

Fly fishers unknowingly transporting invasive species

By Felicity Barringer, New York Times

For fly fishers who pride themselves on a conservationist ethic, it hurts to discover that they may be trampling on that ethic every time they wade into a trout stream.



Blame their boots – or, more precisely, their felt soles. Growing scientific evidence suggests that felt, which helps anglers stay upright on slick rocks, is also a vehicle for noxious microorganisms that hitchhike to new places and disrupt freshwater ecosystems.

That is why Alaska and Vermont recently approved bans on felt-soled boots and Maryland plans to do so soon.

“If you were trying to design a material to transport microscopic material around,” said Jack Williams, an expert on invasive species with the environmental group Trout Unlimited, “felt on the bottom of someone’s boots in a stream would be as close to perfection as you could find.”

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