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Media Advisory



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NEW ZEALAND MUDSNAIL DISCOVERED IN BIG LAGOON

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that it received a preliminary confirmation that the invasive New Zealand Mud Snail (NZMS) is present in Big Lagoon, a popular Humboldt County recreational destination. The lagoon is located approximately seven miles north of Trinidad, Calif.

On September 9, 2008, a crew from the Service's Arcata Fish and Wildlife Office was surveying for the federally endangered tidewater goby when it collected samples of the small snail which was found in abundance throughout the southern end of the lagoon. Several thousand snails were observed while the crew conducted the fish surveys using fine mesh seine nets. On September 18, the FWS received preliminary confirmation that the species is the NZMS.

Mudsnails were first discovered in the U.S. in Idaho's Snake River in the 1980's and has rapidly spread throughout the West. They have been discovered in waters throughout California. The discovery in Big Lagoon is believed to be the first confirmed occurrence in the North Coast region.

The mudsnail should not be confused with invasive mussels, such as quagga and zebra mussels, which are often considerably more detrimental to ecosystems and underwater infrastructure. Still, mudsnails are a threat to native waters and they compete with native invertebrates for food and habitat, which may have serious consequences for fish populations, vegetation, and other native biota.

The mudsnails are brown or black in color and can be as small as a grain of sand and reach lengths of up to an 1/8 of an inch. Mudsnails can tolerate a wide range of habitats, including brackish water, and are found living in high densities (often over 400,000 snails/sq meter) on many different substrates such as rock, gravel, sand, and mud). They reproduce asexually and in vast numbers.

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There are no effective eradication procedures once these species are established in water bodies. It is critical that the further spread of the NZMS is prevented. The NZMS is primarily spread into new waters by people. Anglers, boaters, researchers and others who transport potentially contaminated gear and equipment can easily move these species to new locations. Public education and preventive measures are the best means for controlling the spread of these invasive species.

What you can do to prevent the spread of New Zealand Mudsnaails:

- Have extra waders and boots for use in infested waters only. Store them separately.
- After leaving the water inspect waders, boots, float tubes, boats and trailers, and any gear used in the water.
- Remove visible snails with a stiff brush and follow with a rinsing.
- If possible, freeze or completely dry out wet gear before reuse.
- Never transport live fish or other aquatic animals or plants from one body of water to another.

For more information on New Zealand mudsnails in California, visit the California Department of Fish and Game Web site at www.dfg.ca.gov/invasives/mudsnail. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.esg.montana.edu/aim/mollusca/nzms/>.