

Zebra Mussels

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Zebra mussel, if this doesn't send a shiver through your spine then you probably don't know much about them. This paper will focus on Zebra Mussels which are only one of the many possible invasive species that could impact Douglas County and our waters. Most people think, oh it's just another clam, well it's not it's much more than that. The Zebra Mussel will effect more than just our lakes and rivers. These invasive species will affect the following: the waterways, tourism, and the overall economy of Douglas County.

Zebra Mussels are native to the Caspian Sea, on the other side of the world, NOT to Douglas County. It is believed that the mussels were transported to the great lakes via ballast water in cargo ships. From there they attached to fishing boats and are rapidly being spread across America.(Fuller) Unfortunately Zebra Mussels were recently discovered in lake Le Homme Dieu in 2008.

Zebra Mussels start as a microscopic organism and quickly develop into a small clam, at the age of about two years old they start laying eggs. A Mussel can lay up to a million eggs a year. (Fuller) This is obviously a huge problem because they can quickly overtake a body of water. These mussels will attach to basically anything, rocks, shells, plants, boats, boatlifts, docks, etc... The mussels will cover every solid object in a lake and then they will start layering themselves on top of one another. Seeing as the mussels shells are as sharp as a knife this poses a problem for swimmers.

Tourists don't want to come spend time at a lake full of zebra mussels. I mean really who in their right mind would want to jump into a lake full of knife like shell creatures. Another downfall is that Zebra Mussels can filter up to a quart of water a day and they take all of the zooplankton and phytoplankton out of the water. This in turn will make the water clearer and allow weeds to grow thicker and at greater depths. (Fuller) Not only extra weeds but without the zooplankton the minnows and small fish will have nothing to eat and it then becomes an even harder battle of the fittest to stay alive. Logically without as many small fish there won't be as many big fish either. So now not only is the lake full of Zebra Mussels but the lake is full of weeds with hardly any fish in it. Wow, that really sounds like a fun family vacation.

Douglas counties biggest summer attractant of tourists is lakes. So when the lakes are full Zebra Mussels and weeds with hardly any fish in them not many tourists will want to come spend time at the lakes. This in turn won't attract tourists to the area. Many small business owners depend solely on summer tourists to keep their business alive. So without the tourists most if not all of these businesses will fail. The big attractant to the area in the winter is the Ice Fishing Challenge which is held on lake Le Homme Dieu. Due to Zebra mussels there are less fish and the fish that are left are smaller. This can be seen by just looking in the Echo Press newspaper at the results of the Ice Fishing Challenge. The 2008 Ice Fishing Challenge winner had caught a 5.06 pound northern Pike; the 2009 Winner caught a 2.18 pound northern Pike. (Beam A1) This shows that there is an obvious and drastic decrease in fish size. Seeing as the fish are smaller there won't be as many fishing tournaments in Douglas County during the winter or summer, so that brings even less people to the area. Now the economy is falling in both the summer and the winter. Also, anyone who is trying to pump water from the lake or run lake water through their plant will have to deal with Zebra mussels. It might not seem like a big issue now but Zebra mussels will come in and attach to things and grow and multiple until there are millions of them and they completely clog up a tube.

As is evident Zebra mussels are BAD. The only good effect from Zebra mussels would be clearer water and that even turns into a downfall because it increases weed growth. There is currently no way to kill Zebra mussels without killing every living organism in a lake. Which is bad news because it means they will stick around longer getting into all of the lakes, causing havoc with landowners, and causing the Douglas County economy to gradually fail over time. So, as of now there is no way to eliminate Zebra Mussels but there are ways to prevent them from moving to other lakes. Some of these solutions to stop movement are the following: Leave boats out of water for 7 days or more before moving to new water, Check trailers and all items that were in-contact with the lake water for zebra mussels. Don't transport bait or water to different lakes. (Drummond) Also, always remember just because you can't see them doesn't mean they aren't there. Zebra Mussels... now do they send a shiver down your spine?

Work Cited

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