Task Force discussed several issues, including a recommendation to establish a committee to develop a prevention program for *Caulerpa taxifolia*; a recommendation to establish a committee to develop a management program for the Chinese mitten crab; establishment of a Gulf Regional Panel; and a request to the Western Regional Panel to develop a generic protocol for emergency response to aquatic invasive species.

The next meeting of the ANS Task Force is scheduled in Washington, D.C. on Dec. 1-2, 1999 (see Upcoming Events).

Contact: Sharon Gross, USFWS, Acting Executive Secretary, ANS Task Force, 703-358-2308, Sharon_Gross@fws.gov.

Upcoming Events

- *Meeting of the National ANS Task Force.* Dec. 1-2, 1999; USFWS Headquarters, Arlington, VA. **Contact:** Sharon Gross, USFWS, Acting Executive Secretary, ANS Task Force, 703-358-2308, Sharon_Gross@fws.gov.
- *Taking Stock of Our Future: A Conference on the Impacts of Fish Stocking in the Great Lakes.* Dec. 5, 1999, Chicago, Ill., in conjunction with the Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference. **Contact:** Jennifer Nalbome, Great Lakes United, 716-886-0142, jen@glu.org.
- *10th International Aquatic Nuisance Species and Zebra Mussel Conference.* Feb. 14-18, 2000. Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. **Contact:** Elizabeth Muckle-Jeffs, 800-868-8776, profedge@renc.igs.net or conference web site, www.zebraconf.org.

On the Bookshelf

- *Nonindigenous Freshwater Organisms: Vectors, Biology, and Impacts.* 1999. Edited by Renata Claudi and Joseph Leach. Lewis Publishers.
- *Fanwort Invades Ontario Waters.* August 1999. **Contact:** Ed Paleczny, ON MNR, 705-755-1890, ed.paleczny@mnr.gov.on.ca.
- *Attention Anglers: New Bait Import and Harvest Regulations.* **Contact:** Chris Brousseau, ON MNR, Chris.Brousseau@mnr.gov.on.ca