

## Action Needed

### *Didymo: Invasive Algae infesting Upper Delaware River*

**Didymo is spreading fast in the West and East Branch Delaware River:  
We need to act now to prevent future harm!**

Didymo is a microscopic algae that clings to waders, boots, boats, lures, hooks, sinkers, fishing line, and other absorbent items and fishing gear. It can do so without even being seen and can remain viable for several weeks, even in slightly moist conditions. Didymo was previously limited to cold, nutrient-poor, northern waters, however in recent decades it has been expanding its range and now tolerates warmer and more productive streams.



Photo / Environment DEC

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) confirmed that the West Branch of the Delaware River is now infested with the invasive algae, Didymo. This region of the Delaware River Watershed is located downstream from the Cannonsville Reservoir, located in Delaware County, New York. In 2007, the DEC also confirmed that Didymo was present in the Batten Kill River, Washington County, NY, tributary to the East Branch of the Delaware River. This is an indication that the main stem of the Delaware River is also infested with Didymo and that it is spreading vigorously throughout the watershed, although it is currently not known to be present in any other New York waterway. The presence of Didymo has especially been a problem for anglers in the Beaver Kill and Willowemoc Creek of the East Branch.

This aquatic nuisance species, *Didymosphenia geminata* is often referred to as “rock snot” because of its mucous-like resemblance. Large colonies of Didymo grow and attach themselves in streambeds of both flowing and still waters impacting freshwater fish, aquatic plants, and aquatic insects. It can develop thick mats resembling a shag carpet, even in fast-flowing trout streams. The colonies may persist for months because the stalk produced by Didymo is slow to break down and can live for up to two months following its peak growth.



Photo / Graeme Hughes

Streams located in the West and East Branch of the Delaware River are common places for trout fishing as well as other popular water activities such as kayaking, canoeing and tubing.

The Upper Delaware is widely regarded as one of the leading trout fisheries on the East Coast. However, fishing becomes difficult when the abundance of bottom-dwelling organisms declines due to the presence of Didymo. Colonies of Didymo eventually alter stream conditions as it chokes out native organisms causing a ripple effect up the food chain.

**We are urging anglers and boaters to:**

- ✓ Check, clean and dry all equipment in order to prevent the spread of Didymo
  - **CHECK** - Any equipment that entered the water must be inspected. Remove all obvious clumps of algae and look carefully for hidden clumps. Leave any algae at the affected site before leaving the river or stream. Do not wash anything down drains if you find any later. Instead, you should dispose of all material in the trash.
  - **CLEAN** - Soak and scrub all items for at least one minute. Use hot water that is at least 140°F, a 2%-solution of household bleach or a 5%-solution of salt, antiseptic hand cleaner or dishwashing detergent to clean the gear. Be sure that the solution completely penetrates absorbent items like felt-soled waders and wading boots. Absorbent items require longer soaking times and should be soaked for at least 40 minutes in hot water that is at least 115°F or 30 minutes if the water contains 5% dishwashing detergent.
  - **DRY** - Equipment and gear may sit out in the sun until it is completely dry to the touch if cleaning is not performed. Waiting an additional 48 hours before any contact or use in any other waterway should follow. All absorbent items should still be checked thoroughly to assure that they are completely dry. Items can also be placed in a freezer until all moisture is frozen solid.
- ✓ Try to restrict aquatic equipment to just one location to prevent Didymo spread from where it has already occurred. Otherwise clean or freeze the equipment.
- ✓ Report and take photos of any suspicion of Didymo and contact the DEC with the location so that samples can be taken to document and monitor the algae's spread

For more information or to share sightings of Didymo - contact  
**Rick Georgeson, NYSDEC**  
**(518) 402-8000**

Please also share a copy of your report information with the Delaware Riverkeeper Network:

Phone 1-800-8-DELAWARE; email [drn@delawareriverkeeper.org](mailto:drn@delawareriverkeeper.org); fax 215-369-1181

***\*There is no known method for completely controlling and eradicating the presence of Didymo. We all must do our part to stop the spread of Rock Snot.***

***The Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) is the only advocacy organization working throughout the entire Delaware River Watershed. The Delaware Riverkeeper is an individual who is the voice of the River, championing the rights of the River and its streams as members of our community. The Delaware Riverkeeper is assisted by seasoned professionals and a network of members, volunteers and supporters. Together they form DRN, and together they stand as vigilant protectors and defenders of the River, its tributaries and watershed. DRN is committed to restoring the watershed's natural balance where it has been lost and ensuring its preservation where it still exists.***