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ZEBRA MUSSELS FOUND IN TIOGA COUNTY LAKE

First Time Zebra Mussels Discovered in Pennsylvania Tributary to Susquehanna River

July 3, 2007

HARRISBURG -- Environmental Protection and Fish and Boat Commission officials, along with Pennsylvania Sea Grant, today confirmed the discovery of zebra mussels in Cowanesque Lake, Tioga County. This marks the first time zebra mussels, *Dreissena polymorpha*, have been discovered in a Pennsylvania waterway in the Susquehanna River watershed.

[Invasive species](#) like zebra mussels pose serious threats because of their potential to foul industrial facilities and plug public water supply intakes that draw from infested waters. Invasive species also can interfere with the operation of locks and dams on rivers, or damage boat hulls and engines.

Zebra mussels threaten aquatic ecosystems because of their ability to filter about a quart of water per day. While water clarity is improved during this process, the zebra mussels disrupt the food chain by removing plankton, which supports the existence of native mussels and fish.

"Public education is key to preventing the spread of zebra mussel infestations, as well as for protecting the many unspoiled Pennsylvania waterways we all enjoy," said Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Secretary for Water Management Cathy Curran Myers.

The Pennsylvania Zebra Mussel Monitoring Network first discovered the mussels in Cowanesque Reservoir on May 17 as part of a routine monitoring visit. Verification analyses were conducted by DEP and Pennsylvania Sea Grant to confirm the species of mussel. Since the discovery, Pennsylvania Sea Grant has worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to alert visitors and assess the degree of the mussels' presence in the lake.

Zebra mussels are prolific breeders and, since they are not a native species, have no natural predators, making control and clean-up methods difficult, very expensive and generally unsuccessful. The best control is to limit the spread of zebra mussels by cleaning boats and equipment before and after use.

"The introduction of invasive species like zebra mussels can have a substantial and lasting impact on the balance of aquatic life in a waterway," said Doug Austen, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's executive director. "Anglers and boaters should exercise great care when moving from one waterway to another that they don't inadvertently move

an aquatic nuisance species with them.”

Adult zebra mussels can be found in other Pennsylvania waters, including Lake Erie, the Ohio River and lower portions of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. The mussels have also been reported in Edinboro and Sandy lakes in northwestern Pennsylvania, as well as upper French Creek in Crawford County.

The zebra mussel is native to the Black and Caspian seas region of Eastern Europe. They were introduced to this country around 1986 when ocean-going ships released infested ballast water into the lower Great Lakes.

The Pennsylvania Zebra Mussel Monitoring Network is sponsored by DEP, Pennsylvania Sea Grant and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Zone Management Program to help slow the spread of invasive mussels in the commonwealth's rivers, streams and lakes.

For more information on zebra mussels, visit the Pennsylvania Sea Grant invasive species web site at www.pserie.psu.edu/seagrants/publications/ais.htm.

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