



## ZEBRA MUSSEL FACT SHEET

### WHAT ARE ZEBRA MUSSELS?

Mature zebra mussels look like small D-shaped clams. Their shells are yellowish-brown with alternating light and dark stripes. They can reach a maximum of 2 inches in length, but most are smaller than one inch. They are typically found attached to solid objects below water level, often growing in large clusters thanks to strong byssal threads. Zebra mussels begin as eggs, then develop into microscopic free swimmers (called veligers). After approximately 3 weeks, they settle out and firmly attach to hard surfaces, where they grow shells and into adults. With a lifespan of 3-5 years, they begin to reproduce after a year where females can release up to one million eggs in one year.

### WHAT DO ZEBRA MUSSELS DO?

Zebra mussels are filter feeders that can filter up to 1 Liter of water in one day. They remove plankton—tiny plants and animals from the water. Plankton is an important food supply for young fish, native mussels, and other aquatic organisms. Zebra mussels may concentrate this food at the bottom, leaving open water species with less to eat. They often make the water clearer due to their filtering systems. Cordy and Sweetwater are some of the cleanest lakes in Indiana already so zebra mussels may allow light to penetrate deeper allowing aquatic plants to grow in deeper water and spread to a larger area—not to mention how it will affect the fish supply.

### HOW ARE ZEBRA MUSSELS SPREAD?

- These larvae, also called veligers, spread within bodies of water in the form of plankton.
- Microscopic veligers spread between bodies of water by live wells, bait buckets, bilge water, dive gear, life jackets, waterfowl, and anything else that moves from one body of water to another.
- Adult and juvenile mussels can attach to boats, kayaks, canoes, paddles, or other equipment that is moored in the water.
- They can also attach to aquatic plants, which may hitch a ride on boats and equipment.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

- PROPERTY VALUES will decline for all freeholders
- BEACH WILL CLOSE as dead zebra mussel shells will accumulate on shore and create a foul odor and cut the feet of swimmers
- DOCKS, DOCK LADDERS, BOATLIFTS, BOAT MOTORS, and SEAWALLS will be costly to clean and repair
- FISH AND WILDLIFE will be adversely affected by these invasive mussels—not to mention the water may be harmful to your pets

## STEPS YOU MUST TAKE TO STOP THE SPREAD

- Before you leave any water access, CLEAN weeds and debris from your boat, trailer, kayaks, canoes, paddles, jet skis, etc. Remove DRAIN plugs and keep them out while traveling.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash before leaving that other body of water. NEVER throw unwanted bait in our lakes.
- Wash your boat, trailer, kayaks, canoes, paddles, jet skis, anchors, ropes, life jackets (anything that has touched water) with 140 degree water for 10 minutes, OR
- Clean and DRY everything that has touched another body of water (In the sun) for 5 days.
- Never empty your aquarium/fish tanks in our lakes.

## SPECIAL NOTE TO ALL THOSE THAT FISH OUR LAKES AND THOSE WITH PRIVATE FISH TANKS.

Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.

DO NOT transfer bait or water from another waterbody to our lakes. Larval zebra mussels or other invasive species could be present in the water. This includes private fish tanks. Aquarium Moss Balls sold in Spring 2021 were found to be infected with zebra mussels.

