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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

36<sup>th</sup> meeting  
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**RECOMMENDATION  
ON THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT ON  
RECREATIONAL BOATING AND INVASIVE ALIEN  
SPECIES**

*Document  
prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*



Convention on the Conservation  
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

**Recommendation No. 188 (2016) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 18 November 2016, on the European Code of Conduct on Recreational Boating and Invasive Alien Species**

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aim of the Convention which is notably to ensure the conservation of wild flora and fauna, by giving particular attention to species, including migratory species, which are threatened with extinction and vulnerable;

Recalling that under Article 11, paragraph 2.b of the Convention, each Contracting Party undertakes to strictly control the introduction of non-native species;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 41 (1993) on the conservation of freshwater fish;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 99 (2003) on the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 150 (2010) on the European Charter on recreational fishing and Biodiversity;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 170 (2014) on the European Code of Conduct on Recreational Fishing and Invasive Alien Species;

Recalling Decision VI/23 of the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on Alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species, and the definitions used in that text;

Recalling that the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 with its 20 headline Aichi targets for 2020, in particular Target 9 devoted to invasive alien species (IAS): “By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment”;

Welcoming the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, endorsed by the Council of the European Union in June 2011, and in particular its Target 5, calling on Member States to combat IAS so that by 2020 IAS and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS;

Welcoming the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species;

Noting the need to co-operate with all the actors involved in recreational boating activities in the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of IAS into the territory of the Convention;

Referring to the European Code of conduct on recreational boating and invasive alien species [document T-PVS/Inf (2016) 13],

Recommends that Contracting Parties:

1. Take the European Code of Conduct mentioned above into account while drawing up other relevant codes - or where appropriate - draw up national codes of conduct on recreational boating and IAS,

2. Collaborate as appropriate with the actors involved in recreational boating activities in implementing and helping disseminate good practices and codes of conduct aimed at preventing and managing of introduction, release and spread of invasive alien species,
3. Keep the Standing Committee informed of measures taken to implement this recommendation;

Invites Observer States to take note of this recommendation and implement it as appropriate.

**Appendix I to Recommendation No. 188 (2016) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 18 November 2016, on the European Code of Conduct on Recreational Boating and Invasive Alien Species**

**THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

***Audience and aims***

This code of conduct is voluntary guidance aimed at all those that engage in recreational boating whether individual boaters, clubs or training centres, recreational boating governing bodies or those that are commercially engaged with recreational boating, for example charter boats or marinas. It is applicable to water management authorities and other bodies involved in managing ports or waterways. It is also intended for those Member States and their agencies that may regulate recreational boating activities. However this code is voluntary only and is not a legally binding instrument nor is it the intention that this code be used as the basis for future legislation. Its aim is to be compatible with other national and international initiatives on recreational boating and IAS such as the IMO's 'Guidance for minimizing the transfer of invasive aquatic species as biofouling (hull fouling) for recreational craft' (IMO, 2012 - see Annex 1). It incorporates that advice, particularly on use of antifouling, and then expands the IMO guidelines to cover more detailed advice on smaller craft particularly those which are used predominantly in freshwater.

The code of conduct uses the experience gathered by the Royal Yachting Association (RYA, 2015) and The Green Blue environment programme, a partnership project between the RYA and British Marine (TGB, 2015). This is pulled together with the biosecurity approach taken in the UK using the Check, Clean, Dry protocols (GBNNS, 2015) developed by the GB Non Native Species Secretariat in collaboration with other UK Government Departments and stakeholders. Much of the guidance in these initiatives are repeated verbatim here or tailored to highlight issues around IAS and recreational boating.

***Awareness, education, training, research and monitoring***

The recreational boating sector should:

- Promote awareness of the code to encourage responsible recreational boating through targeted information, education and training within the sector. Particular emphasis should be placed on biosecurity, promoting and spreading the message, implementing basic biosecurity measures, encouraging everyone to do what they can, in particular to check and clean equipment. Action should not only be limited to locations where aquatic IAS are an issue, measures should be implemented by everyone, everywhere, every time.
- Promote research into developing effective and practical biosecurity methods and tools for the recreational boating sector. Collaborate with relevant experts in developing awareness, engagement, training and education programmes aimed at informing recreational boating on IAS.
- Ensure that where relevant, government agencies and authorities engage with recreational boaters in programmes to prevent, early detect, eradicate or manage specific IAS on waters used by the sector.
- In collaboration with government agencies and recreational boating associations, monitor the application and implementation of the Code of Conduct and its effects on recreational boating among Member States.
- This Code of Conduct should be reviewed periodically, and as appropriate, taking into account new developments in IAS as it impacts recreational boating. Knowledge is still evolving, and new, practical and effective biosecurity techniques developed in partnership with the recreational boating sector should be supported where possible and included in future revisions.

### ***Biosecurity for recreational boating***

An appropriate anti-fouling coating system and good maintenance are the best way of preventing biofouling accumulation, which therefore minimises the risk of introduction and spread of aquatic IAS. However, this approach may not be appropriate for small trailered craft, particularly those used predominantly in freshwater.

#### ***Check, Clean, Dry***

Following the discovery of the Ponto-Caspian gammarid species, *Dikerogammarus villosus*, at a public water supply reservoir at Grafham Water in England in 2010 the United Kingdom (UK) Government Departments and its Agencies together with environmental Non-Government Organisations and representative bodies from all water users in the UK adopted similar biosecurity practices to those used in New Zealand. This campaign has been effective in containing *Dikerogammarus villosus* to a limited number of sites. This report therefore recommends that this good practice should become the norm, where practical, for biosecurity control for recreational boating and other water users in Europe. This is consistent with the recent Code of Conduct for Recreational Fishing and IAS (Owen, 2013). In some places in Europe this will be a new concept, building on the practices in Australia, New Zealand and most recently in the United Kingdom following the recent discovery of this Ponto-Caspian species in that country.

The overriding principle is that prevention is better than cure and the key to success in this approach is the awareness, education and training principles noted previously and recognises that recreational boaters contact with water via equipment or clothing can result in their inadvertently becoming a vector for the transfer of aquatic IAS. Equipment includes boats, anchors, trailers, buoys and engines. Further information on 'Check Clean Dry' for anglers (including those fishing from recreational vessels) is available in the Code of Conduct on Recreational Fishing and IAS (Owen, 2013). The campaign consisted of a public initiative for all water users, launched in 2011, to promote the adoption of the principles of 'Check, Clean, Dry' (Anderson, 2015). This protocol relies on public participation, education, awareness raising and training to ensure that these procedures are followed, which are as follows:

#### ***Check***

Check boats, equipment and clothing for living plants and animals. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

#### ***Clean***

Clean and wash all equipment, thoroughly with freshwater and anti-foul boats annually. Remove visible fouling and put in the bin, not back in the water.

#### ***Dry***

When recovering a boat, trailer, dinghy, personal watercraft or RIB, drain water from every part and all equipment that can hold water, including any water that collects in bilges, before leaving the site. Clothing and equipment should be thoroughly dried for as long as possible before it is used elsewhere.

Use of hot water can provide a simple, rapid and effective method to clean equipment (Anderson, 2015). Submerging equipment for about 15 minutes at around 45°C can effectively kill a number of significant aquatic IAS. This technique is useful for participants who may be cleaning equipment such as wetsuits when they return home, however it is not practical for cleaning large equipment such as boats. If hot water is available on site, hot pressure washers can also be effective for cleaning boat hulls. Use of chemicals is not recommended as not all species are susceptible to each product.

Adequate signage or guidance should be in place in boating hotspots and particularly with site specific measures in areas known to already contain aquatic IAS, making all boaters aware of the risk and providing advice on how and why to prevent any spread. By demonstrating that aquatic IAS can damage boating equipment, affect navigation, increase maintenance costs, block water treatment

systems, harm native habitats and impact on recreational access to waterbodies, participants may be more likely to take action. Where practical, access and egress points for boats arriving on site and recovery from the waters should be limited, preferably to a single spot or point to enable biosecurity equipment to be readily provided and regularly used. Ideally, all cleaning and inspection operations should be supervised by a volunteer or member of staff.

More detailed tailored Check, Clean, Dry advice specific for recreational boating, particularly small trailered craft such as dinghies and RIBs is as follows:

#### ***On the water***

- ✓ Avoid sailing or motoring through water plants and weed if possible. This can chop up plants and can spread them further. If caught up on the hull or propeller, invasive alien species can be transferred to another area.
- ✓ If the boat is on the water but not in use and stationary for a period of time, if possible, raise propellers out of the water to minimise the risk of invasive alien species entering the engine. Use your boat regularly to prevent biofouling of the hull and engine.
- ✓ If an anchor has been used, wash off both the anchor and chain before stowing.
- ✓ Any structures or equipment such as pontoons, piles and buoys which have been submerged in water for a time also pose a higher risk of spreading invasive alien species and so extra care should be taken when moving or working with them.

#### ***After use***

- ✓ Once the boat is on shore, remove all visible plant and animal material and put in the bin.
- ✓ Use freshwater to wash down all parts of the boat that have been in contact with the water (including outboard, trailer and trolley/vehicle tyres). Pay attention to any crevices. Flush outboard engines with clean fresh water before leaving the site using appropriate equipment, flush muffs or in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
- ✓ Drain all water from the boat, including bilges. Allow the water to drain completely from engines by placing them in a vertical down position.
- ✓ Wash and dry all equipment, clothing and footwear. Drying for as long as possible is important because some invasive alien species can survive for over two weeks in damp conditions.
- ✓ If freshwater washing facilities are not available on site, ensure that the boat is washed down, drained and dried prior to arrival at another waterbody.
- ✓ Ensure that any wash water run-off or water emptied from boats after use does not drain into another waterbody.

#### ***Boat storage on land***

- ✓ Store boats and outboard engines in a location where any run-off does not drain into a waterbody (e.g. drains, gullies or rivers).
- ✓ Return any engines to their vertical down position to drain.
- ✓ Use the general waste bin to dispose of any plant or animal material found in prop bags or other equipment.

#### ***Antifouling and in-water cleaning***

If boats, such as yachts and motor cruisers, are normally kept in the water for long periods of time the Check, Clean, Dry approach may not be a practical method of preventing the spread of aquatic IAS. Although biofouling may not necessarily always contain IAS, it follows that reducing biofouling minimises the risk of spread.

An appropriate antifouling coating system and good maintenance are the best way of preventing biofouling accumulation for boats kept on the water. Lifting out, cleaning and antifouling annually keeps boat hulls clean, and has environmental benefits including both preventing the spread of invasive alien species and also improving fuel efficiency.

Different anti-fouling coating systems suit different operating profiles. An appropriate antifouling coating should be chosen by seeking expert advice and considering the time period between coatings, the use, location and type of the vessel and any legal requirements in the country of use. It is important to note that antifoul may not be effective against all species in all areas, for example, some types of antifoul are thought to be ineffective against biofouling by zebra mussels (Weissert, 2013). Therefore, appropriate antifouling should be combined good maintenance, in-water cleaning and the Check, Clean, Dry approach where possible. The more a boat is used the less likely species will accumulate and the more effective any antifouling will be. By using the boat regularly over summer/growing season, the level of fouling can be reduced.

Antifouling is, by its nature, toxic to aquatic life. Since the banning of Tributyltin (TBT), most antifouls are now copper or zinc based. Available biocides are regulated by European and national regulations; however, during evaluation of these products, their toxicity should be balanced with their efficacy against biofouling, particularly by aquatic IAS.

Some of the compounds found in these antifouls can enter the environment through leaching or during removal of the paint, accumulating in organisms, forming concentrated deposits in the sediments and finding their way into wildlife further up the food chain. Boat owners can play a vital role in preventing concentrated scrapings from entering the water by following the following best practice advice.

*When removing antifoul:*

- ✓ Select a marina, club or boatyard which has a wash-down facility which collects residues and captures run off from wash down, or prevent antifoul scrapings from entering the water by collecting in a tarpaulin;
- ✓ Use a dustless vacuum sander or wet abraision to reduce dust toxic dust and to protect the users health;
- ✓ If using scrubbing piles, only scrub off the fouling and not the underlying paint – be careful not to let old or new paint enter the water;

*When applying antifoul:*

- ✓ Select the right type of antifouling for the area and boat usage, choosing the lowest levels of biocides and copper suitable for your needs – take advice from the local chandlery. Use water-based paints where possible, or paints low in Volatile Organic Compounds or look into using less damaging bottom paints, such as vinyl, silicone or Teflon, which are suitable for in-water hull cleaning systems;
- ✓ Apply the right amount of antifouling required and do not spill it – when applying use a sheet to collect drips;
- ✓ Dispose of used brushes, rollers and trays and empty cans of antifoul as hazardous waste.

It is always preferable to clean boats out of the water where waste can be effectively captured for proper disposal. However, in-water cleaning can be effective as an interim measure.

In-water cleaning can be suitable for removing light fouling, predominantly if the boat has been in the water for less than a year but has not been frequently used and therefore may have accumulated bio-fouling.

Particular consideration should be given to in-water cleaning prior to long distance trips, if cleaning out of the water is not possible. This will help prevent invasive alien species from being transferred long distances, for example from one country to another. Remove any potential invasive alien species in situ at a home harbour before transferring them somewhere else.

Before undertaking any in-water cleaning, check with the local authorities for any regulations regarding the in-water cleaning of boat hulls and / or the discharge of chemicals into the water column. In water cleaning systems are available in some marinas, or the process can be carried out by hand:

- ✓ Use gentle techniques to minimize both the release of toxic substances from any anti-fouling coating and the degradation of the anti-fouling coating system;
- ✓ Take care not to deplete the anti-fouling coating system which would then rapidly re-foul: in-water should not be used in order to delay haul-out beyond the specified service life of a coating. Many inland water recreational boats (narrow boats, motor cruisers and barges) do not have any anti-fouling coating - thus there is a reduced risk of toxicity for aquatic life from cleaning the hull in these cases;
- ✓ From a tender, a sponge can be used to clean as much material off as possible. Alternatively, use a long handled brush from the pontoon or the boat to clean off the material;
- ✓ Collect the material into a bucket or bag for disposal on land where practical.