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Environmental  
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Canal  
Corporation

**For Immediate Release:** 01/25/2023

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

### ***Ongoing Implementation of State's Rapid Response Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species***

### ***Effort Includes Research, Mitigation, Enhanced Public Education and Engagement to Prevent Spread of Round Goby 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 continue to implement a comprehensive effort, including a [rapid response plan](#), to combat the potential spread of the round goby, an aquatic invasive species (AIS), to the Lake Champlain Basin following the discovery of the fish in the Hudson River near the city of Troy in July 2021. Aquatic invasive species can out-compete native fish species, disrupting ecosystems and damaging local economies dependent on recreation.

**DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos** said, "As we approach the season opening this spring, DEC continues to work with our partners at Canal Corporation to mitigate the risk of round goby and other invasive species entering our waterways. DEC and our partners at Canal Corporation have strategies in place to protect our fisheries, wildlife, and economy from the potential spread of the round goby and other invasive species consistent with the State's rapid response plan. Working together, DEC and Canal Corporation are advancing education and outreach encouraging canal users to follow best practices to safeguard these waterways. DEC will continue to actively work to protect these waterways with ongoing monitoring and management to ensure early detection and treatment of potential new invasions."

**Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton** said, "As we prepare for the upcoming navigation season on New York's Canals, we are reaffirming our commitment to mitigating the potential spread of the round goby to the Lake Champlain Basin. Our ongoing partnership with DEC and Champlain Canal stakeholders will ensure the actions we collectively take now protect our waterways for the future. We are confident that the strategies we deploy through the State's rapid response plan will ensure the Champlain Canal remains a key driver of economic and tourism activity in the region."

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.

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 State 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 are conducting a full evaluation of the potential ecological and economic impacts of AIS, including the round goby, to the public, canal users, municipalities, and New York State. In 2022, working with partners, the agencies developed and began implementing a rapid response plan prior the seasonal opening of the Canal system. The response plan identifies appropriate actions if round goby enter the Champlain Canal and will guide 2023 canal operation. These measures and metrics are being driven by research tracking the spread of AIS and through information sharing and communication with Parks Canada.

In addition to the rapid response plan, the agencies are working collaboratively with partners, like the Lake Champlain Basin Program and others, to assess 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.

**Director of the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) Dr. Eric Howe** said, "The Lake Champlain Basin Program's Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Task Force continues to meet monthly with partners in New York, Vermont, and Quebec to coordinate round goby early detection monitoring and education and outreach efforts. We are committing resources to work with U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct round goby environmental DNA, trawling, electrofishing and VHS sampling in the Champlain Canal system in 2023 and 2024. The Lake Champlain watershed community is very concerned about round goby impacts to lake trout recovery, bass populations, and the fishing economy. LCBP's highest priority is working in partnership with DEC and Canal Corporation to address the Champlain Canal as a pathway for aquatic invasive species introduction and spread."

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 continues to work with U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to undertake an aggressive sampling effort using Environmental DNA (eDNA) and electrofishing. This effort occurred Between April and December 2022 and found the round goby remained south of Champlain Canal Lock C-1 in Waterford. Sampling efforts will continue this year to help determine the extent of round goby spread in the Canal system and provide the data necessary to strategically guide response efforts.

- **Continue implementation of immediate risk reduction strategies in select locks on the Champlain Canal this season:** Immediate measures include the piloting of "double draining" at Champlain Canal Locks C-1 (Waterford) and C-2 (Halfmoon) and scheduling locking operations to set times to accommodate recreational and commercial vessels for a second season. The intent of "double draining" is to move goby out of the lock and lock approach to prevent upstream migration. Additional efforts have been taken to understand the efficacy of double draining and studies will continue this season.
- **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.
- **Continue a coordinated public education campaign:** Working with partners in Vermont and Canada, State agencies and the New York Invasive Species Council are engaged in an education and outreach effort that teaches boaters, anglers, and others what steps can take to prevent the spread of goby and other AIS. This effort includes angler education on bait buckets, the importance of awareness and use of boat washing stations, and other stewardship actions as well as outreach visits that target different user groups. Educational materials developed by DEC will be distributed to boaters by lock staff.
- **Implement rapid response plans:** DEC and Canal Corporation will continue to implement and adjust the rapid response plan as new data become available. The rapid response plan defines 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 contains objective criteria based on data for implementation of further canal operation modifications or implementation of technology-based interventions, such as an electric field barrier; and
- **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 increased boat stewards through the Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program to reach 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 2022, DEC's boat stewards talked with more than 19,000 boaters who were unfamiliar with the boat steward program. These stewards also intercepted more than 9,800 AIS on boats and equipment, including finding hydrilla, which was an invasive plant removed from boats headed into Lake Canadarago before it could spread. 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 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 on [DEC's YouTube channel](#).

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