
Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : Rock Snot Discovered in the Yough

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We've received the following notice from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection about the recent discovery of the aquatic invasive plant species Didymo (commonly known as "rock snot") in the Youghiogheny River. Please forward this along to others, and read on for precautions you can use to help curb the spread of Didymo to other area waterways. Thank you!

Didymo has now been confirmed in the Youghiogheny River in Ohiopyle State Park near Ohiopyle, PA. A single sample was taken in the Youghiogheny River in Ohiopyle State Park near some large boulders with tufts of Didymo growing at moderate length. The sample was taken by Erik L. Silldorff, PhD, an Aquatic Biologist. On Friday, June 1st, The Academy of Natural Sciences verified the identification of the sample submitted by Dr. Silldorff. Dr. Silldorff noted, "there was plenty of Didymo on the rocks so I had no trouble finding material to collect, and my sample was filled with nice, healthy, living Didymo. So, in terms of a risk of spread, I would say the Youghiogheny is now a potential launching pad, especially with the combined traffic of whitewater enthusiasts and trout anglers." According to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Didymo, "can smother entire stream beds with mats as thick as eight inches and can ruin just about any river or creek." Additional information can be found here: http://www.fish.state.pa.us/water/habitat/ans/didymo/faq_didymo.htm

As you know, the Ohiopyle area is heavily used for recreation. All users of the river should take extra precaution to clean all equipment used in the Youghiogheny before entering other waterbodies. Didymo is a diatom that causes severe degradation of stream habitat in some places. It can be spread by moving just a small amount – maybe even just a cell or two. Take extra care in cleaning boats, gear, equipment before transporting to another waterbody! Gear can be disinfected by using a 10% household bleach and 90% water solution or a strong salt solution (minimally, use at least a true 5% salt solution). Allow either solution to remain in contact with equipment for at least 10 minutes! Either solution can be harsh on gear and equipment so be sure to rinse everything with plenty of water after disinfecting. Take extra care to properly disinfect porous materials such as nets, ropes, cloth items, water shoes, and especially felt-soled waders and wading shoes!