



State of Vermont
Agency of Natural Resources
Office of the Secretary

[phone] 802-241-3600

[fax] 802-244-1102

103 South Main Street, Center Building
Waterbury, VT 05671-0301

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Contact:

Leslie Matthews, Ph.D.
802-241-3798 (office)
802-498-3051 (mobile)

Ann Bove
802-241-3782

Didymo found in Gihon River

WATERBURY – Water quality scientists at the Agency of Natural Resources have confirmed the presence of “didymo” in the Gihon River, the second occurrence of the invasive freshwater alga in Lake Champlain Basin, and the first in the Lamoille River basin.

Jim Ryan, VT DEC basin planner for the Lamoille River basin, said a citizen spotted the didymo and water quality scientists obtained a sample and verified the didymo bloom. The infestation was discovered on the lower Gihon River in East Johnson.

Didymosphenia geminata, also known as didymo and rock snot, is a type of freshwater diatom or algae with the potential to form nuisance blooms, or mats, several inches thick that carpet a stream bottom.

Until 2006 it was unheard of in the northeastern U.S. It was discovered during the summers of 2006 and 2007 in the Batten Kill; in 2007 in the Connecticut River, the White River and the Delaware River system; and in 2008 in the Mad River.

Dr. Leslie Matthews said there is nothing that can be done to control or eradicate didymo once it has infested a waterbody. Matthews urged river users to help prevent the spread of didymo, as well as other invasive species, including fish diseases, by always cleaning fishing gear, clothing, boats, and other equipment before moving between waters. Check and remove all visible clumps of algae and plant material from fishing gear, waders, clothing, watershoes, sandals, canoes, kayaks and anything that has been in the water. Clean gear by using hot tap water and lots of

soap, scrub hard items and soak felt-soled waders for thirty minutes in hot soapy water. Scientific studies have shown that felt-soled waders are particularly efficient at harboring and transporting “hitchhiking” invasive species.

“Our biggest focus right now is spread prevention and outreach. The more we can educate our community about this, the better chance we have in preventing further spread of didymo and other harmful invasive species into other water bodies.”

Scientific studies conducted around the globe have yet to show conclusively that didymo has significant impacts to trout fisheries. However, it remains a priority of the Agency of Natural Resources to limit the alga’s spread throughout the region, as a precaution.

More information on didymo and what Vermonters can do to help stop its spread is available online at: http://www.vtwaterquality.org/lakes/htm/ans/lp_didymo.htm

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