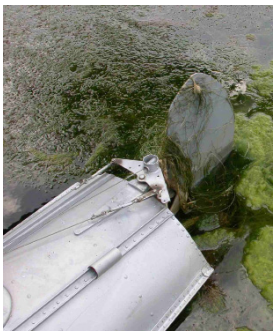
INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS and FLOATPLANE OPERATIONS:
Help prevent new infestations

Canadian waterweed infestation in Chena Slough, Alaska (T.Wurtz, USFS)

BACKGROUND: Aquatic plants grow in a variety of habitats including lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, bogs and wetlands. Some aquatic plants grow out of the water along the shoreline; others have leaves that float on the surface, while many live completely underwater. Native aquatic plants provide food and shelter for fish, birds, moose and other wildlife. They also help stabilize habitat along lake and river banks. However, invasive aquatic plants can become a serious nuisance to natural systems and also a danger to safe floatplane operation.

PROBLEM: Invasive plant species (sometimes called exotic or non-native species) can out-compete native aquatic plants and choke waters with excessive plant growth. Uncontrolled growth of invasive aquatic plants can:



Fouled rudder - Lake Hood float plane (USFWS)

- *Impact habitat and reduce fish populations*
- *Ruin boat engines and jam steering equipment*
- *Make lakes/rivers unusable for recreation (e.g., fishing, boating, or swimming)*
- *Reduce native plant species and degrade natural habitats*
- *Reduce property values*
- *Reduce water quality*
- *Increase maintenance costs for floatplane operations*
- *Complicate safe floatplane operation, especially for taxiing near tight slips and at take-off*

There are many ways seeds or fragments of invasive aquatic plants can be introduced into Alaska's waters including: birds, winds, boats, waders, and even floatplanes. Although fewer invasive aquatic plants have been found in Alaska than in other states, we are not immune to this problem.

Keep watch for these invasive species

F. Koshere

Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Clayton Antieau

Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*)

L.J. Mehrhoff, Univ. of Connecticut

Curly leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*)

Richard Old, www.xidservices.com

Reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

www.eol.org

Parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

Smithsonian

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*)

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It is important to take steps now to prevent introductions to Alaska and to prevent the further spread of invasive plants that are already found in the state. Floatplane pilots can help to reduce potentially harmful infestations by learning more about invasive aquatic plants, reporting them and following these simple steps:

Before entering the aircraft

Inspect/remove plants from floats, wires or cables, and water rudders.
Also, check the transom, bottom, chine, wheel wells, and float step area.
Pump water from floats.

Before takeoff

Do not taxi through heavy aquatic plant growth prior to takeoff.
Raise and lower water rudders to clear off plants, minimize cable stretch and improve steering effectiveness.

After takeoff

Raise/lower water rudders several times to free aquatic plant fragments while over the waters you are leaving or over land.

REPORTING OPTIONS: If you encounter the plants shown here or other plants you suspect may be invasive, note the location and any distinguishing characteristics. If possible, take photos of the plant and the site. Report your observations by phone or online:

Alaska Exotic
Plant Information Clearinghouse
http://akweeds.uaa.alaska.edu/

EDDMapS Alaska's
Early Detection Reporting Form
www.eddmaps.org/alaska/report/report.cfm

or

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Invasive Species Program
1-877-INVASIV (1-877-468-2748)

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