

# Banning felt-soled waders may help stop spread of invasive species

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Felt-soled waders, a time-honored safeguard for anglers knee-deep in slippery streams, are under mounting scrutiny in Nevada and across the country.

With officials concerned that felt soles on waders and boots could help aquatic invaders hitchhike from one place to another, regulations regarding their use are being considered or are already in place.

Maryland became the first state to ban them, effective March 21. They became illegal in Vermont on April 1. Across Alaska, felt-soled waders and boots will be prohibited beginning Jan. 1, 2012.

The soles have a problem. Porous felt can trap spores and larvae of non-native plants and animals, allowing them to spread in much the same way invading mussels can move from place to place attached to motorboats.

That's what's believed to have happened in Vermont, where felt-soled footwear is suspected in the spread of didymo, a slimy algae commonly called "rock snot," said Shawn Good, a fisheries biologist with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

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