Title: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to aquatic invasive species, spread prevention, and penalties.

Purpose: This bill aims to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by simply requiring the removal of visible vegetation and animals from boats and the draining of watercraft, when entering and leaving launch sites.

Statement of support: New York State is blessed with unparalleled water resources. Our rivers, streams and lakes are not only ecological treasures to be enjoyed by all New Yorkers – but their relative purity is essential to the economic vitality of the state’s recreational, agricultural and industrial activities. Introduction of aquatic invasive species – both plant and animal- not only disrupt the balance of native natural systems and threaten the survival of rare species but also impede navigation, clog industrial intake pipes, destroy commercial fisheries and degrade water quality. Once an invasive, nonnative organism is introduced into one of the State’s lakes or rivers it is very difficult and costly to eradicate. Some examples:

- The European water chestnut (Trapa natans), an invasive aquatic plant that was inadvertently released into waters of the Northeast is slowly, but inexorably, spreading throughout New York State, clogging waterways and ponds and altering aquatic habitats at the cost of millions a year to resource managers. The dense floating mats created by water chestnuts rob oxygen from the water column below, creating vast areas inhospitable to most fish species.

- Since September 1992, Asian zebra mussels have been dominant in the freshwater tidal Hudson river, filtering a volume of water equal to all of the water in the estuary every 1-4 days during the summer. As a result of this consumption, phytoplankton biomass fell by 80% and zooplankton numbers fell by 70%, which has transformed the food web in the Hudson causing populations of certain native fishes to crash. Zebra mussels have also caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to underwater industrial infrastructure.

Recreational boating is one of the primary vectors for the spread of aquatic invasive species and A.9619 provides safeguards to ensure that transferring a boat from one waterway to another does not inadvertently lead to further invasion. Mandating that all boaters carefully clean their watercraft of any visible plants or animals before entering or leaving a waterway will help reduce the spread of these costly invaders.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter strongly urges your support of this legislation.