

Zebra Mussels Found

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) has confirmed the presence of invasive zebra mussels in Osage State Fishing Lake in Osage County. Previous sonar work by KDWPT game wardens had located a submerged vehicle in the lake. The car has been confirmed as having been stolen. While removing it from the lake, the officers discovered a small number adult zebra mussels attached to the vehicle. The officers alerted KDWPT fisheries staff, who then verified the discovery.

Osage State Fishing Lake is a popular lake for fishing and camping located about 20 miles south of Topeka and one-half mile southeast of the US-75/US-56 junction. The lake consists of approximately 140 surface acres of water and is owned and operated by KDWPT. While the zebra mussel population is currently small, there is no known method to completely rid a lake of this invasive species.

Lake enthusiasts play the primary role in stemming the spread of zebra mussels to uninfested lakes. “Zebra mussels produce microscopic larvae called veligers that cannot be seen with the naked eye. At Kansas lakes with established zebra mussel populations, there may be as many as 1,000 veligers in a single gallon of lake water,” said Chris Steffen, KDWPT Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator.

Prevention is the best way to avoid spreading aquatic nuisance species (ANS). They often travel by “hitchhiking” with unsuspecting lake-goers. “Remembering to clean, drain, and dry boats and equipment before moving between waterbodies is the key to preventing the spread of zebra mussels. If everyone took these precautions, we could stop the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species,” Steffen said.

Osage State Fishing Lake and 110-Mile Creek downstream from the lake to Pomona Reservoir will be added to the list of ANS-designated waters in Kansas, and notices will be posted at various locations around the lake. Pomona Reservoir was previously discovered to be infested with zebra mussels in 2014; there should be no additional impacts to Pomona Reservoir from this new, upstream population. Live fish may not be transported from ANS-designated waters. The sharp-shelled zebra mussels attach to solid objects, so lake-goers should be careful when handling mussel-encrusted objects and when grabbing an underwater object when they can’t see what their hands may be grasping. Visitors should protect their feet when walking on underwater or shoreline rocks.

Zebra mussels are just one of the non-native aquatic species that threaten our waters and native wildlife. After using any body of water, people must remember to follow regulations and precautions that will prevent their spread:

- Clean, drain and dry boats and equipment between uses
- Use wild-caught bait only in the lake or pool where it was caught

- Do not move live fish from waters infested with zebra mussels or other aquatic nuisance species
- Drain livewells and bilges and remove drain plugs from all vessels prior to transport from any Kansas water on a public highway.

For more information about aquatic nuisance species in Kansas, report a possible ANS, or see a list of ANS-designated waters, visit ProtectKS Waters.org.

ABOUT ZEBRA MUSSELS

Zebra mussels are dime-sized mollusks with striped, sharp-edged, two-part shells. They can produce huge populations in a short time and do not require a host fish to reproduce. A large female zebra mussel can produce 1 million eggs, and then fertilized eggs develop into microscopic veligers that are invisible to the naked eye. Veligers drift in the water for at least two weeks before they settle out as young mussels which quickly grow to adult size and reproduce within a few months.

After settling, zebra mussels develop byssal threads that attach their shells to submerged hard surfaces such as rocks, piers, and flooded timber. They also attach to pipes, water intake structures, boat hulls, propellers, and submerged parts of outboard motors. As populations increase, they can clog intake pipes and prevent water treatment and electrical generating plants from drawing water. In 2012, two Kansas communities, Council Grove and Osage City, experienced temporary water shortages from zebra mussel infestations before water intake structures could be cleaned up. Removing large numbers of zebra mussels to ensure adequate water flow can be labor-intensive and costly.

Zebra mussels are native to the Black and Caspian seas of western Asia and eastern Europe and were spread around the world in the ballast water of cargo ships. They were discovered in Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River in 1988 and quickly spread throughout the Great Lakes and other rivers including the Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, Arkansas and Hudson. They were first discovered in Kansas in 2003 at El Dorado Reservoir. Despite public education efforts to alert boaters about the dangers of zebra mussels and how to prevent spreading them, the species continues to show up in new lakes every year. Moving water in boats and bait buckets has been identified as a likely vector.

For information about Osage State Fishing Lake, visit KSOuthdoors.com, click on Fishing, then Where to Fish and select the Southeast region.