

No zebra mussels in Enders Lake

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The news is good — at least for now. There are no zebra mussels to be found in Enders Reservoir.

In a joint project between the US Geological Survey, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, boaters on Nebraska lakes are being educated about the invasive species. In addition, Nebraska lakes are being inspected every summer month for signs of the mussels.

Minnie Petsch of Wauneta was a Creel Clerk this past summer, one of 12 in the state. From April to October she visited Enders and Swanson Reservoirs daily, interviewing fishermen about their trips and educating them about zebra and quagga mussels.

She recorded how many people were fishing from boats and how many were fishing from the banks. She also recorded the types of fish caught. The information was sent to the NGPC.

Petsch said she was surprised at how many Colorado boaters visit the lakes. Colorado has confirmed zebra mussel invasions in some of its lakes and on trailered boats.

The Creel Clerk surmised that the boaters didn't want to put their boats in contaminated Colorado lakes. Those boats must be inspected when they are pulled from the lakes. Petsch noted that the inspectors only work until 8 p.m. and any boat not inspected by then must be impounded overnight.

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The Invasive Species Project at UNL provides free voluntary inspections of boats in Nebraska. Information is also handed out about the importance of the “clean, drain and dry” process when moving boats between waterways.

The goal is to prevent the spread of zebra and quagga mussels, which can cause significant ecological problems. They’re often found attached to solid objects, such as submerged rocks, dock pilings and water intake pipes.

They are transported in bilge, ballast or live well water and attached to boat hulls. The mussels reproduce rapidly, and once established, they cannot be eliminated.

Petsch said she interviewed only one person this past summer who had picked up zebra mussels. The man had been fishing in Minnesota.

When he pulled a line out of the water at one of the state’s many lakes, there was a “glob of fishing string” attached. When he shook the mess, Petsch said, zebra mussels fell out and into his boat.

The man told Petsch, she said, that he was glad she had previously educated him about the dangers of zebra mussels, and how to identify them.

Both zebra and quagga mussels have light and dark alternating stripes. They are less than one-half inch in length, on average.