



**Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation**

**Canal  
Corporation**

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## **DEC AND CANAL CORPORATION ANNOUNCE COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO PROTECT NEW YORK'S WATERS FROM AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES ROUND GOBY**

***State to Develop Rapid Response Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species***

***Effort Includes Research, Mitigation, Enhanced Public Education and  
Engagement to Prevent Spread of Round Goby Fish and Other Invasive Species  
to Lake Champlain, Other Waterways***

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York State Canal Corporation today announced a new comprehensive effort, including a new rapid response plan, to combat the potential spread of the round goby, an aquatic invasive species, to the Lake Champlain Basin following the discovery of the fish in the Hudson River near Troy in July 2021. Aquatic invasive species can out-compete native fish species, disrupting ecosystems and damaging local economies dependent on recreation.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native aquatic plants and animals that can negatively impact the environment, local economies, and even human health. These harmful species have been found in many of New York's lakes, ponds, and rivers, and can be transported from waterbody to waterbody on watercraft, equipment, and bait. Research shows that recreational watercraft are the greatest vector for transport and introduction of these invasive species throughout the United States.

**DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said,** "DEC is working shoulder-to-shoulder with our partners at Canal Corporation to address the threat of round goby and other invasive species to waterbodies like Lake Champlain. We are bolstering current invasive species surveillance education and taking a hard look at the immediate threats posed by these water-borne invaders to implement the most effective strategies that will protect our fisheries, wildlife, and local recreational economies today and into the future."

**Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said,** "The Canal Corporation is proactively partnering with DEC to ensure the Canal system helps implement any necessary steps, including education and awareness programming, to combat against invasive fish, like the round

goby, and other aquatic invasive species, while at the same time ensuring the Canal remains a driver of economic activity and a thriving tourist destination. As we implement risk reduction strategies along on the Champlain Canal this season, we ask users and stakeholders for their patience and encourage them to learn how they can assist in mitigating the spread of aquatic invasives species to ensure the Canal's resiliency for generations to come."

The round goby is one of the biggest threats to New York waters, particularly Lake Champlain, and DEC lists round goby as a prohibited invasive species in the New York Code of Rules and Regulations. Native to Europe and Asia, this fish was introduced in the Great Lakes in 1990, and spread throughout the lakes' system. Round goby reproduces quickly, outcompetes native benthic fish species for food and habitat, eats the young and eggs of other fish, and can transport botulism up the food chain to waterfowl.

DEC and Canals will conduct a full evaluation of the potential ecological and economic impacts of aquatic invasive species, including the round goby, to the public, canal users, municipalities, and New York State. Working with partners, the agencies will develop a rapid response plan to take effect before the opening of the Canal system on May 20 to identify appropriate actions if round goby enter the Champlain Canal. These measures and metrics will be driven by research tracking the spread of AIS.

In addition to the rapid response plan, the agencies are working collaboratively with partners, like the Lake Champlain Basin Program and others, to the associated economic impacts, implement new risk reduction strategies and potential mitigation measures in select locks on the Champlain Canal, and provide enhanced public education so all New Yorkers can help prevent the spread of invasives. Prior to advancing any actions, DEC and the Canal Corporation will work with partners to educate and engage stakeholders on any measures identified to limit the spread of round goby.

**Dr. Eric Howe, Director of the Lake Champlain Basin Program, said,** "The LCBP is dedicated to short- and long-term solutions to prevent invasive species impacts to Lake Champlain, and supports an integrated management approach to addressing the round goby threat. Round goby may invade Lake Champlain via several different routes, including the Richelieu River in Quebec, bait bucket introductions from the Mohawk River, and now via the Champlain canal. Since the fall of 2021, the LCBP Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Task Force has been following an established rapid response process of ecological and economic evaluation of round goby impacts to Lake Champlain. The Task Force's integrated response includes addressing all potential points of round goby introduction to Lake Champlain, and has identified the Champlain Canal as a very high risk pathway. LCBP and New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) have activated rapid response funds to support U.S. Geological Survey New York to conduct early detection monitoring for round goby in the Hudson River system and the Champlain Canal. LCBP and NEIWPCC also are collaborating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support a new AIS outreach specialist position stationed at DEC in Warrensburg to work with communities along the Champlain Canal on spread prevention for round goby and all other aquatic invasive species."

DEC and Canal Corporation are undertaking the following actions in coordination with Vermont, Canada, and other stakeholders:

- **Perform immediate and ongoing field research on the Champlain Canal:** In coordination with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and at other locations in the Hudson River watershed, DEC will work with U.S. Geological Survey to undertake an aggressive sampling effort using Environmental DNA (eDNA). This effort will launch in April and will help determine the extent of round goby spread in the Canal system and provide the data necessary to strategically guide response efforts.
- **Implement immediate risk reduction strategies in select locks on the Champlain Canal this season:** Immediate measures will include the piloting of “double draining” at Champlain Canal locks C-7 and C-8, both in Fort Edward, Washington County, and scheduling locking operations to set times to accommodate recreational and commercial vessels. The intent of “double draining” is to move goby out of the lock and lock approach to prevent upstream migration.
- **Assess mid-term protection strategies:** DEC and Canals will develop additional potential AIS mitigation measures that allow boat passage and have the potential to be implemented in the next year, such as electric field barriers and air bubblers, and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures.
- **Launch a coordinated public education campaign:** Working with partners in Vermont and Canada, State agencies and the New York Invasive Species Council will engage in an education and outreach effort on the steps boaters, anglers, and others can take to prevent the spread of goby and other AIS. This effort will include angler education on bait buckets, the importance of awareness and use of boat washing stations, and other stewardship actions.
- **Develop rapid response plans:** DEC and Canal Corporation will create plans to address additional operational changes of the Canal system in the event that research shows upstream movement of the goby that may justify the need for other measures, or if a new AIS is identified within proximity to entering the Champlain Canal. The plan will establish objective criteria based on data for implementation of further canal operation modifications or implementation of technology-based interventions, such as an electric field barrier.
- **Evaluate economic and ecological impacts of round goby:** State agencies and partners will gather data and provide a comprehensive evaluation of potential economic and ecological impacts as a result of round goby and AIS spread. Assessment will include impacts to canal users, residents, municipalities, anglers, other recreational user groups, and New York State to further inform mitigation efforts.

DEC undertakes wide-ranging efforts to address AIS in New York State. DEC has increased boat stewards through the Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program, reaching additional recreationists with the agency’s “Clean, Drain, Dry” campaign. Boat stewards demonstrate how to conduct boat and trailer inspections prior to launching into a new waterbody and provide basic facts about AIS. In 2020, DEC's boat stewards talked with more than 30,000 boaters who were unfamiliar with the boat steward program. These stewards also intercepted more than 19,000 AIS on boats and equipment, including hydrilla, which was removed from boats headed into Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario. New York State’s efforts to combat AIS are supported by additional work led by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including a feasibility study already underway to assess options for permanent barriers to prevent the spread of these invasive pests.

To help protect New York's lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, visit DEC's website for [more information on AIS](#) and a [step by step guide](#) for ridding boats and equipment of AIS. A video can also be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHdyB5SpnR8>.

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