

Living with Zebra Mussels

Ecosystem Alterations

Zebra mussels are filter feeders that remove plankton from the water

- Increase in water clarity as plankton are filtered out of the water
- Increase in light penetration and plant growth as clarity increases
- Increase in blue green algae as zebra mussels avoid their consumption
- Decrease in native mussel population
- Decrease in food (plankton) for fish
- Changes in aquatic life abundance and species composition
- Decrease in dissolved oxygen during population die off events
- Exponential increase in zebra mussels in early stages of the population



Recreational Alterations

- Submerged equipment becomes covered with zebra mussels
- Intake pipes/pumps become clogged with zebra mussels
- Consider storing boats on lifts fully out of water
- Shells may wash up on shore as zebra mussels die
- Need for footwear when walking in the lake
- Need for gloves when handling equipment stored in water (docks, lifts, rafts)



Contacts

Polk County Land and Water Resources Department

Colton Sorensen (715-485-8639) or colton.sorensen@polkcountywi.gov

Katelin Anderson (715-485-8637) or katelin.anderson@polkcountywi.gov

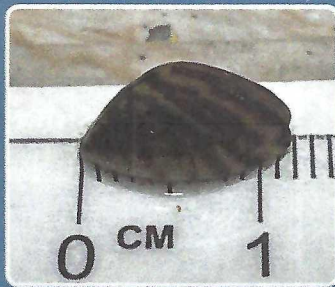
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Tyler Mesalk (715-416-5066) tyler.mesalk@wisconsin.gov

Living with Zebra Mussels

Identification

- D-shaped shell
- Alternating light and dark bands
- Adults up to 1 ¼ inches in length
- Attach to hard surfaces by byssal threads (unique to invasive mussels)



Information

- Life span is 3-9 years
- Microscopic when immature (called a veliger)
- Females can produce up to a million veligers a season that are free floating in water for 3-5 weeks
- Physical movement of water allows for veliger dispersal
- 2-3% of veligers reach adulthood
- Can reproduce at one year of age
- Reproduction occurs when the water temp is above 54 degrees Fahrenheit
- Mostly found in 6 to 40 feet of water
- Can filter up to 1 liter of water a day
- Do not prefer direct sunlight, most often on the underside of structures

Decontamination

Follow these steps to prevent the establishment of other AIS and prevent the spread of zebra mussels to other lakes

- **Drain all water** from boats, ballasts, live wells, and any other equipment
- **Remove all** aquatic vegetation
- **Remove (scrape) all adults** off equipment (docks, lifts, boats)
- **Briefly run motor** out of water (Veligers can be in intake lines and can damage motors and could spread zebra mussels to another lake)
- **Spray all** equipment that contacted lake water with a bleach solution to kill veligers (2 T. of bleach/gallon of water)
- **Dry** equipment for 5 days
- **Dispose** bait in trash after use if it was exposed to lake water

