

AIS Working Group

Zebra Mussel



MEDIA RELEASE



Quagga Mussel

Stop Mussel Pain !

Some nasty little critters called quagga mussels are about to invade Western Canada, and they will inflict serious pain if they are not stopped.. Some have already infested the Colorado River system and are spreading north and across the western USA and throughout the Pacific Northwest. Zebra mussels, to which they are closely related, are already in most waterways in Quebec, Ontario and most states in the eastern USA; now they have been found in Lake Winnipeg.

Quagga mussels are very small but breed very quickly and adhere to practically any surface. They threaten native fish habitat by consuming phytoplankton, clarifying the water and changing the sub-surface ecosystem so native fish may starve. As with zebra mussels, they can clog water intakes, screens and pipes and cause damage to hydroelectric dams, irrigation equipment and marine engine cooling systems. Quagga mussels are hardy, capable of surviving out of water for a month and tolerant of a wide range of temperatures and water conditions.

How are they coming to Saskatchewan? On (or in) recreational boats, motors and boat trailers mostly, but also on industrial equipment. Anything that has been in an infested body of water will likely spread the mussels when it is moved, unless precautions are taken. Visiting fishing enthusiasts coming north across the USA/Canada border, or Saskatchewan folk coming back home after a winter in Arizona, pulling their favourite boats and trailers with them. Even “seashells” collected while on holiday in affected areas, or introduced through carelessly disposed-of aquarium materials, can result in an accidental contamination.

How do we stop the spread of these tiny, attractive (and potentially poisonous as well as destructive) critters? We engage our Saskatchewan army (well, maybe navy?) of boating enthusiasts to inform each other and the public at large about making sure people who could possibly be transporting invasive mussels to properly clean their boats, motors, bait wells and related equipment when moving to a Saskatchewan waterway from an area which may be infested. It’s like washing your hands to stop the spread of bacteria – it’s simple, and it works!

The AIS Working Group (managed by the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve) will ensure we take some important first steps right away, through public service announcements like this one and producing handouts for distribution at boat dealerships and fishing equipment retailers. The goal for this first step is to have information in the hands of the boating public before the May long weekend.

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***The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Working Group is an initiative of the Operations Committee of the Redberry Lake (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve Association Inc.
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