

1) Zebra mussel meeting synopsis

All,

We attended the Dec. 1, Thurs. evening meeting on zebra mussels, and there was a good turnout of concerned folks (around 75-80). Maureen Ferry, a state biologist from Madison, spoke on her multi-year study of zebra mussels and relevant scientific data (i.e.: their life cycles, rate of spread in infested lakes etc.) and also the preliminary work being started this winter to create a coalition of state, local lake assoc.'s and private resources to attempt to stem the advance of this invasive species in Big McKenzie and vulnerable waters downstream.

The research biologist bluntly stated that once a zebra mussel population becomes established in a lake system, there's currently no way to stem their spread up to the maximum number of animals that the lakes nutrients will support, and every lake is different as to how long this process takes to mature. Dissolved calcium levels in a lake appear to be a factor in supporting populations of adult zebra mussels.

Big McKenzie has high levels of dissolved calcium with Middle McKenzie slightly lower and Lower McKenzie having calcium levels that would 'probably' not support a large population, (if any), of adult zebra mussels.

Pam Toschner, from the Spooner DNR office, gave a summary of their findings on Big McKenzie. Her team did a shoreline survey of the docks and lifts as well as some shallow water structures. Mussels were found in three places for a total of 9 adults all aged to be less than 1 year old. Minnesota has been using DNA testing on zebra mussels to determine their area of origin, however a minimum of 15 adults are required to perform the DNA tests, therefore DNA testing was not performed here. Her team also performed a seine net survey to look for zebra mussel larvae. As of this writing, no zebra larvae have been found in Big McKenzie but this could be due to the cold water temperatures at the time.

Minnesota's use of spot chemical treatments in a few lakes was referenced but it has not yet been shown to be an effective solution, and it's doubtful the WI DNR would allow their use anytime soon without further study of the effects on natural species.

As to any law enforcement available for invasive species, it appears to be rather weak in WI. There is a law concerning illegal transport of invasive species from lake to lake, and even though boat launch 'cleaning stations' are being discussed as an option a private citizen would currently not be required to comply with having their

boat disinfected and the DNR would have to 'step aside' and allow them to launch their possibly infected watercraft into the lake. Launch sites at resorts are also not monitored and are a point of great concern to everyone.

Public awareness and a willingness to not spread invasive species is a big part of any plan going forward.

If you're not already a member, please consider joining the 'McKenzie Lakes Association' and join in the fight to protect our lakes against these invasive species.

Info on becoming a member is available at: www.mckenzielakes.com

Here are two informative websites provided at the meeting:

<http://www.aissmartprevention.wisc.edu/>

<http://DNR.wi.gov/> search "aquatic invasive species"