

IA DNR News Release - 10/3/2017

Zebra mussels found in Big Spirit Lake

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is watching Big Spirit Lake after a resident found a single juvenile zebra mussel attached to a rock in the southwest side of the lake on Sept. 23.

Biologists at the DNR's Boone research facility also found a single larval zebra mussel in a water sample collected from Big Spirit Lake in August. The DNR collects water samples and deploys settlement samplers in lakes across the state each summer to monitor for the invasive zebra mussel.

The first zebra mussels in the Iowa Great Lake chain were discovered in the fall of 2012 and have increased in numbers since. Big Spirit Lake flows over a spillway into the rest of the Okoboji Chain.

"Finding both a zebra mussel veliger and juvenile indicates to us that zebra mussels have been introduced into Big Spirit Lake," said Kim Bogenschutz, the DNR's Aquatic Invasive Species Program coordinator. "It's too early to tell if there is an established population in the lake, but it is likely since the other lakes in the chain have growing populations."

Zebra mussels look like small, D-shaped clams that have alternating light and dark bands. Most are less than one inch long. They are filter feeders that can form dense clusters as they attach to hard underwater surfaces. In the case of large infestations, they may interfere with aquatic food chains, kill native mussels, clog water intakes, increase algae blooms, and cover beaches with dead shells.

The City of Spirit Lake recently completed upgrades to their drinking water intakes in the lake in preparation for a possible infestation.

Biologists will inspect boat hoists and docks after they come out this fall for storage. "These structures are quickly colonized and are good indicators of how prevalent mussels are in the lake," said Mike Hawkins, Spirit Lake District fisheries management biologist.

The Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery uses raw water from Big Spirit Lake in the production facility. Zebra mussels can be filtered and killed in the water used to haul fish from the hatchery to other water bodies. The Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery, along with other Iowa hatcheries, has implemented plans for many years to prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species when stocking fish.

"Although we can treat the water leaving the hatchery, zebra mussels can clog pipes and valves, making the infrastructure at the Spirit Lake Hatchery vulnerable to the infestation," said Hawkins. "Important upgrades are needed to protect the facility."

The Iowa Great Lakes community has provided important leadership in fighting aquatic invasive species in Iowa.

"This strong partnership and the continuation of these efforts remains our best weapon against these invaders," Hawkins said. Currently there is no effective treatment to control zebra mussels once they have infested a lake.

Young zebra mussels are microscopic and can be unintentionally transported with water in bilges, live wells or bait buckets. Adult zebra mussels can attach to boats, trailers and aquatic vegetation.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, in Iowa. Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before leaving a water access and must keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport.

“Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species if they do not take the proper precautions - clean, drain, dry - after each time out on the water,” said Bogenschutz.

- CLEAN any plants, animals or mud from boat and equipment before leaving a water body.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before leaving a water body.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before transporting to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

More information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters can be found in the Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet.

If you find a zebra mussel, please note its location and contact your local fisheries office or the Aquatic Invasive Species Program in Boone.

MN DNR News Release - October 25, 2018

Zebra mussels confirmed in Lake Sarah in Murray County

Fall is a key time of year to check for invasive species

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has confirmed zebra mussels in Lake Sarah in Murray County.

A lake service provider business contacted the DNR after finding zebra mussels on docks they removed from the lake for the season. DNR staff surveyed six locations around the lake and found multiple adult zebra mussels at all six locations.

The DNR also plans to bring in a conservation officer with a K9 trained to locate zebra mussels, to search other equipment at a nearby marina.

“It helps a lot when lake property owners, lake service businesses and others notify us when they’ve spotted an invasive species,” said DNR Invasive Species Unit Supervisor Heidi Wolf.

Minnesota law requires keeping docks and lifts out of the water for at least 21 days before putting them into another body of water.

The DNR recommends these steps for lake property owners:

- Look on the posts, wheels and underwater support bars of docks and lifts, as well as any parts of boats, pontoons and rafts that may have been submerged in water for an extended period.
- Hire DNR-permitted lake service provider businesses to install or remove boats, docks, lifts and other water-related equipment. These businesses have received training on Minnesota’s aquatic invasive species laws and many have experience identifying and removing invasive species.
- People should contact their area aquatic invasive species specialist if they think they have discovered an invasive species that has not already been confirmed in a lake. Take a photo of any newly discovered invasive species before removing it from equipment. Save specimens or leave them in place until the DNR can investigate.

More information is available at www.mndnr.gov/AIS.