

USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Conservation of Freshwater Mussels in the Upper Mississippi River Basin



Freshwater mussels are the most imperiled group of animals in North America. About 70% of the 300 native species are considered extinct, endangered, threatened, or of special concern. Freshwater mussels are a renewable resource, providing significant ecological and economic benefits to the Nation. Mussels serve as a food resource for many animals; they improve water quality by filtering contaminants, sediments, and nutrients; and their shells are used in producing cultured pearls. Their declines may be a signal of critical problems in river ecosystems.

Because freshwater mussels are declining nationwide, it is important to understand what contributes to their distribution (location) and abundance (numbers) across large geographic areas. In 2001, scientists at the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center began to develop predictive models to relate the distribution of freshwater mussels to physical and biological variables over large and small geographic areas.

See the project Web page for more information.

http://www.umesc.er.usgs.gov/aquatic/native_mussels/5004455.html

Visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web page for information on freshwater mussels of the Upper Mississippi River System:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/mussel/>