

Aquatic invasive species can still spread during the winter months. Here's how ice fishermen can help

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This cold snap has been good for making ice on lakes across the Northwoods.

As fishermen get ready to drill some holes, conservationists are reminding them to be mindful of spreading invasive species.

Stephanie Boismenu says it's a matter of trying to get people to change their mindset when it comes to lakes in the winter.

"People tend to think, 'oh it's winter, so the native vegetation has died back, the lakes are frozen over. We're not even going to think about invasive species. How could they possibly spread this time of year?'" she said.

Boismenu is the aquatic invasive species coordinator and conservation technician for the Oneida County Land and Water Conservation Department.

She'll be the first to tell that kind of thinking isn't correct.

"There is mud, debris, and plants that are still thriving under the ice, so there is an opportunity for those to spread in the winter months," she said.

Two invasive species of particular concern this time of year are Eurasian Water Milfoil and Curly Leaf Pond Weed.

Boismenu says the milfoil in particular can stay hardy through the winter months.

Ice fishermen can help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by thoroughly cleaning all their gear.

"They need to make sure they remove all bits and pieces of plant matter and muddy debris because it could be harboring the larvae of the invasive zebra mussels or invasive snails. Be sure to check anything that was on the bottom of the lake, suspended in the water or in weedy areas," said Boismenu.

Fishermen should clean off their gear before moving to a different section of a lake or leaving the lake.

Boismenu also reminds people to pack out all their waste.

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