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PRESS RELEASE

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“Rock Snot” Campaign Intensifies

Officials from NH, VT unveil new radio ads, education efforts on invasive algae

Hartford, Vt. – Officials from Vermont and New Hampshire today announced the beginning of a two-month radio advertising campaign to enlist anglers, boaters and others who use the states’ waters in the assault on the aquatic invasive species commonly known as “rock snot.”

Called “Stop Rock Snot,” the radio campaign complements the already-on-the-ground efforts of biologists, anglers and volunteers who have fanned out along the White and Connecticut rivers since *Didymosphenia geminata*, the invasive aquatic algae also known as rock snot, made its first known northeastern United States appearance several weeks ago.

“As biologists from both Vermont and New Hampshire have made clear, it is nearly impossible to eradicate rock snot once it appears in a waterway,” said Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Secretary George Crombie. “However, its spread can be slowed with the help of the public. This campaign is designed to arm the public with the knowledge of how to properly disinfect their boats, fishing gear and clothing once they’ve been in the water.”

So far, the algae – which threatens the health of many species of fish – has been confirmed in the upper Connecticut River and in two locations six miles apart on the White River in the towns of Royalton, Bethel and Stockbridge.

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Commissioner Thomas S. Burack said that the threat to the region’s waterways is real. “Experts on both sides of the Connecticut River mobilized and formulated a regional approach to stopping didymo’s spread,” he said. “Our cooperation will continue in the months ahead, as biologists from Vermont and New Hampshire search for ways to mitigate this potential hazard to aquatic life in our rivers.”

Believed to be native to far northern regions of Europe and Asia, didymo has been expanding its range and tolerance for warmer, more nutrient-rich water conditions during recent years in Europe and North America. Accompanying this expansion have been increasing reports of massive blooms that reach nuisance levels, forming thick mats of cottony material on the bottoms of rivers and streams that can potentially smother aquatic plants and destroy fish habitat.

There are currently no known methods for controlling or eradicating didymo once it infests a water body. Anglers, kayakers and canoeists, boaters and jet skiers can all unknowingly spread didymo. The microscopic algae cling to fishing gear, waders, boots and boats, and remain viable for several weeks under even slightly moist conditions.

Biologists from the two states as well as representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited and a cadre of volunteers met earlier this month to develop a regional rock snot strategy. Shortly after, volunteers all along the Connecticut and White rivers posted signs alerting the public to the proper way to disinfect their gear.

The radio campaign augments the sign posting, as well as a strong Internet-based education effort in which disinfection techniques are described. The websites of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Environmental Conservation, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department all contain extensive didymo information.

“An invasive algae like this has no respect for state boundaries, so it is imperative that we work together to quell its spread,” Secretary Crombie said. “I am pleased that Commissioner Burack shares this view, and I look forward to working cooperatively with New Hampshire in all aspects of environmental protection.”

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