

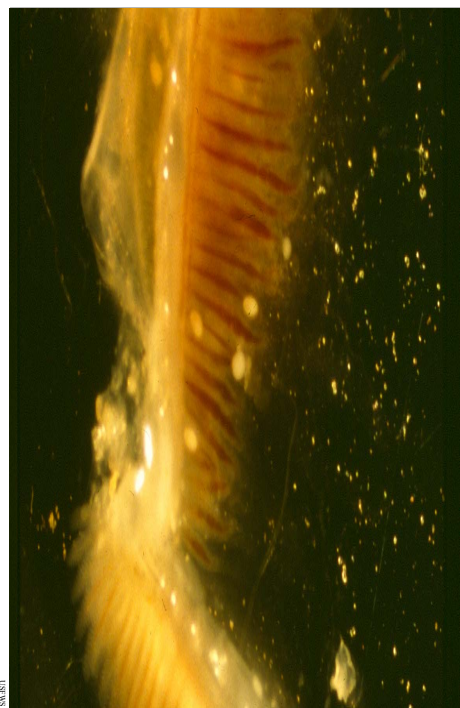


Recovering Endangered Mussels

Aquatic Species Conservation



The Genoa National Fish Hatchery has joined with federal and state partners to recover the Endangered Higgins Eye Pearly Mussel in the Mississippi River Basin.



Encysted larvae appear as grains of rice on fish gills



Biologists harvesting mussel larvae to place on host fish. They will live on the hosts gills for 3-6 weeks before dropping to the riverbed. Host fish are held in cages over suitable river habitat until mussels are released.

The Fisheries Program is using propagation as a tool to increase juvenile recruitment and survival, until populations can sustain themselves.



Results from host fish cages in CY 2002 Many juvenile mussels are found including Higgins eye

Siltation from poor land use practices, zebra mussel infestation, and pollution has caused mussels to decline drastically. Over 250,000 juvenile mussels produced at Genoa in 2002 were stocked at three different recovery sites. Many juveniles stocked previously are now being found in spring assessments.



The Adult Higgins Eye, after being cleaned of zebra mussels. Zebra mussels use freshwater mussels to attach to, causing the mussels to suffocate or slowly starve to death..

Partners include the Corps of Engineers, Twin Cities ES Field Office, LaCrosse Fisheries Resource Office, and the Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin DNRs, NPS, and Academic Institutions.