The health of your favorite river depends on you! Wisconsin's rivers are vulnerable to invasion by a number of invasive species, from Eurasian watermilfoil to Japanese knotweed. The key to successfully protecting your river is detecting invasives early when it may still be possible to isolate or eradicate them. The longer we wait to find and fight them, the harder it will be to win the fight. Volunteers like you are invaluable for early detection and rapid response.

Project RED has four steps:

1. Paddle or wade a reach of river or stream keeping your eyes peeled for invasive species
2. Collect specimens of or photograph suspicious plants and animals
3. Verify the specimens
4. Share your findings

River Alliance of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and local AIS coordinators can help you throughout the process. Grab your paddle or waders and get out on the water. We need your help!

**STEP 1: Paddle or wade a river and search for invasives**

There are two types of riverine AIS monitoring:

**Routinely monitoring an adopted reach**
Project RED volunteers are asked to adopt a reach of river or stream and to **routinely monitor** at least once within the summer, preferably twice. When monitoring an adopted reach, always complete the “Project RED Field Data Collection Sheet” even if you do not find an invasive species.

**Incident reporting**
If you are simply out in a river that you have not pledged to monitor and **stumble across** an invasive species of concern, complete the “Aquatic Invasive Plant/Animal Incident Form.”

Regardless of method, become familiar with the habitat and identifying features of the following invasive species that have been identified as a threat to our rivers and streams here in Wisconsin. See *Regulated Aquatic Plants of Wisconsin, Common Wetland Invasive Plants of Wisconsin*, and the included trading cards for images of each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shoreline/Wetland Plants</th>
<th>Emergent/Submerged Plants</th>
<th>Invertebrates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese hops</td>
<td>Yellow floating heart</td>
<td>New Zealand mudsnail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phragmites</td>
<td>Eurasian watermilfoil</td>
<td>Faucet snail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese knotweed</td>
<td>Curly-leaf pondweed</td>
<td>Asian clam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purple loosestrife</td>
<td>Hydrilla</td>
<td>Zebra mussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flowering rush</td>
<td>Water hyacinth</td>
<td>quagga mussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow iris</td>
<td>Brazilian waterweed</td>
<td>Rusty swamp crayfish</td>
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<td>Water lettuce</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Didymo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parrot feather</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As you paddle or wade, pay particularly close attention when you are near bridges, backyards, boat landings, and urban areas. More common than not, we find riverine invasive species in areas where humans come into contact with rivers the most or where rivers have been disturbed.

**Monitoring Shorelines and Wetlands**
Search both shores and wetlands for suspect plants. Binoculars can be helpful when a river or the adjacent wetland or floodplain is wide. When near beaches or boat landings, wade the shoreline in search of invertebrate shells that might have washed up.

**In-stream Monitoring**
When canoeing or wading, wearing polarized sunglasses helps you to see into the water. If you see a suspicious submerged or emergent plant, gather a bit using your hand or a rake to inspect it closer. When near beaches, boat landings, or other areas of high use and likely introduction, collect rocks or handfuls of substrate to search for invertebrates and didymo. A homemade hand scoop may be useful to help collect and sift through smaller substrate.

**Datasheets**

WDNR Reporting Forms: http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/monitoring/forms.aspx

**STEP 2: Identify and collect/photograph invasive species**

Invasive species are often easily confused with native look-a-likes. To ensure quality data, volunteers are encouraged to verify their findings with a professional. The easiest way to do so is to take photographs of the suspect plant or animal with a digital camera and send them to contacts on the next page. If you do not have a camera, you are encouraged to collect specimens if you may do so safely and legally. Do not trespass onto private property in order to do so.

**How to Take Photographs**
Take multiple photographs of the same subject. Take many close-up photos of all identifying characteristics (i.e., leaves, stems, flowers, and roots). Also capture landscape photos to show the extent of the infestation and the habitat in which the species was found. Be sure to include something for scale (e.g., a pencil or coin) in all photographs.

**How to Collect Plants**
Collect 5 – 10 intact specimens. Try to get the root system, all leaves, and seed heads and flowers when present. Place in a Ziplock bag with no water. Keep the sample cool, and transport it to a refrigerator.

**How to Collect Invertebrates**
Collect up to five specimens. Place in a jar or bag with water; keep cool and transport to a refrigerator. Transfer specimen to a jar filled with rubbing alcohol. It is illegal to collect live native mussels. Collect only empty shells. If this is not feasible, you are encouraged to take photographs.

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**Recommended Equipment**
- Project RED folder with blank datasheet
- Pencil
- Large Ziploc bags
- Waterproof sharpie pen to write on Ziploc bags
- GPS unit
- Heavy trash bag for trash collection
- Ice chest for keeping samples cool
- Binoculars
- Polarized sunglasses
- Camera
- Rake (optional)
- Hand scoop (optional)
STEP 3: Verify your findings

After returning home from the river, refer to additional references to confirm the identity of the plant or animal that you found. The WDNR online factsheets are a good place to start. Simply type the name of the species and the word “factsheet” (Ex. “Japanese hops factsheet”) into the search bar on the WDNR’s homepage (wdnr.wi.gov). Here you will find photographs and a detailed description of the invasive species.

Other Online Resources:
http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/our-work/aquatic-invasive-species
http://www.goldensandsrcd.org/our-work/water/aquatic-invasive-species-program/handouts

If you still believe that you have found an invasive species, please contact the local or River Alliance Project RED coordinators listed below as soon as possible. If you took photographs of the invasive, please email the photographs along with the latitude and longitude coordinates to your coordinators. If you collected specimens, it will be necessary to label the specimen with the collection location/date and deliver the specimen to a local expert within days. A delay may result in decay and prevent experts from being able to identify the specimen. The local or statewide coordinators will confirm where you should deliver the specimens once you have contacted them.

Local Project RED Coordinator

Name: ________________________________

Organization/Agency: ________________________________

Mailing Address: ________________________________

Telephone: ________________________________

Email: ________________________________

River Alliance of Wisconsin AIS Program
147 S. Butler Street, Suite #2
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 257-2424
ais@wisconsinrivers.org
STEP 4: Share your findings

Your observations are valuable whether or not you found any invasive species while monitoring. When submitted, your Project RED data will be added to the WDNR database (called “SWIMS”), where it will be used by researchers and managers to better understand how invasive species are spreading throughout Wisconsin’s waters.

You may submit your data in either of two ways:

- Mail your completed datasheets to one of the two coordinators identified on the previous page.
- Enter your data into SWIMS directly. To enter your data into SWIMS, you must first attain a user ID.

To do so, simply follow the steps below. After you receive your user ID, enter data into SWIMS throughout the field season.

Registering for SWIMS

- Go to https://on.wisconsin.gov/WAMS/home & follow the directions for Self-Registration
- Open your email account and look for an email from Wisconsin.gov.
- Email us your user ID (ais@wisconsinrivers.org). You'll get a reply within a couple of business days saying you're all set up to enter Project RED data.

Entering data in SWIMS

- Go to http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/clmn-data. Log in using your WAMS ID
- On your My Projects page, navigate to Project Riverine Early Detectors (Project RED). Under the description, click the Enter Data link.
- Select your name from the Data Collectors drop down list. If there are additional data collectors not listed, feel free to list them in the comments area.
- Then, select your monitoring station. If your station is not available in the dropdown list, select “Location Specified on the Next Page”.
- Enter the Start Date, End Date, and Time you started and stopped monitoring that day.
- Enter your written observations in the comments box.
- Click Next.
- Enter the Waterbody Name; then provide the Start and End Location in decimal degrees along with a detailed description of the locations (ex. County H Bridge just north of Baytown).
- Note which Species you looked for. Please answer Yes or No. Do not leave blank.
- Click Enter First ID# to enter your first find.
- Enter the ID#, name of the species, and latitude and longitude.
- Click Enter Next ID# to enter your next find.
- When finished, click Save and Return to List. If you click Save and Return to List (or if you click View List from the Submit Data tab), you will see the data you recently entered.
Invasive species threaten the health of Wisconsin’s rivers and the plants and animals that rely upon them for habitat and nourishment; therefore, I pledge to monitor

(river/stream)

at least twice a year by watercraft or at areas of potential introduction, bridge abutments, boat launches, and areas of disturbance.

I will monitor from

(description of start location)

to

(description of end location)

I pledge to have any suspect plants or animals I find verified by a professional.

I pledge to report my observations and any invasive species found within the selected river corridor by submitting my data online in SWIMS or sending my completed datasheet to River Alliance as soon as possible.

Signature

Date

Name:

Organization/Agency:

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

Email: