



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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COMBATING INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS – NEW BOAT CLEANING STATION AT WORDEN POND

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announces that the Town of South Kingstown has installed a boat cleaning station at the Worden Pond boat ramp. The system is a self-service unit that is free to the public throughout boating season. The unit enables boaters to [properly clear off fragments of invasive aquatic plants](#) that easily hitchhike on boats and gear and spread to other waterbodies.

The invasive plant [Hydrilla verticillata](#) was [detected in Worden Pond in 2023](#) and is a significant threat to boating, recreation, native plants, and wildlife in the pond while other waterbodies in Rhode Island are at high risk. The plant is easily transported and can grow from just one small plant fragment. [A 2024 study](#) estimated that over 150 acres (or 14%) of the 1,094-acre lake was covered by invasive hydrilla in June.

Encouraging boaters to clean their boats at the boat launch can reduce the chance of its spread to other waterbodies in RI. The boat cleaning station was purchased using a \$35,000 US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [Section 319 Non-Point Source](#) grant secured through DEM with an additional \$21,610 from the town.



The solar-powered boat cleaning station stands to remind boaters to clean off their boats and provides compressed air to dry gear, a wet-vacuum to remove water and plants, and tethered tools available to reach difficult spaces under boat trailers.

Transporting any plant or plant part in or out of Rhode Island waterbodies on boats, vessels, vehicles, trailers, fishing supplies, or any other equipment is [prohibited](#). Boaters must clean all vessels and gear before and after entering freshwaters to prevent the spread of invasive plants. Boaters should always follow the [CLEAN DRAIN DRY](#) approach and take the [pledge](#) to help protect the waterbodies where they recreate by taking the following actions:

- **CLEAN:** Remove all visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from all equipment before leaving water access.
- **DRAIN:** motor, bilge, livewell, and other water containing devices before leaving water access.
- **DRY:** everything for at least 24 hours OR wipe with a towel before reuse.



Fragments of hydrilla, an aggressive aquatic invasive plant, on the boat ramp at Worden Pond.

The Town of South Kingstown is hiring a part-time boat greeter at the ramp during boating season to demonstrate how to use the boat cleaning unit and can help boaters clean off their gear. Volunteers that wish to help greet boaters and educate others at Worden Pond or the local boat ramp [can register online](#) for upcoming training sessions in late May and early June.

Aquatic invasive plants are a major threat to Rhode Island’s freshwater lakes, with [more than 114 lakes and ponds](#) and 29 river segments affected. Before visiting a waterbody, boaters should check for known invasive plant sightings using DEM’s online maps and list of waterbodies by town available [online here](#), or use [the interactive map](#). Visitors who suspect they have discovered hydrilla in another water body should take a photo and report the sighting at www.dem.ri.gov/hydrilla.

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