



Connecticut Department of

**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

PRESENCE OF ZEBRA MUSSELS CONFIRMED IN LAKE HOUSATONIC

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) today confirmed that zebra mussels have been found in Lake Housatonic. The adult zebra mussels were found on November 3 (2011) by divers working for Biodrawversity LLC, the consulting firm hired by DEEP to survey for zebra mussels in the Housatonic River system and other nearby high calcium content waters. Federal Aquatic Nuisance Species funding was used to fund this survey.

Lake Housatonic, located in the municipalities of Derby, Monroe, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton, is the most downstream of the three large impoundments of the Housatonic River. The adult zebra mussels were found on the lake bottom in the southern end of the lake.

The presence of zebra mussels is not unexpected as the mussels were found in Lakes Zoar and Lillinonah, the two large impoundments located immediately upstream of Lake Housatonic, in November, 2010. Zebra mussels were first found in the Housatonic River in 2009 when they were discovered in Laurel Lake in Lee, Massachusetts, and subsequent sampling found them in the lake's outflow into the mainstem river.

The non-native zebra mussel is a black and white-striped bivalve mollusk that was unintentionally introduced into North American waters through the discharge of ship ballast water. Since its discovery in Lake St. Clair (Michigan/Ontario) in 1988, the zebra mussel has spread throughout the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River system and most of New York State including Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. More recently, both zebra mussels and quagga mussels (a related species, and also invasive) have been expanding their range into a number of western and southwestern states.

Zebra mussels have fairly specific water chemistry requirements and are limited to waters with moderate to high calcium concentrations and pH. In Connecticut, suitable habitat for zebra mussels is mostly limited to a number of water bodies in western portions of the state. Under highly

favorable conditions, the mussel can foul boat hulls and engine cooling water systems and clog power plant, industrial and public drinking water intakes.

While zebra mussels can be spread by natural methods, such as birds and by drift of larval stages, boaters and anglers can also transport them unwittingly when they move from infected waters to clean waters.

Outreach and Education (properly checking, cleaning boats, gear, etc) are often the most effective tools to control the introduction and spread of zebra mussels and other invasive species. For well over 10 years, education appears to have prevented their spread from the Twin Lakes (Salisbury) to nearby waters suitable for zebra mussels. Since they were first found in East Twin Lake in 1998, information about the presence of zebra mussels has been posted at access points to the two lakes, in DEEP's annual publication for anglers, the CT Angler's Guide, and included in the approved permit packets for fishing tournaments.

This past year the DEEP increased the seasonal staff presence at Lakes Lillinonah and Zoar and Connecticut's largest lake, Candlewood Lake, to educate boaters about the responsibility they have to keep zebra mussels out of other waters. Staff also inspected boats at state boat launches on weekends and holidays throughout the summer. A new program was developed in which local residents were trained in efforts to educate the boaters and inspect boats for the presence of aquatic plants and animals. All fishing tournament participants and boaters having marine events on infected waters or waters that could support zebra mussels were required to certify that they cleaned their boats according to proper protocols.

Boaters and anglers should follow the following precautions to prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals, including zebra mussels:

Before leaving a boat launch:

- **CLEAN:** all visible plant, fish, and animals as well as mud or other debris. Do not transport them home.
- **DRAIN:** all water from every space and item that may hold water.

At home or prior to your next launch:

- **DRY:** anything that comes in contact with water (boats, trailers, anchors, propellers, etc) for a minimum of 1 week during hot/dry weather or a minimum of 4 weeks during cool/wet weather.

If drying is not possible, you should clean your boat prior to the next launch. The techniques listed below are advised to decontaminate your vessel:

- Wash your boat with hot, pressurized water.
- Dip equipment in 100% vinegar for 20 minutes prior to rinsing.
- Wash with a 1% salt solution (2/3 cup to 5 gallons water) and leave on for 24 hours prior to rinsing.
- "Wet" with bleach solution (1 oz to 1 gallon water) or soap and hot water (Lysol, boat soap, etc) for 10 minutes prior to rinsing.

When Fishing:

- Do not dump your bait bucket or release live bait! Avoid introducing unwanted plants and animals. Unless your bait was obtained on site, dispose of it in a suitable trash container or give it to another angler.
- Do not transport fish, other animals or plants between water bodies. Release caught fish, other animals and plants only into the waters from which **they came**.

DEEP will continue to monitor for the presence of zebra mussels at these lakes and others throughout the state. Individuals wishing to report possible sightings of zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species can contact DEEP's Inland Fisheries Division at **860-424-3474**. If you are interesting in learning how you can educate boaters on ways to prevent the spread of invasive species, contact the Boating Division at 860-447-4339. More information on zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species can be found on the DEP website at

www.ct.gov/deep/invasivespecies and in the:

- 2011 CT Angler's Guide (www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/fishing/anglers_guide/anguide.pdf)
- 2011 CT Boater's guide (www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/boating/boating_guide/boaterguide.pdf).