



**STOP AQUATIC  
HITCHHIKERS!**

## **New Boating and Fishing Laws to Prevent the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species**

Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act ([Act 451 of 1994](#)) [Part 413](#) has been amended with changes for boaters and anglers that take effect March 21, 2019. The changes are intended to strengthen protection for Michigan waterways against the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.

### **What boaters need to know:**

Prior to the amendment, the law only required that a person not place watercraft or trailers in the waters of Michigan if an aquatic plant is attached. In addition to this requirement, **the new changes require all of the following prior to transporting any watercraft over land:**

- Removing all drain plugs from bilges, ballast tanks, and live wells.
- Draining all water from any live wells and bilges.
- Ensuring that the watercraft, trailer, and any conveyance used to transport the watercraft or trailer are free of aquatic organisms, including plants.

**This means that after trailering boats, and before getting on the road, boaters must pull plugs, drain water and remove plants and debris.**

Violation of the law is a state civil infraction and violators may be subject to **fines up to \$100.**

### **What anglers need to know:**

For anglers, these amendments codify the Michigan DNR's Fisheries Order 245 regarding the release of baitfish, collection and use of baitfish and cut bait, and release of captured fish, specifically:

- A person shall not release baitfish in any waters of this state. A person who collects fish shall not use the fish as bait or cut bait except in the inland lake, stream, or Great Lake where the fish was caught, or in a connecting waterway of the inland lake, stream, or Great Lake where the fish was caught if the fish could freely move between the original location of capture and the location of release.

- A person, who catches fish other than baitfish in a lake, stream, Great Lake, or connecting waterway shall only release the fish in the lake, stream, or Great Lake where the fish was caught, or in a connecting waterway of the lake, stream, or Great Lake where the fish was caught if the fish could freely move between the original location of capture and the location of release.

Whether purchased or collected, unused baitfish should be disposed of on land or in the trash – never in the water. Any baitfish an angler collects may be used only in the waters where it was originally collected.

**Anglers who are catching and releasing fish should only release the fish back into the same water or in a connecting body of water the fish could have reached on its own.**

Violation of the law is a state civil infraction and violators may be subject to **finest up to \$100.**

### **What you should do:**

To comply with the law and prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, boaters should:

1. CLEAN boats, trailers and equipment.
2. DRAIN live wells, bilges and all water - pull all drain plugs.
3. DRY boats and equipment.
4. DISPOSE of unwanted bait in the trash.