



NEWS RELEASE

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources South Central Region

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SUBJECT: Jefferson County
ZEBRA MUSSELS FOUND IN LAKE RIPLEY
Boaters can help prevent further spread of this invasive species

CAMBRIDGE -- Lake Ripley, a 418-acre water body located about 20 miles east of Madison in Jefferson County, is now officially among a growing list of inland waters classified as "infested" with the non-native zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*).

The discovery was made during routine summer monitoring of the lake conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and volunteers from the Lake Ripley Management District. These monitoring efforts include sampling for the microscopic larvae, called veligers, and the regular inspection of plate samplers on which the settled veligers attach and grow into adult zebra mussels.

"The presence of both adults and veligers in 2007 indicates that a small reproducing population of zebra mussels is established in Lake Ripley," according to Liesa Lehmann, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator with DNR's South Central Region. "Based on this information, Lake Ripley will be added to the list of state waters which have zebra mussels."

Native to the Baltic and Caspian Seas of Europe, zebra mussels came here in the ballast water of ocean-going ships. They were originally introduced to the Great Lakes in the mid 1980s, and first arrived in the Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan in the Racine harbor in 1990. Since then, they've spread throughout the Great Lakes region, into the Mississippi River, down to the Gulf of Mexico and into Canadian waters. According to the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, the barnacle-like zebra mussel could become more widespread than the German carp and cause more economic damage than the Mediterranean fruit fly.

Zebra mussels are prolific breeders that will attach to any hard surfaces, forming dense colonies. They can harm native ecosystems by filtering out plankton communities that serve as food for young fish, reducing native mussel populations, decreasing oxygen, and worsening unsightly algal blooms. In addition, the zebra mussels can clog boat engines and intake pipes, and their sharp shells can cut the feet of unsuspecting swimmers.

The following counties are in the South Central Region: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk.

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“I’m both disappointed and frustrated” admits Paul Dearlove, Lake Manager for the Lake Ripley Management District. “We were bracing ourselves for their possible arrival, especially upon learning that nearby lakes had become infested, including Rock Lake which is just a 10-minute drive to our north.” Mr. Dearlove notes that “short of building a wall around the lake to restrict access, and then disinfecting every boat, bait bucket and migrating waterfowl coming through the gate, there’s always the chance they’ll find their way in despite our best efforts at increasing public awareness.”

Adding Lake Ripley to the statewide list means DNR will post the ‘Exotic Species Advisory’ signs with zebra mussel decals at all the landings to notify the public that Lake Ripley is infested. The DNR will also work with local units of government to increase public awareness efforts and outreach efforts to control the further spread of zebra mussels.

“Although this is unfortunate, we will continue to monitor for zebra mussels in Lake Ripley,” says John Molinaro, Chair of the Lake Ripley Management District. “We suggest that lakefront owners contact us or visit our website – www.lakeripley.org – for information on how to manage zebra mussels on their property.” Tips are available on how to keep boat engines clean, and how to clean piers and boats this fall.

Zebra mussels look like small clams with a yellowish-brown “D”-shaped shell that has alternating light and dark stripes (hence the name “zebra”), and with a flat edge on one side. They are generally less than an inch long, and typically form dense colonies. Zebra mussels are the ONLY freshwater mollusks that firmly attach to solid objects like dock pilings, boat hulls, and submerged rocks and stumps. Juveniles are difficult to see, but will feel like grit on any solid surface they may inhabit.

“We’re asking all boaters to prevent further spread of aquatic invasive species by taking a few simple, but effective steps when boating, fishing and otherwise enjoying our lakes ,” according to Ron Martin, coordinator of the DNR’s Aquatic Invasive Species Program. “It’s important to practice these prevention steps when transferring boats and boating equipment from any water body to prevent the spread of not only zebra mussels, but other aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian water-milfoil, quagga mussels and spiny waterfleas,” says Mr. Martin.

Before moving your boat/equipment to a new waterbody:

1. Inspect and remove plants, animals and mud from your boat and equipment
2. Drain all water from your boat’s live wells, bilge, motor, etc.
3. Dispose of your unwanted live bait in the trash.
4. Rinse your boat and equipment with a high-pressure sprayer and/or hot water, especially if moored for more than a day; OR dry your boat and equipment thoroughly for at least five days.

To learn more about zebra mussels and what you can do to limit their impacts, see DNR’s website at www.dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/zebra.htm.